From Protest to Ballot Box

2021 election in Iraq and its national, regional and local consequences

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Preface

Keiko Sakai

Chiba University

On 1 October 2019 in the Iraqi capital Baghdad, massive clashes suddenly began between demonstrators and government security forces. In Tahrir Square, the center of the capital, security forces used high-pressure water cannons and tear gas to disperse protesters who had been staging a sit-in, resulting in the deaths of demonstrators. Protests broke out in the capital and a chain of cities in the south, including Basra, Nasiriyah, Maysan, Najaf, and Karbala. The number of demonstrators and sit-ins in Tahrir increased day by day, and the 'liberated zone' spread beyond Tahrir Square to the surrounding buildings, streets, and underground pathways.

The protests were an outpouring of anger and frustration among the youth against the government, criticizing its corruption, failure in providing essential goods and social services, unemployment, and *muhassasa* system (distributing power resources based on religious and ethnic affiliation). Streets and squares became a space for autonomy and self-empowerment of the youth, which was reminiscent of what took place in Egypt and Tunisia in 2010-11. Despite an increasing number of victims among the protesters caused by persistent disruptions and attacks by security forces, young men and women continued joining and supporting protest movements in collective form and demanded complete and comprehensive political reform.

An early election was one of their demands. The protest movement, which they themselves call 'Tishrin (October) Revolution,' occurred one year after the fourth national parliamentary election. Reflecting cumulative social dissatisfaction and frustration in Basra and other governorates in the south and the failure of the Abadi government to accomplish political reforms he had promised as early as 2015, results of the election in 2018 showed popular objections to the ruling political elites in Iraq. The turnout was as low as 44.5%, and Sa'irun, an electoral coalition, which the al-Sadr tendency and Iraqi Communist party had formed to represent an opposition to the ruling circles, won the most considerable number of votes against the electoral blocs led by former prime ministers and other political elites.

Nevertheless, the government formed after the election failed to respond to these social discontents and could not implement political reforms. The newly elected council of representatives appointed Adil Abd al-Mahdi, a Communist-turned-Islamist once at the heart of SCIRI and heavyweight with a long history of exile in France, as the prime minister more than five months after the election. Under his administration, the Fatah bloc, led mainly by pro-Iran political-military organizations such as Badr Organization, Kata'ib Hizbullah, and 'Asa'ib

Ahl al-Haqq, retained a strong influence in cooperation with the State of Law led by ex-Prime Minister Nuri Maliki. The more frequently protest movements occurred, the more harshly the Fatah-dominant security forces suppressed the protesters.

Mustafa Kazimi, a non-partisan with experience in intelligence and journalism who was finally nominated as prime minister in May 2021, was relatively sympathetic to protesters and tried to restrict the aggressive treatment of security forces against them. Yet, the protest movements were prevented from expanding not only by oppression from the security force and friction with al-Sadr tendency, which had shown its support to the protesters at the beginning but also by introducing quarantine policy against covid-19.

In this way, the election was held in October 2021, instead of the regularly scheduled year of 2022. However, it does not mean that all the protesters were satisfied with this decision, as most of them, being seriously affected and damaged by the violent oppression, were not ready to form an influential electoral bloc that could represent the protesters as well as critical voices in the streets. National House (Bait al-Watani), one of the prominent protest movement organizations, decided to boycott the election and other secular leftist groups. Still, a certain number of new electoral blocs based on protest movement ran for the election, and some achieved rather unexpected success, as Imtidad did.

Then, what happened after the election in 2021? Turnout was lower than the previous one, and al-Sadr tendency won more votes than it did three years ago. Fatah lost heavily compared with the last election, but Maliki and other existing political elites are trying to challenge the leadership of the al-Sadr-KDP-Taqaddum alliance. Do these differences bring any changes or reforms to Iraqi society? However, the post-election process looks similar to what was seen before: although Muhammad Halbusi was re-elected as a speaker of parliament on 9 January 2022, parliament failed to elect a new president in its meeting on 8 February. It remains to be seen who will be the next prime minister (as of 14 February 2022). It is unclear how long the current cooperative relationship will last between al-Sadr, KDP, and Taqaddum.

This RSGC Occasional Paper is the outcome of an in-depth analysis of the process and results of the parliamentary election in Iraq, held on 10 October 2021. In the first paper, Yoshioka clarifies the background of the election, showing how it was decided to be held, how the new electoral law was introduced, and the differences with the previous one. She concludes that the turnout was not as low as expected, which saved the legitimacy of the election in Iraq at the brink of people's political distrust.

In the following paper, Yamao outlines the development of elections and the evolution of party politics in post-war Iraq. He discusses the formation of the party coalitions for the election in 2021, providing an overview of how the major party coalitions were formed and reorganized after the regime change in 2003. It examines how the party coalitions were formed and restructured after introducing the electoral process, along with the results for each election.

In his second paper, Yamao concentrates on analyzing the election results in 2021 from the perspective of how they were affected by institutional changes. He puts importance on the effects brought about by institutional changes and voter preferences and argues that the change to SNTV has highlighted the negative aspects of the loss of a representative system that reflected the party support structure and the diverse preferences of voters.

Yamao's papers are followed by Yoshioka's analysis of electoral results in the Kurdistan Regional Government. Experiencing decades of two-party dominance in Kurdistan, popular sentiments in the KRG-controlled area shared a similar frustration as in the rest of Iraq, against the existing political parties in power that have remained essentially unchanged for a long time, the difficult economic situation and corruption among government officials. She examines how the election in 2021 reflected these frustrated youths in Kurdistan. She also took up several electoral districts in Kirkuk and Ninawa Governorates and conducted an in-depth analysis.

The paper by Ali Taher Alhammood, on the other hand, focuses on profound transformations in Iraqi society seen behind the political competition in the election. One of the most prominent shockers in the election was, he argues, the limited influence of religious authority on the course of the electoral process. He points out the relative absence of sectarian appeals or intimidation from the Ba'thists, which shows that they were no longer a source of legitimacy for the candidates. It coincided with public opinion that rejects sectarian division, the cause of quota systems at the government level, he argues. His paper is based on intensive research conducted by the al-Bayan Center in 2019 on the protest movement. (This paper was originally published in Arabic as a report from the Center dated 14 October 2021 (https://www.bayancenter.org/2021/10/7598/)).

Lastly, Sakai's paper focuses on the electoral results in Baghdad, a microcosm of society and politics of the whole of Iraq. She examines each electoral bloc's seats in each constituency in Baghdad and clarifies how its electoral campaign differed. She points out the continuity of their electoral policy since the last election: amateurism of al-Sadr and ruling elite-ness of SLC and ISCI-origin political parties. She also sheds light on the historical background of each constituency, disclosing how it affects voting behavior and candidates' ways of appealing in the campaign.

It would be our great pleasure if this occasional paper contributed to the understanding of the current and future developments in Iraqi politics.

Background to the 2021 Iraqi Parliamentary Elections

Akiko Yoshioka

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The Iraqi Parliamentary elections were held on October 10, 2021. For the first time in the current political system, the Parliament was dissolved without waiting of the four-year term to expire. To understand the political background of this election, I will give an overview of the anti-government protests, the "October Revolution/Movement," in 2019, and then examine the details of the revised election law and how the election was held.

1. From Protests to Early Elections

In October 2019, young people rallied in a massive anti-government protest in Tahrir Square in Baghdad and in other southern cities. Even though Iraq has often seen protests since around the mid-2010s, mainly because of economic discontent, there has never been a protest of such scale and duration in the past. Except for brief participation by the Sadrists, the political movement led by Muqtada al-Sadr before breaking up with them, the protests were basically characterized by their distance from the existing political forces and their grassroots gatherings. Therefore, the protest movements were deemed threats to the regime, and a massive crackdown was carried out using tear gas and live ammunition. In particular, the Popular Mobilization Units (PMUs) which are part of the vested interests in Iraq and have their own weapons, are said to have been deeply involved in this repression. The protest movements were forced to be scaled back after the spring of 2020 partly due to the COVID-19 lockdown. In the six months until then, more than 600 people were killed and as many as 20,000 were injured in clashes with the security forces [International Crisis Group 2021]. Sporadic protests continued after that, but by October 2020, they had largely come to an end. In addition to the COVID-19 lockdown, the protests had achieved certain results, such as the resignation of the Prime Minister and amendments to the election law, and the protesters were divided as to whether they should organize a political party and prepare for elections or continue their street protests to overthrow the existing regime. It should also be pointed out that the security situation was becoming severe for the protesters; not only repeated harsh clashes with the security forces but also a visible increase in assassinations and threats against the leaders of the demonstrations were seen, which made the protesters shrink their activities.

Nevertheless, the protests that began in October 2019 were distinct from previous protests in terms of the impact they had on Iraqi society, as evidenced by the spread of the name "October Revolution." This was obvious from the results of several public opinion polls conducted in Iraq. For example, in a survey conducted in July-August 2020 by Chatham House, among more than 1,200 people, 28% responded that "all of them (protesters) are justified" and 55% responded that "most of them are justified; a small group are spoilers." In fact, more than 80% of respondents viewed the demonstrators favorably [Cooke and Mansour 2020]. Similarly, in a June 2021 telephone poll of 1,068 respondents by the Enabling Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC), when asked about their perceptions of the protesters, 51.4% said they "strongly support," 18.9% said "slightly support" the protestors. This was much higher than the 17.6% who "neither support nor oppose," 3.0% who "slightly oppose," and 2.0% who "strongly oppose" the protestors [Gustafson, Al-Nidawi and Khalil 2021]. In the Chatham House poll mentioned above, when asked what the top priority demand of the protesters was, the most common response was "prosecution of corrupt officials." The fact that this surpassed issues directly related to people's daily lives, such as job creation and improvement of public services, shows that there is a growing awareness that more fundamental political and administrative reforms are needed, not just the socio-economic demands that have always been demanded in past protests.

In response to the growing protests, then Prime Minister Adil Abd al-Mahdi was forced to resign at the end of 2019, and after some twists and turns, a new government led by Mustafa Kazimi was formed in May 2020. Prime Minister Kazimi pledged to hold early parliamentary elections based on the new electoral law in order to refurbish the political scene. It was November 2020 when the pending delimitation of electoral districts in the new law was finally settled. The Prime Minister announced that elections would be held on June 6, 2021, but this was eventually pushed forward to October 10 due to technical preparations by the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC).

Although the decision to hold early elections was made in response to the growing number of protests, citizens' hopes for the elections remained low contrary to initial prospects. This was due to the strong and widespread distrust of politics. According to the previous EPIC poll, 60.8% of respondents said that the last election in 2018 "did not represent the will of the Iraqi people at all." Only 7.8% considered that the election "mostly represented the will of the Iraqi people," and 13.3% answered that it "somewhat represented the will of the Iraqi people." As mentioned above, assassinations, kidnappings, and threats against protest leaders occurred quite often throughout 2020 and 2021, which culminated in a massive protest with thousands of participants under the slogan "Who Killed Me?" in May 2021. After the registration of candidates for the election was closed on May 1, 2021, more than 30 candidates requested a withdrawal of their candidacy due to receiving death threats. IHEC then decided to change the regulations and set up a new application period, from 13 to 20 June, for withdrawing their candidacy.

Partly because all the major political forces in Iraq own armed groups, disillusionment with and resignation concerning the democratic electoral process spread far and wide. It was widely believed that vested interests would not relinquish power even after the election. Some of the "October Revolution" forces therefore called for a boycott. In addition, some of the existing parties, such as Wataniya of the former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, responded to the boycott. As the voting day approached, there were growing concerns about whether the turnout would be sufficient to ensure the legitimacy of the election.

2. New Election Law

It is important to review the contents of the new election law here, since the method of dealing with this election law has had a significant impact on the outcomes of the elections. All of Iraq's Parliamentary elections in the past, in December 2005, March 2010, May 2014, and May 2018, were held under the proportional representation system with a total of 18 constituencies per governorate. However, since voters choose the party rather than candidates in this system, candidates tend to focus more on the wishes of the party rather than the voters. It was considered that a system in which constituents directly select candidates from their local communities would make it easier for voters to scrutinize candidates and increase the transparency and accountability of legislators to their constituents. As such, the electoral system was changed to a single, non-transferable vote (SNTV) system this time.

Of the 329 seats in the Parliament, 320 seats, excluding nine seats reserved for minority groups, are allocated to 83 constituencies with three to five seats each, depending on the population size. The voters choose one person to cast their only vote for, and the top vote-winners are elected in order, with priority given to at least one female candidate in each constituency. The number of constituencies, 83, is related to the women's quota. The Iraqi Constitution stipulates in Article 49 that the "the election law shall aim to achieve a percentage of representation for women of not less than one-quarter of the members of the Council of Representative." This article necessitates that at least 83 female legislators will be elected. Although the Iraqi political scene is still dominated by men, this rule regarding the women's quota has forced each party to actively recruit female candidates who can attract votes. As a result, not only were more than ninety female legislators elected in this election, but around sixty of them garnered enough votes to be elected even without the quota. Thus, the existence of such priority quotas did help and encourage women's active presence in politics.

Further, under the new system, even if one popular candidate earns many votes, it does not help other candidates in the same party, unlike the previous proportional representation system. For this reason, big names, especially those at the party leader level, tended not dare to nominate themselves. This is the first parliamentary election in which none of the current or former prime ministers ran for office.

The proposed draft of the new election law was originally submitted to the

parliament by President Barham Saleh in 2019. However, during the parliamentary discussions, the existing political parties made various amendments for their own survival. For example, even though the suffrage for lawmakers was lowered from the existing age of thirty to twenty-five in the presidential bill, it was raised to twenty-eight years of age in the parliamentary debate [al-Jaffal 2021]. This raises the bar for participants in protests, who are overwhelmingly young people, to enter politics. Similarly, various procedural and financial conditions were imposed on the registration of new parties and their candidates. For example, registration of a new party would require ID30 million (Iraqi dinars, about $20,000) and at least five founders must pay ID2 million (about $1,300) per person. In addition, 3,000 signatures in support of the creation of the party must be collected from at least three governorates, and a party convention of no less than 350 people must be held in the presence of the electoral authorities. To run a candidate, an ID10 million deposit (about $6,900) must be paid, half of which will be returned if the candidate is successfully elected [Jiyad 2021]. Thus, although the election bill was revised drastically on the surface in response to the growing protests, in reality, it was designed to maintain the status quo.

3. The Election Day

More than 3,000 candidates from 267 political parties and 32 political coalitions registered to contest 329 seats in this election. The campaign period was from July 8 to October 7, with special voting for groups such as security forces, internally displaced persons, and hospitalized patients held on October 8. On October 10, a general vote was held. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) supported professional aspects of the election. In response to citizens' concerns about election fraud, some technical measures such as biometric voter cards, QR code management of ballot papers, and electronic counting systems were used. On the day of the vote, diplomatic missions from various countries including the EU organized election monitoring missions to inspect voting sites and reported that the election was generally conducted in a fair manner. Moreover, security incidents, which had been a concern, were very limited.

As for the much-feared voter turnout, the IHEC announced at the end of November that of the 22,116,368 registered voters, 9,629,601 voted, for a turnout of 43.5 percent. This is almost unchanged from 44.5 percent in the previous election in 2018. However, the IHEC's calculation of voter turnout is based on the denominator being the number of registered voters. According to UNAMI, Iraq's population over the age of eighteen is 25,182,594. Based on this possible total number of voters, the actual turnout would be 38.2%. Voter turnout in Iraq's Parliamentary elections was always above 60% until 2014 but dropped significantly in 2018 due to a widespread distrust of politics. That trend has obviously been continued in this election. Journalists and observers who were covering the election on the ground commented that the small number of young people voting was especially notable. Nevertheless, the overall turnout was not so low as to

raise questions about the legitimacy of the elected legislators and the future Iraqi government that they will form. In other words, the significance of the election was narrowly secured.

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An Overview of the Transformation of the Party Coalitions after the US Invasion of Iraq

Dai Yamao

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This chapter discusses the background to the formation of the party coalitions for the Iraq's fifth parliamentary election in 2021. It provides an overview of how the major party coalitions were formed and reorganised after the United States' (US) invasion of Iraq (Iraq War) in 2003. Specifically, this chapter examines how the party coalitions were formed and restructured after the introduction of the electoral process following the Iraq War, along with the results for each election. In so doing, it traces the process through which major political parties formed and dissolved coalitions, which can contribute to a better understanding of the results of the fifth parliamentary election.

1. Introduction of Party Coalition Politics

(1) Seizure of power by a large Shiite coalition

After the Iraq War, with the introduction of the democratisation process, various political forces began to form party organisations to participate in the elections. Among them, Shiites were the first to organise themselves. This was because many Shiite Islamist forces fled into exile under the former Ba'thist regime, engaged in opposition activities, and had the organisational basis to form political parties. These formerly exiled forces were represented by the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI, or ISCI after 2007), which was based in Iran, and the al-Da'wa Party, which had several bases in Iran, Syria, and the United Kingdom. These parties formed their political organisations using the bases of their opposition activities abroad. Although these foreign groups had such organisational bases, they did not have a support base in Iraq. Therefore, they tried to mobilise votes in the elections by obtaining support from Ali Sistani, the supreme authority in the Shiite religious establishment, who was rapidly gaining support by calling for the formation of a government by Iraqis via elections.

However, there are some Shiite Islamist parties that could be called 'domestic' groups. A representative group is the al-Sadr Tendency. Al-Sadr Tendency is a mass political party based in the slums of Baghdad and led by Muqtada al-Sadr. This political party is based on the support from the social movement that Muqtada's father, Sadiq al-Sadr, led in the country in the 1990s.

Another party is the United Iraqi Alliance, which was formed by a coalition of Shiite Islamist groups as a result of Shiite Islamist forces that had been suppressed under the former Ba'thist regime. It attempted to take control of the creation of a new country by gathering various Shiite political parties to form a grand coalition. With the support of the Shiite religious establishment, the Shiite forces won more than 140 seats in the January 2005 elections for the Constituent Assembly, and succeeded in controlling the constitution-making process (Table 1).

Conversely, the Sunni political elites were much slower to participate in the State-building process, and made no progress in organising political party structures. This was because under the former Ba'thist regime, political parties other than the Ba'th Party were not allowed to engage in political activities, and Sunnis lacked experience in forming political parties. Therefore, it was not immediately possible to form a political party that would represent voters in the Western and Northern parts of the country. The only party that had started its activities from the beginning was the Iraqi Islamic Party, which was the successor to the Muslim Brotherhood of the 1950s. However, even the Iraqi Islamic Party was unable to conduct an election campaign; thus, they were forced to boycott the Constitutional Assembly elections.

The Iraqi National List, led by former Prime Minister (of the interim government) Iyad Allawi, did not represent Sunni voters but was formed as a cross-sectarian, secular constituency. The party gained support from urban intellectuals and secular voters to become the third-largest party. Another coalition of tribal chiefs led by President Ghazi Yawir was formed and participated in the elections as the Iraqiyun, winning five seats (Table 1).

The Kurds joined the Constituent Assembly as the Kurdistan Alliance, with a coalition of two major parties—the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic union of Kurdistan (PUK)—and won 75 seats. The KDP is the largest party in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), is dominated by the Barzani family, and is based in Irbil and Duhok. The KDP and PUK are the two largest Kurdish parties formed under the former Ba'thist regime that have been active in the autonomous regions gained since the Gulf War, which has allowed them to enter the elections smoothly after the Iraq War.

Table 1 Main Parties under the Ja'fari Regime (after the Election for the Constitutional Assembly)

Coalition	Main parties	Seats	Cabinet	Characters
United Iraqi Alliance	Al-Da'wa Party, ISCI, al-Sadr Tendency, Fadila Party, al-Da'wa Party-Iraq Organisation, Iraq Hizbullah Movement, Turkmen Islamic Coalition	140	10	Shiite Islamist parties' alliance, the largest coalition
Kurdistan Alliance	KDP, PUK	75	8	Kurdish nationalism, basically secular
Iraqi National List	INA, Iraqi Communist Party, INC	40	2	Secular, supported mainly by urban intellectuals and led by former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi
Iraqiyun		5	1	Mainly Sunni tribal forces led by first President Ghazi Yawir

Source: Compiled by the author

(2) Formation of an official Shiite government

The newly-formed Iraqi government, led by the Shiite United Iraqi Alliance, maintained the form of a government of national unity. The first parliamentary elections were held in December 2005 to form an official government after the constitution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly. During the run-up to the elections, the Shiites, Kurds, and seculars maintained their existing grand coalitions (the United Iraqi Alliance, Kurdistan Alliance, and Iraqi National List, respectively), while the Sunnis and seculars formed a new coalition of parties.

During the first parliamentary election, the Sunni political parties were divided into two groups. The first was the Iraqi Accord Front, which was formed based on the Iraqi Islamic Party. This was a coalition of parties with a strong religious inclination who won 44 seats in the election, jumping to third place (**Table 2**). The second among the secular parties, the Iraqi National Dialogue Front, was formed under the leadership of Salih al-Mutlaq, who was close to the former Ba'th Party, on the platform of Arab nationalism, and won 11 seats in the election.

Thus, the Shiites, Kurds, and secularists maintained their coalition, while only the Sunnis formed two new coalitions. The new government that was formed as a result of the elections was different from the government that was formed after the election of the Constitutional Assembly. However, this new government was different from that formed after the elections to the ruling parliament because, as shown in **Table 2**, the Shiite United Iraqi Alliance reduced its number of seats from 140 to 128, which was less than the majority. As a result, the coalition became indispensable. Of course the cabinet was originally the government of national unity; however, the United Iraqi Alliance won far fewer seats than most, which allowed other parties to gradually expand their presence.

Table 2   **Main Parties under the Ja'fari Regime (after the Election for the Constitutional Assembly)**

Coalition	Main parties	Seats	Cabinet	Characters
United Iraqi Alliance	Al-Da'wa Party, ISCI, al-Sadr Tendency, Fadila Party, al-Da'wa Party-Iraq Organisation, Iraq Hizbullah Movement, Turkmen Islamic Coalition	128	17	Shiite Islamist parties' alliance, the largest coalition
Kurdistan Alliance	KDP, PUK	53	6	Kurdish nationalism, basically secular
Iraqi Accord Front	Iraqi Islamic Party, Iraqi National Dialogue Council, General Council for the People of Iraq	44	8	Sunni Islamist alliance led by Tariq al-Hashimi and Adnan al-Dulaymi, has a strong connection to Sunni tribes
Iraqi National List	INA, Iraqi Communist Party, INC	25	4	Secular, supported mainly by urban intellectuals and led by former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi
Iraqi National Dialogue Front	Iraqi National Front, Arab Democratic Front	11	6	Sunni Arab coalition led by Salih al-Mutlaq, Iraqi nationalism and Arab Nationalism, secular, close to former Ba'thist ideology

Source: Compiled by the author

2. Reconstruction of Party Coalitions

(1) The spread of the Shiite United Iraqi Alliance

The official government of post-war Iraq was formed and led by Nuri Maliki, who became the leader of the al-Da'wa Party, a long-established Shiite Islamist party outside of the country. Nevertheless, the Maliki administration began amidst a horrific civil war caused by conflicts among various forces, which intensified with the introduction of the electoral process. Therefore, stabilising the security situation was a major challenge, yet it was successful with the support of the US military and local tribes. With such support, the Maliki administration won the local elections in early 2009 and gradually took control of a large amount of authority.

As a result, several Shiite Islamist parties began to criticise Prime Minister Maliki, who had gained significant power. Subsequently, the United Iraqi Alliance gradually split. Accordingly, in the run-up to the second parliamentary elections in 2010, the United Iraqi Alliance split into the State of Law Coalition, led by Prime Minister Maliki, and the National Iraqi Alliance (al-I'tilāf al-Waṭanī al-'Irāqī), led by the ISCI and al-Sadr.

Conversely, to prevent Prime Minister Maliki from expanding his power, the Sunnis and secularists were consolidated into the Iraqiya (Iraqi National Movement), led by former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

As a result of the elections, the Iraqiya jumped into first position, with 91 seats. Meanwhile, the State of Law Coalition, led by Prime Minister Maliki, won the coalition of the splintered Shiite Islamist parties, Maliki's State of Law Coalition (which won 89 seats), and the ISCI and al-Sadr's Iraqi National Alliance (which won 70 seats) (**Table 3**). The divided ruling Shiite Islamist forces ceded their first-party position to the unified opposition.

Meanwhile, for the Kurds, a new party called the Gorran was formed mainly by PUK defectors, who criticised the system in which the two major political parties, the KDP and the PUK, monopolised all authority. The Gorran criticised the corruption of the KDP, and made a breakthrough in the second parliamentary election by winning eight seats.

However, the results were polarising, and none of the party coalitions obtained anywhere close to the majority (163 out of 325 seats). This dispersion of votes made it extremely difficult to form a cabinet after the election and resulted in a political game in which each party repeatedly reorganised its party coalition to form a majority, half-ignoring the election results. This process was conducted behind closed doors for more than eight months, based on the consensus of party leaders. Specifically, the parties that were members of the four-party coalition of the Iraqiya, the State of Law Coalition, the National Iraqi Alliance, and the Kurdistan Alliance reconfigured their coalitions beyond the confines of the party coalition at the time of the elections. For example, the second party, the State of Law Coalition, and the third party, the National Iraqi Alliance,

reunited to form the Shiite grand coalition and won the 'majority game'. With the approval of the Kurdistan Alliance, the State of Law Coalition, led by Prime Minister Maliki, formed an overwhelming majority. Thus, approximately eight months after the election, the second Maliki regime (government of national unity) was formed. However, regardless of the election results, the political game of reorganising the party coalitions to form the largest parliamentary party after the election became the norm, and voters strongly criticised this as a power game of the political elite.

Table 3 **Main Parties under the Second Maliki Regime (after the Second Parliamentary Election)**

Coalition	Main parties		Seats	Cabinet	Characters
National Alliance	State of Law Coalition	Al-Da'wa Party, al-Da'wa Party-Iraq Organisation, Turkmen Islamic Coalition	89	15	Shiite Islamist coalition, strong nationalism
	National Iraqi Alliance	ISCI, al-Sadr Tendency, Fadila Party, National Reform Trend	70	6	Shiite Islamist coalition, strong nationalism
Iraqiya (Iraqi National Movement)	INA, Iraqi National Dialogue Front, Tajdid List, Hadba List		91	12	Secular coalition of the Iyad Allawi, Salih al-Mutlaq, Tariq al-Hashimi, and Usama al-Nujayfi, in addition to other Sunni parties
Kurdistan Alliance	KDP, PUK		43	10	Kurdish nationalism, basically secular
Centre Alliance	Iraqi Accord Front, Unity Alliance of Iraq		10	2	Sunni Islamist parties' coalition
Gorran			8		Kurdish nationalists and reformists divided from the PUK

Source: Compiled by the author

(2) Further fragmentation of large party coalitions

The tendency of spreading among the Shiite party coalitions continued in the following years in criticism of the strengthening authority of Prime Minister Maliki. During the second Maliki administration, various parties boycotted parliament and attempted to submit a resolution of no confidence to limit Maliki's powers. This paralysed the political scene. To move this situation forwards, Prime Minister Maliki tried to respond by increasing his power, which intensified the political conflict. Therefore, the Shiite forces became increasingly divided during the run-up to the third parliamentary elections in 2014. However, this did not mean that the 'anti-Maliki faction' was united in their

opposition to the State of Law Coalition, which was seeking to elect Prime Minister Maliki for a third term. This was because the Shiites did not share the same interests, except for their anti-Maliki stance. As a result, the Shiite Islamist forces were sharply divided, except for the State of Law Coalition. Specifically, the Iraqi National Alliance, which was in place at the time of the second parliamentary election, further split into the ISCI-led Muwatin Alliance, al-Sadr's Ahrar (Liberation) Bloc, the Ja'fari-led National Reform Trend, and Fadila Party. As a result, in the third parliamentary election, the Maliki-led State of Law Coalition won a landslide victory, with 92 seats.

Meanwhile, the Sunni and secularist forces formed a large coalition after the bitter experience of failing to come to power in the post-election 'majority game', despite having formed a grand coalition in the last second parliamentary elections by consolidating with the Iraqiya. Specifically, they could not reach an agreement on the formation of a grand coalition. Instead, the former Prime Minister Allawi, who led the Iraqiya, formed a political coalition called the Wataniya, which absorbed the secularists and intellectuals. In addition, the Mosul-based al-Nujayfi brothers emerged from the forces that had been consolidated into the Iraqiya during the previous elections. The elder brother, Usama, was the parliament speaker under the second Maliki government, and the younger brother, Athir, was the governor of Ninawa. The al-Nujayfi brothers formed the Muttahidun, which won 23 seats in the third parliamentary election in 2014, surpassing the Wataniya. In addition, a coalition of political parties called Arabiya was formed around Salih al-Mutlaq. Accordingly, the Sunni and secularist forces that had been integrated into the Iraqiya were greatly divided by the election, and the multiparty system became advanced.

Table 4 Main Parties under the Abadi Regime (after the Third Parliamentary Election)

Coalition	Seats	Characters
State of Law Coalition	92	Coalition based on the al-Da'wa Party led by Nuri Maliki
Muwatin Alliance	29	Coalition based on the ISCI led by Ammar al-Hakim
Ahrar Bloc	28	Coalition based on the al-Sadr Tendency
National Reform Trend	6	Shiite Islamist coalition led by Ibrahim al-Ja'fari
Fadila Party	6	Party originally split from al-Sadr Tendency, previously a member of National Iraqi Alliance
Muttahidun	23	The largest Sunni coalition led by al-Nujayfi and based in Northern Iraq
Arabiya	10	Secular Sunni coalition based on Iraqi National Dialogues and led by Salih al-Mutlaq
Wataniya	21	Secular coalition led by Allawi, mainly based on parties jointed to the Iraqiya in the previous election
KDP	19	Kurdish nationalist party led by the Barzani family
PUK	19	Kurdish nationalist party led by the Talabani family
Gorran	9	Kurdish nationalists and reformists divided from the PUK

Source: Compiled by the author

The same can be said for the Kurds, who had been integrated into the Kurdistan Alliance. In the current election, the KDP and PUK independently fielded candidates, except for three provinces (Salah al-Din, Diyala, and Baghdad) in which they did not have a strong constituency. Meanwhile, the Gorran, which separated from the PUK in the second parliamentary election, fielded candidates only in three provinces of the Kurdistan Region, and maintained its strength with nine seats.

Thus, the political parties were fragmented under the second Maliki regime, which resulted in the dispersion of voters in the third parliamentary election in 2014.

3. Growing Political Distrust and Destabilisation of the Government

(1) Realignment of political parties after the rise of the Islamic State (IS)

Although the State of Law Coalition won the third parliamentary election in 2014 with 92 seats, Prime Minister Maliki was not elected for a third term due to the national security crisis regarding the fall of Mosul by the IS shortly afterwards. As a result of coordination, al-Abadi, who was also a senior member of the al-Da'wa Party, was nominated as the head of the government to form the Abadi government. The top priority was given to the campaign to clean up IS.

During the campaign to defeat IS, many Shiite militias, supported by Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps, replaced the dysfunctional regular army, and created an umbrella organisation called the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) to expand their power. The core of the PMU was the Badr Organisation, which was originally trained by Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps in the 1980s as a military faction of the ISCI. A coalition of political parties called the Fatah was formed based on the Badr Organisation led by Hadi al-Amiri. Thus, the Shiite Islamist forces were divided into five major groups: the State of Law Coalition led by former Prime Minister Maliki, Fatah led by the Badr Organisation, Hikma formed by Hakim's independence from the ISCI, Nasr formed by Prime Minister Abadi's departure from the State of Law Coalition, and Sa'irun formed by the al-Sadr in alliance with the Iraqi Communist Party. In the fourth parliamentary elections held in 2018, Sa'irun, led by al-Sadr, won 54 seats, and became the first party (**Table 5**). Fatah, led by the Badr Organisation of the PMU that expanded its influence in the campaign to clean up IS, won 47 seats and became a second party. Thus, the power structure of the Shiite Islamist forces changed drastically after IS.

The Sunnis, led by the al-Nujayfi brothers (Vice President Usama al-Nujayfi and former governor of Ninawa province Athir al-Nujayfi), formed the al-Qarar Alliance based on members of the Muttahidun. Meanwhile, the parties did not form a large coalition but limited the nomination of their candidates to provinces in which they had bases, and developed a strategy of fielding

candidates under different names. In the elections, al-Qarar failed to gain many votes, even in Ninawa Province (in which al-Qarar received the majority of votes), and only won 14 seats nationwide.

Kurdistan witnessed the development of other splits. There was widespread dissatisfaction with the authoritarian nature of the KRG government, led by Masoud Barzani's KDP, and the 'failure' of the September 2017 referendum for KRG independence. The emergence of forces opposed to the KDP-led KRG government, such as the Alliance for Democracy and Fairness (led by former Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh) and the formation of the New Generation Movement (a new party led by the youth) led to a split in the political coalition.

Table 5 Main Parties under the Abd al-Mahdi and Kazimi Regime (after the Fourth Parliamentary Election)

Coalition	Seats	Characters
Sa'irun	54	Coalition of the al-Sadr Tendency and Iraqi Communist Party
State of Law Coalition	25	Coalition based on the al-Da'wa Party led by Nuri Maliki
Fatah	47	Coalition based on the Badr Organisation, the main force of the PMU led by Hadi al-Amiri
Nasr	42	Coalition led by Haydar al-Abadi
Hikma	19	Coalition led by Ammar al-Hakim
Wataniya	21	Secular coalition led by Allawi, mainly based on parties that jointed Iraqiya in the previous election
Qarar (Muttahidun)	14	Coalition based on the Muttahidun led by al-Nujayfi
KDP	25	Kurdish nationalist party led by the Barzani family
PUK	18	Kurdish nationalist party led by the Talabani family
Gorran	5	Kurdish nationalists and reformists split from the PUK

Source: Compiled by the author

(2) Transformation of the political coalition for the fifth parliamentary election in 2021

As discussed in Chapter 1, the fifth parliamentary election in 2021 was held without waiting for the expiration of the parliamentary term, following the 2019 'October Revolution'. Here, alike in previous elections, serious political distrust prevailed in Iraq. To cope with this political distrust and the newly-introduced the Single Non-transferable Vote (SNTV) electoral system, various forces reorganised their party coalitions.

There were three major changes in the Shiites. First, al-Sadr chose to nominate new candidates in the election independently instead of with their previous Iraqi Communist Party coalition. Second, Nasr (Victory), led by former Prime Minister Haydar al-Abadi, and Hikma (Wisdom), led by Ammar al-Hakim, formed a large coalition, and nominated several candidates as the Quwa

(Alliance of National State Force). Third, while the PMU was previously united into Fatah to run for election, it decided to run as three separate parties: Fatah led by Hadi al-Amiri (the largest party); the al-Aqd (National Contract) movement led by Falih Fayyad (the official leader of the PMU); and the Huquq movement, which was formed around the Hizbullah Brigade. There are two reasons for this: the first is that the PMU aimed to grow into a larger force than ever before; the second is that it was difficult to consolidate opinions without the PMU, a loose umbrella organisation of Shiite militias that conducted the IS clean-up operation. However, the State of Law Coalition, led by former Prime Minister Maliki, participated in the election without reorganising or maintaining its power.

There was also a realignment of the larger-party coalitions among the Sunni forces. The old generation of political elites (e.g. al-Nujayfi and al-Juburi) who lost many seats in the last parliamentary elections disappeared, and a new generation of leaders emerged. A representative of this new generation is Muhammad Halbusi, who served as the governor of Anbar Province and was elected to the top position in the last election by obtaining the largest number of votes for his local party, Anbar is Our Identity. He was selected as the parliament speaker during the Abd al-Mahdi administration in which he formed a new political coalition called the Taqaddum, which has gained a great deal of support, especially from the youth. Another new force is the Azm, led by Khamis Khanjar. Both are secular party coalitions that attract young Sunni voters.

Regarding Kurdistan, in addition to the Gorran, the New Generation Movement gained strength against two major parties, the KDP and the PUK. This movement, led by the young leader Shaswar Abdulwahid, had already participated in the previous elections, as previously mentioned; however,

Table 6 **Main Parties in the Fifth Parliamentary Election**

Coalition	Seats	Characters
Al-Sadr Tendency	73	Coalition based on the al-Sadr Tendency
State of Law Coalition	33	Coalition based on the al-Da'wa Party led by Nuri Maliki
Fatah	17	Coalition based on the Badr Organisation, the main force of the PMU led by Hadi al-Amiri
Quwa (National State Force)	4	Coalition of Nasr led by Haydar al-Abadi and Hikma led by Ammar al-Hakim
Al-Aqd Movement	4	PMU-based party led by the PMU's official leader, Falih Fayyad
Huquq Movement	1	Coalition based on the Hizbullah Brigade in the PMU
Taqaddum	37	Secular Sunni coalition led by Muhammad Halbusi
Azm	14	Secular Sunni coalition led by Khamis Khanjar
KDP	31	Kurdish nationalist party led by the Barzani family
PUK (Kurdistan Coalition)	17	Kurdish nationalist party led by the Talabani family
Imtidad	9	Coalition of the October Revolution led by 'Ala al-Rikabi in Dhi Qar
Ishraka Kanun	6	Coalition of the October Revolution formed in accordance with Sistani's call to vote

Source: Compiled by the author

through its activities on TV stations that strongly criticise the KDP, it has gained broad support from young Kurds. Accordingly, it has grown far greater than the Gorran in this election.

Moreover, some of the forces that participated in the 'October Revolution' have also formed political parties and participated in the elections. Many who participated in this movement were unable to organise themselves into political parties and did not participate in the elections. However, Imtidad, led by 'Ala al-Rikabi in Dhi Qar Province, and Ishraka Kanun, organised in Najaf and Karbala, were exceptions. The former is secular, while the latter is a religious party that became a political organisation when Sistani, the supreme leader of the religious establishment, called for its participation in the elections.

Conclusion

Partly due to the introduction of proportional representation as an electoral system after the Iraq War, the importance of political parties increased, and party coalitions were repeatedly restructured before and after the elections. Major political parties have since been repeatedly split to include grand coalitions. These have been formed to gain as much power as possible in the post-war turmoil and new state-building and obtain as large a majority as possible in post-election parliaments. Meanwhile, such splits have been a result of being unable to resolve internal conflicts. However, in each case, the common denominator has been that each party has had a strong leader, and decisions have been made through bargaining among these strongly influential leaders. This has inevitably led to negotiations that have disregarded the will of the people and resulted in the spread of political distrust throughout the country.

It is worth noting that while the major party coalitions have broken away from each other, new parties (led by the younger generations of Sunni and Kurdish leaders) and other parties (from social movements that criticise the existing political elite) have been formed since the October Revolution, and are gradually mobilising voters. It will be interesting to see the roles that these new parties will play in relation to the major parties led by the existing political elite.

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Political Distrust and Changes in the Electoral System: The Fifth Iraqi Parliamentary Election in October, 2021

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Introduction

'No matter how many votes one person gets, his votes will result in only one seat. That is why I have decided not to run'. These are the words of Nuri Maliki, who served as Iraq's prime minister for two terms of about nine years, from 2006 to 2014 [*al-Maydān*, 17 September 2021]. Former Prime Minister Maliki was an overwhelmingly strong candidate in the elections, boasting the nation's largest number of individual votes three times in a row: 624,247 in the second election in 2010, 721,782 in the third election in 2014, and 102,128 in the fourth election in 2006 (all in Baghdad province). However, former Prime Minister Maliki's 'record of winning elections' came to an end in the fifth Iraqi parliamentary election held on 10 October 2021.

This is an important episode in understanding the outcome of this election, which was held under the Single Non-transferable Vote (SNTV) system as opposed to the previous open list system of proportional representation (the Saint-Legs system, which favours minorities). As discussed in detail in this paper, al-Sadr Tendency (Shiites, 73 seats), Taqaddum (Progress) Party (Sunnis, 37 seats), and KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party: Kurds, 33 seats) were able to adapt their electoral strategies to the new system and succeeded in increasing their seats, while the Fatah (Shiites, Popular Mobilisation Units led by al-Amiri, 15 seats) and Quwa (Iʾtilāf Quwā al-Dawla al-Waṭanīya, Alliance of National State Forces; Shiites, coalition of former Prime Minister Abadi's Nasr [Victory Alliance] and Hikma (Wisdom Alliance led by Hakim, 4 seats) failed in their election strategies and saw their seats decrease significantly.

This paper analyses the election results, mainly from the perspective of how they were affected by institutional changes[1].

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1. Overview of Electoral System and Issues

(1) Background of the election

Although this election was the fifth formal parliamentary election to be held after the Iraq War, it was essentially a general dissolution election held while the term of office of the members elected in the fourth parliamentary election (2018) remained. This was because the so-called 'October Revolution / Movement', which began in October 2019, led to an outburst of frustration and anger against political elites who repeatedly engaged in corruption and fraud, and the Abd al-Mahdi government resigned after less than a year to take responsibility for the outburst. After that, Prime Minister Kazimi's government was supposed to be temporary. This election originally scheduled for 6 June 2021 was postponed to October at the request of the Election Commission, as it needed more time to prepare.

Therefore, this election focused on the problems of corruption and the improvement of the quality of government services, which were highlighted by the 'October Revolution'. The election was also about responding to the widespread distrust of politics in the country.

One of the critical demands of the 'October Revolution' was the reform of the election law. To maintain and expand their vested interests, the political elite engaged in endless political struggles leading to unstable and inefficient administration, which in turn led to corruption and deterioration of administrative services. The supporters of the 'October Revolution' preferred the constituency system over proportional representation for forming a stable government in which the members could take responsibility for their own constituencies. In response to these demands, in less time than customary, a new electoral law was finalised that included a change from proportional representation to constituencies and was passed by the Parliament on 24 December 2019 [*Tasrībāt*, 24 December 2019]. The speed with which the electoral law was amended, less than a month after the resignation of the Abd al-Mahdi government and the spread of the 'October Revolution', is unprecedented in the political history of post-war Iraq and reveals that the 'October Revolution' was a severe blow to Iraqi politics. Nevertheless, although the systemic changes were agreed upon, there were protracted deliberations over where to draw the constituencies, and the electoral law, including the delineation of the constituencies, was not finalised until November 2020. It aimed to form a stable central government in which each legislator would be accountable to the residents of their district (Table 1).

Table 1 Electoral Systems in Iraq

	After	Seat	Note
First (2005)	Closed list (proportional representation)	275	230 elected, 45 compensatory seats
Second (2010)	Open list (proportional representation)	325	Election 310, 7 compensatory, 8 minority
Third (2014)	Open list (proportional representation)	328	320 elected, 8 minority, Saint-Legs
Fourth (2018)	Open list (proportional representation)	329	320 elected, 9 minority, Saint-Legs
Fifth (2021)	SNTV (constituency)	329	320 elected, 9 minority

Source: Compiled by the author based on electoral law

(2) The new election system, SNTV

Let us take a brief look at SNTV, the new system that replaced the open list system of proportional representation. Each prefecture is divided into several constituencies, and each constituency produces three to five winners. At least one woman must be elected in each constituency to ensure that the percentage of women is at least 25%, in accordance with the Constitution of Iraq. The SNTV allows voters to choose one candidate, and the winner is decided in the order of the number of votes received, resulting in significantly more dead votes compared with the proportional representation system. It is generally believed that if a candidate can be retained with an accurate understanding of his or her ability, the result will be almost the same as under the proportional representation system (d'Hondt system); however, in practice, this is extremely difficult to achieve, leading to vote-splitting due to an overabundance of candidates and surplus votes (votes that are wasted by exceeding the winning line by a large margin) because of too few candidates. The SNTV is also a system that encourages strategic voting among rational voters, who are more likely to vote for a candidate who is on the edge of the winning line rather than a serious contender because their vote will not become a wasted vote. It is also well known that SNTV is subject to the 'M+1 rule', which states that the competition is in equilibrium when there are M+1 people, one more than the number of people in each district (M) [Reed 1990].

2. Overview of Results

(1) Turnout and wasted votes

I would like to start with an overview of the results of the election held under this new system. Ninety-five percent of the election results were automatically counted by scanners installed at the ballot boxes, and the remaining 5% were hand-counted and finalised on 18 October. The last election (2018) saw a significant drop in voter turnout because of a significant widespread distrust of politics, and the same trend was observed in this election. According to **Figure 1**, which plots the trends in voter turnout, the national average is 41.05%, down slightly from 43.7% in the previous

Figure 1 Voter Turnout (%)

election. Turnout declined in the south and the capital except for the Shiite holy cities (Najaf and Karbala), while it increased in the two provinces with the largest number of Sunni voters (Salah al-Din and Anbar). The reason that the turnout did not drop in the holy cities is probably that Sistani, the highest religious authority, called for voting just before the polling day. The two Sunni provinces are both strongholds of the Sunni Taqaddum, which became the second leading party this time, and the relatively high turnout is assumed to have supported Taqaddum's breakthrough.

However, there is a trick to this voter turnout. In this election, a system of pre-registered biometric voting cards for voting was introduced. A similar system was introduced in the last election, but this time the system included biometrics, unlike just the voting cards of the previous election. The problem was that there was a big difference between the actual number of voters and the number of voters who pre-registered and received voting cards.[2] Since the voter turnout figures above are based on the number of voters who received their voting cards, they are more than 10% lower than those calculated for the total number of voters.[3] In other words, the percentage of voters who voted is less than the turnout figure, which reflected the political distrust of the people leading to abstention from voting.[4]

In addition, as a natural consequence of the change to the constituency system, there was a dramatic increase in wasted votes. To compare this with the previous election, **Figure 2** plots the number of 'wasted votes' using the total number of votes received by all candidates of the party that won seats. Except for the Kurdistan Region where the votes were relatively concentrated on the winning candidate, the number of 'wasted votes' increased dramatically, especially in the south. This means that the results were less representative and less likely to reflect the diversity of popular opinion and the structure of voter support for political parties.

Figure 2 **Wasted Vote (%)**
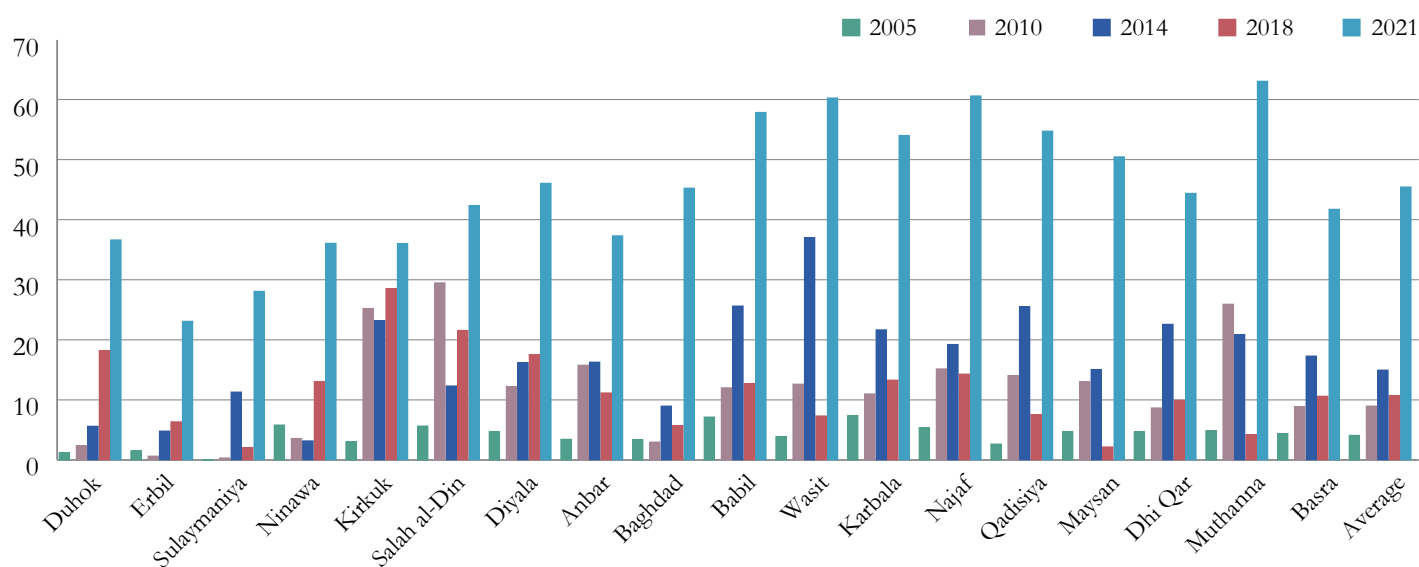
Compiled by the author based on the announcement of the Election Commission

2 In addition, there have been cases where people have been caught buying and selling voting cards [*Furāt*, 16 September 2021].

3 The number of voters announced by the Election Commission on its website was 24,907,679, the number of biometric voting cards distributed was 14,316,237, and the number of voters used by the Election Commission as the population for calculating the voting rate ranges was 22,116,368.

4 In the last election, political distrust greatly reduced the voter turnout [Yamao 2018].

(2) Overview of results

The results, which were finalised on 18 October, highlight the following features: the surge of al-Sadr Tendency and the decline of Fatah, whose parent organisation is the Popular Mobilisation Units (PMU) composed of Shiite militias who are campaigning to clean up the Islamic State (IS) with the support of Iran, the shift to two major Sunni parties and the rise of the 'October Revolution' forces. The two parties with no significant change in results were the KDP (slight increase) and the State of Law Coalition led by former Prime Minister Maliki (see **Table 2** [p.24-p.25] for details).

There were many issues such as low voter turnout and a large number of 'wasted' votes. Nevertheless, both international and local Iraqi election observers have assessed the elections as competitive and free.[5] Against this, leaders of parties that failed to gain seats (such as Fatah and Quwa) and protesters critical of the government have alleged the falsification of the election results and the intervention of foreign powers, and continue to protest for a recount by hand. In the capital and various places in the south, riotous demonstrators criticising the election results have clashed with security agencies, resulting in casualties. As a result, at the time of writing this paper (end of October 2021), the country was in the midst of a 'post-election crisis' in which it was not possible to officially confirm the election results or move on to the process of forming a new government.[6]

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5 A report by the EU election observers assessed that the elections were well organised and competitive, despite the fact that turnout was low and there were some problems with the election law, and that voters were able to vote freely. See (https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu_eom_iraq_2021_preliminary_statement_2.pdf).

6 Popular Mobilisation Units-based parties such as Fatah and Huquq Movement and their supporters continue to criticise the election results, saying that there were irregularities and foreign intervention by the UAE and others. Likewise, the 'Asa'ib Ahl al-Haqq of Truthful People's Front, one of the main forces of the PMU, criticised the falsification of the election results, saying that it was intended to destabilise Iraq by inciting conflict [*Furāt*, 3 November 2021]. More than a thousand objections to election fraud and falsification have been filed with the election authorities, but it is becoming clearer that the results were not fraudulent after the recounting of votes by hand [*Tasrībāt*, 29 October 2021].

Table 2 Results of Election

Category	Party/coalition	Duhok	Erbil	Sulaymaniya	Ninawa	Kirkuk	Salah al-Din	Diyala	Anbar	Baghdad	Babil	Wasit	Karbala	Najaf	Qadisiya	Maysan	Dhi Qar	Muthanna	Basra	Total
Kurd	KDP	8(58.4) 261897	10(49.3) 261965	2(11.5) 54891	9(17.8) 137922	2(11.4) 49631														31
	PUK (Kurdistan Coalition)	1(5.6) 25040	2(13.1) 69736	7(29.4) 140833	1(4.1) 31701	2(14.5) 63371	1(3.0) 12418	1(4.6) 21722												17
	New Generation	0(4.3) 19292	3(14.9) 79245	5(22.2) 106318		1(5.8) 25409														9
Sunni	Taqaddum (Progress)				8(15.6) 120641	1(9.7) 42284	2(13.6) 56839	4(14.6) 68661	10(44.7) 205692	11(8.2) 132314	1(2.0) 10560									37
	Azm (Determination)				1(7.6) 58792		1(16.7) 69839	4(20.1) 94625	1(16.7) 76946	7(7.2) 115936										14
Shia	al-Sadr Tendency							0(4.3) 20487		27(19.5) 316374	2(11.3) 59589	5(16.4) 56364	4(16.7) 51005	5(20.9) 63953	3(11.0) 33006	7(38.4) 105275	9(15.7) 75645	2(8.6) 17662	9(12.0) 78716	73
	State of Law Coalition							0(5.0) 23367		13(10.3) 167255	3(6.8) 35597	1(4.7) 16250	2(11.2) 34267	2(9.5) 29170	2(10.5) 31515	2(12.0) 32693	4(8.8) 42572	3(15.5) 31691	1(6.3) 41632	33
	Fatah				1(4.4) 33737	1(1.8) 7729	1(8.1) 33956	3(15.4) 72685		3(4.5) 72975	2(8.3) 43519	1(5.1) 17584	0(7.0) 21532	0(7.1) 21611	2(9.7) 29193	0(10.1) 27667	0(5.9) 28270	0(3.3) 6681	2(6.8) 45209	17
	Quwa (National State Force)							0(5.8) 27393		0(4.0) 64806	0(8.7) 45403	1(5.4) 18627	1(5.4) 16517	0(9.3) 28573	0(7.7) 23083	0(7.0) 19262	0(4.7) 22727	1(13.9) 28389	1(5.5) 36224	4
	al-Aqd (National Contract)				2(7.1) 54730	1(2.3) 10252				0(1.7) 27000									1(6.0) 39789	4
	Huquq Movement									1(2.1) 34780										1
October revolution/ movement	Imtidad (Extension)										2(7.5) 39938			1(10.0) 30493	1(5.2) 15556		5(31.8) 152761			9
	Ishraka Kanun									1(1.3) 20273	2(4.2) 22158		2(8.9) 27359		1(5.7) 17050					6

Upper row: seats gained (percentage of votes cast for all party candidates), lower row: number of votes for the entire candidates of the party

Wasted votes: The total number of votes received by the party that won the seat divided by the total number of valid votes cast (including the votes of unsuccessful candidates of the party that won the seat, but not including the votes of the independent party winners

Number of voters: Number of people who had been distributed voting cards, not exactly the total number of voters.

Voter turnout: Calculated using the number of people who had been distributed voting cards as the denominator. Therefore, the actual voter turnout based on the total number of voters is more than 10% lower.
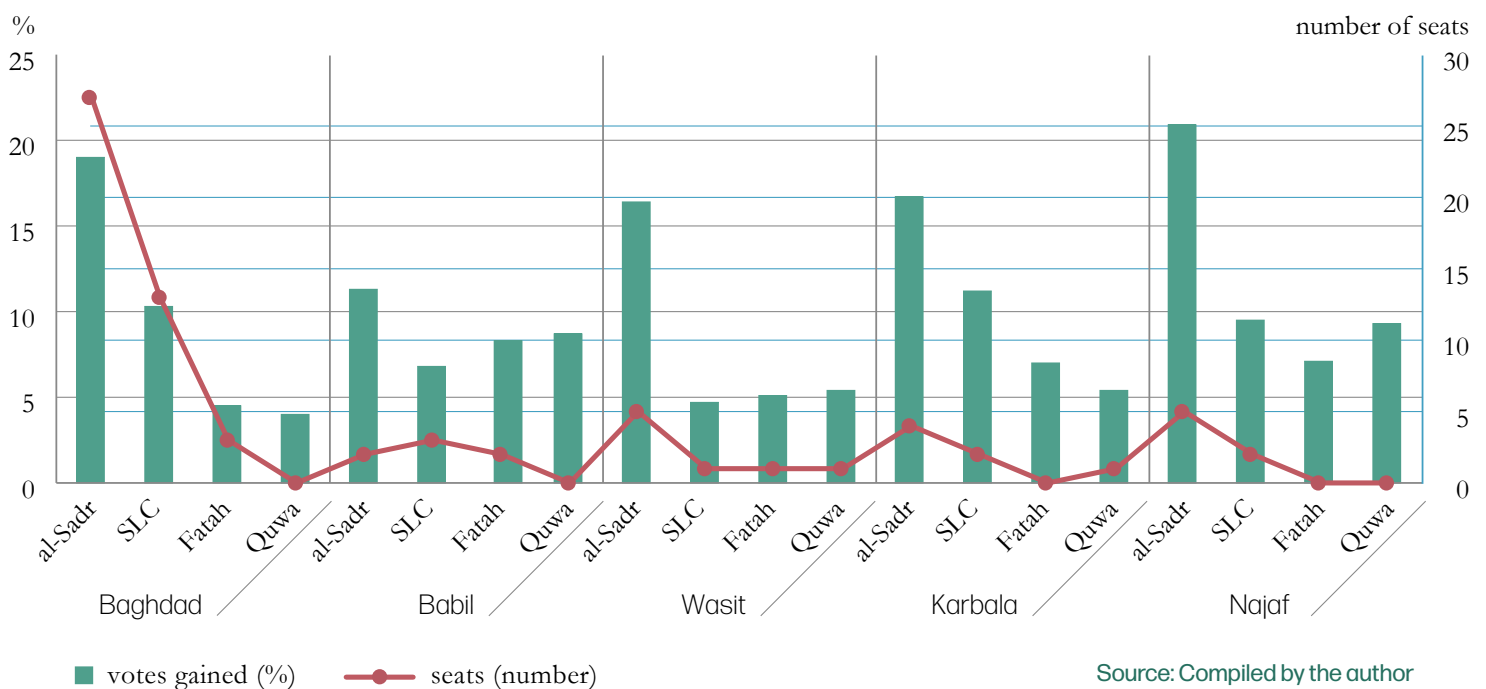
Source: Compiled by the author

Party/coalition		Duhok	Erbil	Sulaymaniya	Ninawa	Kirkuk	Salah al-Din	Diyala	Anbar	Baghdad	Babil	Wasit	Karbala	Najaf	Qadisiya	Maysan	Dhi Qar	Muthanna	Basra	Total
Other	Trukman Front					1(10.5) 45725														2
	Arab Coalition					1(6.0) 26412														1
	Hams Movement				3(3.5) 26973															3
	Mashru' Watani				1(1.4) 10546				0(1.9) 8732											1
	Jamahir Huwiyat-na						3(14.0) 58085													3
	Amal Movement												1(4.1) 12589							1
	Tasmim Coalition																		5(16.4) 108118	5
	Tajammu' al-Sind al-Watani																		1(1.0) 6515	1
	Tahaluf al-Nahj al-Watani																		1(4.3) 28697	1
	others			1(9.3) 44639	1(3.0) 23511	1(2.6) 11375	1(2.9) 12266			1(0.7) 11937	1(2.9) 15241	1(9.0) 30918	1(0.6) 1730		1(4.2) 12684				1(0.7) 4884	10
Independent		2(18.1) 81144	0	2(4.8) 22876	3(5.1) 39429	2(4.9) 21510	3(5.7) 23677	2(7.8) 36854	4(6.4) 29469	5(2.0) 31749	4(8.2) 42814	2(5.6) 19370	0	4(18.4) 56234	1(3.7) 1104	1(4.5) 12239	1(2.5) 12110	1(5.7) 11755	3(5.0) 30414	39
Wasted votes		36.0	22.7	27.6	35.5	35.4	41.7	45.3	36.7	44.5	56.9	59.3	53.2	59.6	53.9	49.7	43.7	62.0	41.1	44.7
Seat (woman)		11(3)	15(4)	18(5)	31(8)	12(3)	12(3)	14(4)	15(4)	69(17)	17(4)	11(3)	11(3)	12(3)	11(3)	10(3)	19(5)	7(2)	25(6)	320(83)
Total number of valid votes		448615	531606	478890	772688	437143	417347	471284	460351	1620067	524738	343365	306269	342986	301276	274026	481056	204808	661264	9077779
Number of voters		832224	1151420	1293707	1838460	992118	872774	1014867	1062594	4999742	1149619	775670	689323	835542	719996	641361	1137744	468488	1640519	22116368
Turnout		53.9	46.2	37.0	42.0	44.1	47.8	46.4	43.3	32.4	45.6	44.3	44.4	41.0	41.8	42.7	42.3	43.7	40.3	41.1

Upper row: seats gained (percentage of votes cast for all party candidates), lower row: number of votes for the entire candidates of the party

Wasted votes: The total number of votes received by the party that won the seat divided by the total number of valid votes cast (including the votes of unsuccessful candidates of the party that won the seat, but not including the votes of the independent party winners

Number of voters: Number of people who had been distributed voting cards, not exactly the total number of voters.

Voter turnout: Calculated using the number of people who had been distributed voting cards as the denominator. Therefore, the actual voter turnout based on the total number of voters is more than 10% lower.

3. Changes Brought by the Election System

## (1) Impact of the election system

What are the significant factors for this outcome? This paper focuses on the institutional factors, mainly whether the country was able to strategically respond to the new electoral system, and the voter preferences in the southern part of the country, excluding the Kurdistan Region.

First, as mentioned above, the change from proportional representation to SNTV led to a significant change in the strategy for fielding candidates. The success or failure of this election strategy was reflected in the results. As a typical example, let us consider the difference between the percentage of votes cast and the number of seats won by the major Shiite parties in the capital and southern prefectures, as plotted in Figure 3. It can be seen that al-Sadr Tendency, who greatly increased their number of seats in the election and became the leading party, have the highest percentage of votes in Baghdad, as well as in all provinces in the south, except for Muthanna (Imtidad, which will be discussed later, has the highest percentage of votes in Dhi Qar), and is the number one party in all provinces except for Babil and Muthanna. Conversely, the People's Mobilization Unit's Fatah, which saw a significant decline in this election, and Quwa (Alliance of National Forces,), a coalition of the Nasr and Hikma, do not have a very low percentage of votes cast in each province. Rather, in the provinces of Babil,

Figure 3 **Percentage of Votes and Number of Seats (%, number)**


votes gained (%)　　seats (number)

Source: Compiled by the author

Figure 3 **Percentage of Votes and Number of Seats (%, number)**

votes gained (%) ● seats (number)
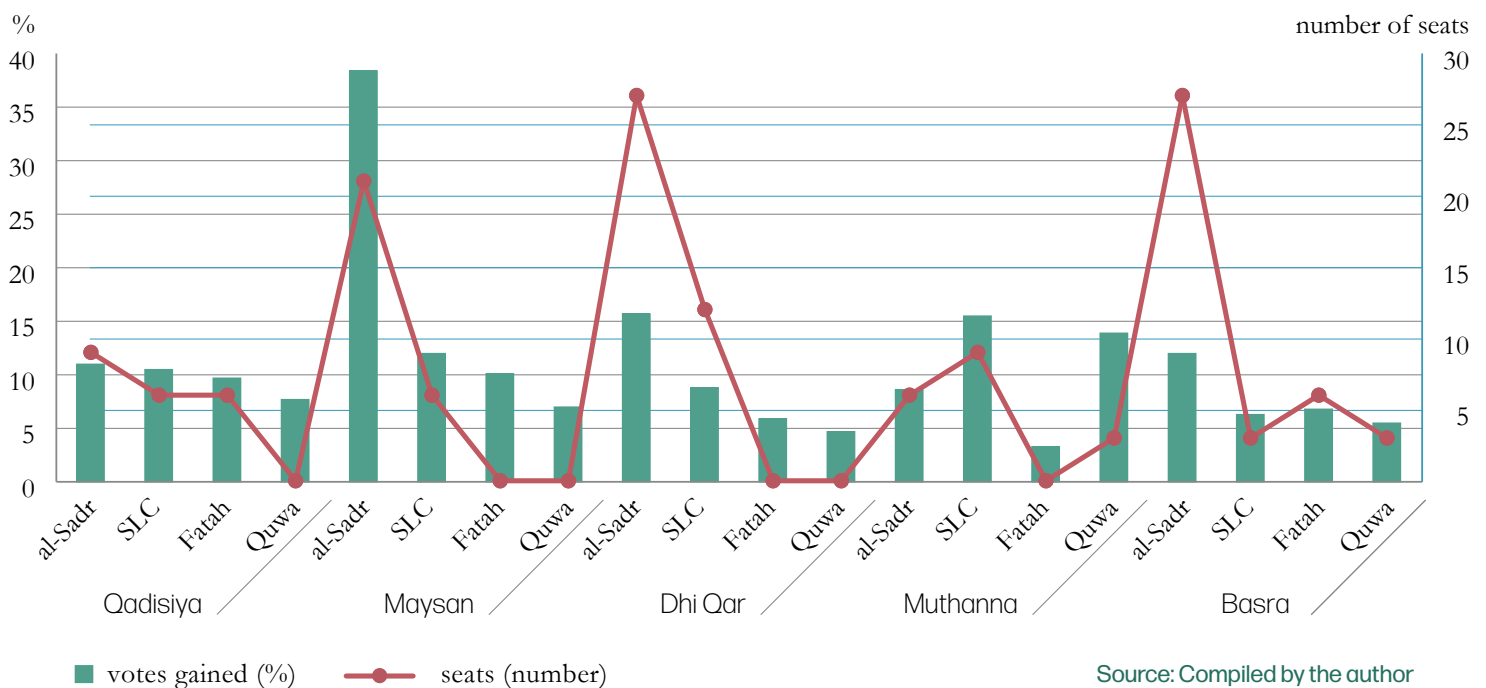
Source: Compiled by the author

Qadisiya, Musannna, and Basra, the percentage of votes won is close to that of al-Sadr Tendency. Nevertheless, as can be seen from **Figure 3**, the votes of these parties did not translate into seats. In other words, the change from the proportional representation system—where the percentage of votes cast tended to lead directly to seats won—to the SNTV system meant that the strategy of fielding candidates for each constituency had a major impact on the number of seats won. Compared with al-Sadr Tendency and the State of Law Coalition (I'tilāf Dawla al-Qānūn; SLC) led by former Prime Minister Maliki, which became the party with the third highest number of votes, Fatah and Quwa failed in their election strategy.

The same can be said for Sunni parties. The Sunni parties that made great strides in this election were Taqaddum, led by Parliament Speaker Muhammad Halbusi, and Azm, led by influential politician Khamis Khanjar, which won 37 and 13 seats, respectively, showing a significant difference. Nevertheless, as can be seen from **Figure 4**, which plots the vote share and the number of seats for these two parties for the Sunni areas and the capital, there is almost no difference in the vote share between the two parties, except in Anbar province. In Salah al-Din and Diyala provinces, Azm's vote share is higher. Despite this, Taqaddum won more seats in the former, while the number of seats in the latter is the same. This implies that Taqaddum's strategy of fielding candidates was more successful than that of Azm. It is important to note that a proportional representation system would have produced a completely different result.

Figure 4 **Percentage of Votes and Number of Seats (%, number)**   From Protest to Ballot Box

votes gained (%) — seats (number)
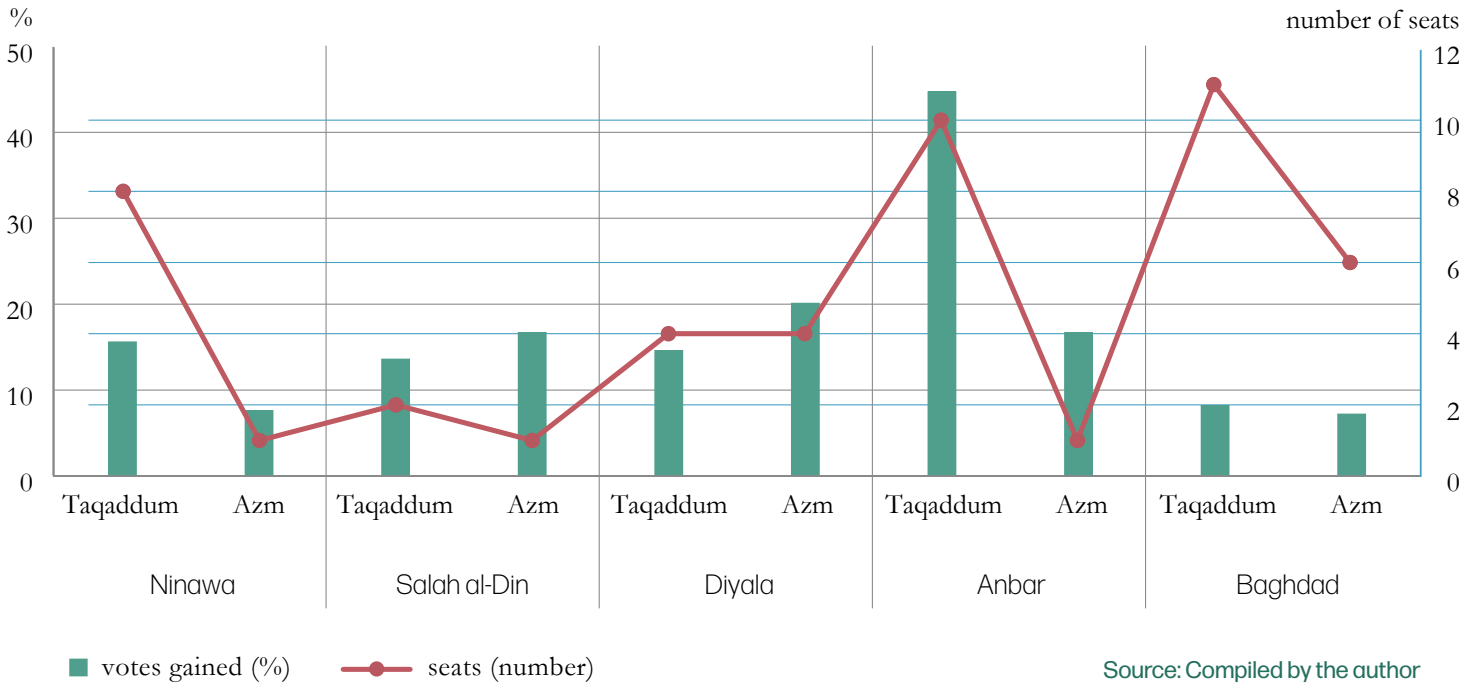
Source: Compiled by the author

(2) Winning rate

The parties that succeeded in winning a large number of seats had extremely high winning rates. Al-Sadr Tendency, which succeeded in fielding and deploying candidates in the right places, were able to secure victory for more than 80% of its candidates, as **Figure 5** shows. This was the result of their strategy of narrowing down the field of viable candidates and ensuring that they won. On the contrary, Quwa had a large number of candidates and received a certain number of votes, but the number of winners was extremely small, as seen from

Figure 5   **Winning Rate of Main Parties (%)**
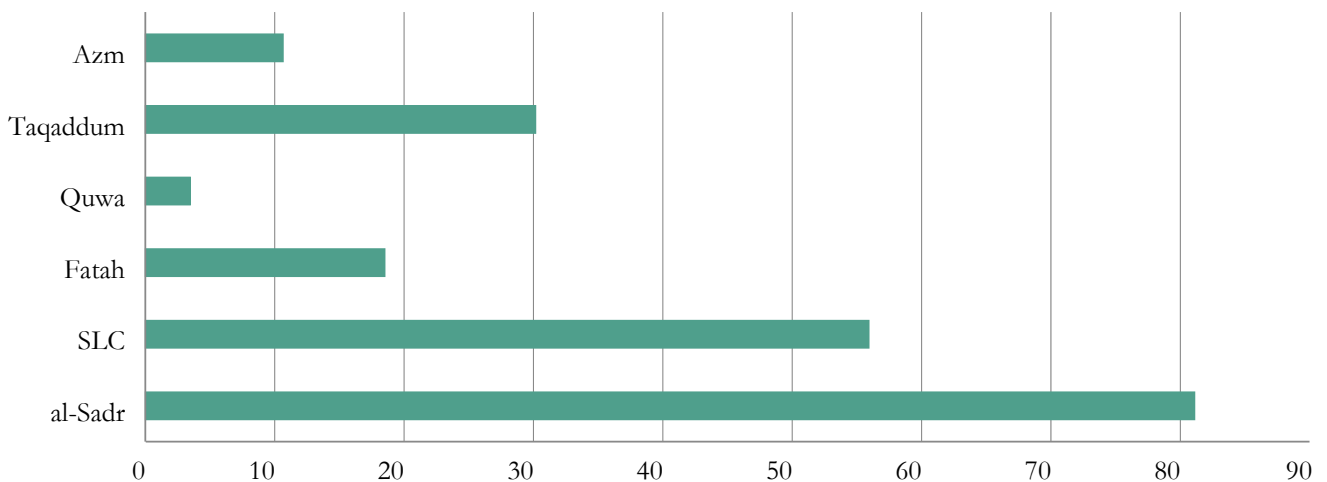
Source: Compiled by the author

the lowest winning rate shown in **Figure 5**. The same can be said for the Sunnis (with Taqaddum), which gained more seats, winning about three times as many seats as Azm. The difference in winning rates also reflects the success or failure of coordination in fielding suitable candidates. However, this is also the result of a system that makes it difficult for party support structures to be reflected in election results, and thus it is difficult to ensure a representative system.

Another factor that influenced the outcome of the election was voter preference and support for political parties. The most important factor in voter preferences is the distrust towards the existing political elite. Since the last election, widespread distrust of politics has greatly reduced the voter turnout [Yamao 2018]. The political distrust expressed in the 'October Revolution' and the antipathy towards the existing political elite and establishment were extremely strong and continued to affect the voter turnout in this election. In this context, the election of new candidates is notable. The majority of candidates fielded by al-Sadr Tendency were newcomers [Sakai 2021]. Similarly, the support from the youth might have supported the breakthrough of the Sunni Taqaddum. In addition, as will be discussed later, there was a deep-rooted opposition to Iranian intervention in Iraq, and this anti-Iranian sentiment is thought to have been behind the decline of the pro-Iranian Fatah. Thus, voter preferences, such as distrust of politics, and anti-establishment and anti-Iran sentiments, greatly influenced the outcome.

4. Party-wise Analysis of Results

(1) Progress of al-Sadr Tendency

The final section analyses the results of major political parties. This paper will not deal with the details of the allocation of electoral districts and voter mobilisation by district.

First, let us look at al-Sadr Tendency. As already pointed out, from an institutional perspective, al-Sadr Tendency was able to respond most effectively to the SNTV system. As shown in **Figure 3**, al-Sadr Tendency won a large number of seats with a relatively small percentage of the vote, and as shown in **Figure 5**, they boasted a high percentage of electoral success. The most successful provinces were Baghdad, Dhi Qar, Maysan, Qadisiya, and Basra. In Dhi Qar province, al-Sadr Tendency won nine seats with 15.7% of the vote, whereas Imtidad, the second party in this province, won only five seats with 31.8% of the vote. One of the reasons for the increase in the number of seats despite the relatively small percentage of votes cast was that female candidates were elected ahead of their male counterparts. As mentioned above, since each constituency must elect at least one woman, many constituencies are subject to carryover elections, and several al-Sadr Tendency's women candidates in Maysan and Qadisiya provinces were subject to the same. The only province where al-Sadr Tendency did not succeed strategically was Babil. In this province, the State of Law Coalition scored a notable strategic victory.

If this is the case, how did al-Sadr Tendency succeed in developing a strategy suitable for SNTV? There is no clear answer to this question at this time, but it is likely to be closely related to factors such as voter relations and voter preferences. In other words, the existence of a solid base of supporters, such as in the case of Sadr City in the capital, the existence of excellent election planners, a careful political mobilisation that is closely connected to the voters, and the strength of individual personal networks with supporters, etc. all contributed to the success of al-Sadr Tendency in understanding voter preferences, supported by their grassroots activities. It was a success. Sakai [2021] points out that al-Sadr Tendency grasped the distrust of the existing political elite and set up new candidates, who were talented and well-educated, which is also an appropriate analysis of their grassroots activities. In addition, the fact that al-Sadr Tendency declared a boycott of the election from 17 July to 27 August 2021 saying that they could not expect fair elections under the existing corrupt regime attracted a great deal of attention domestically and internationally and may have also contributed to attracting many voters' awareness of their policies.

Nevertheless, we cannot conclude that support for al-Sadr Tendency increased in this election. This is evident in the actual number of votes that al-Sadr Tendency received. **Figure 6** shows the change in the number of votes received by the three major Shiite parties in the capital. Al-Sadr Tendency, similar to the other major Shiite parties, have lost a considerable number of votes in this election. In addition, in all southern provinces except Baghdad, the number of votes gained by the major Shiite parties has declined without exception. In other words, al-Sadr Tendency – and other major Shiite parties – have not been able to increase their support among voters.

Figure 6 **Number of Votes Gained by 3 Major Shiite Parties in Baghdad**
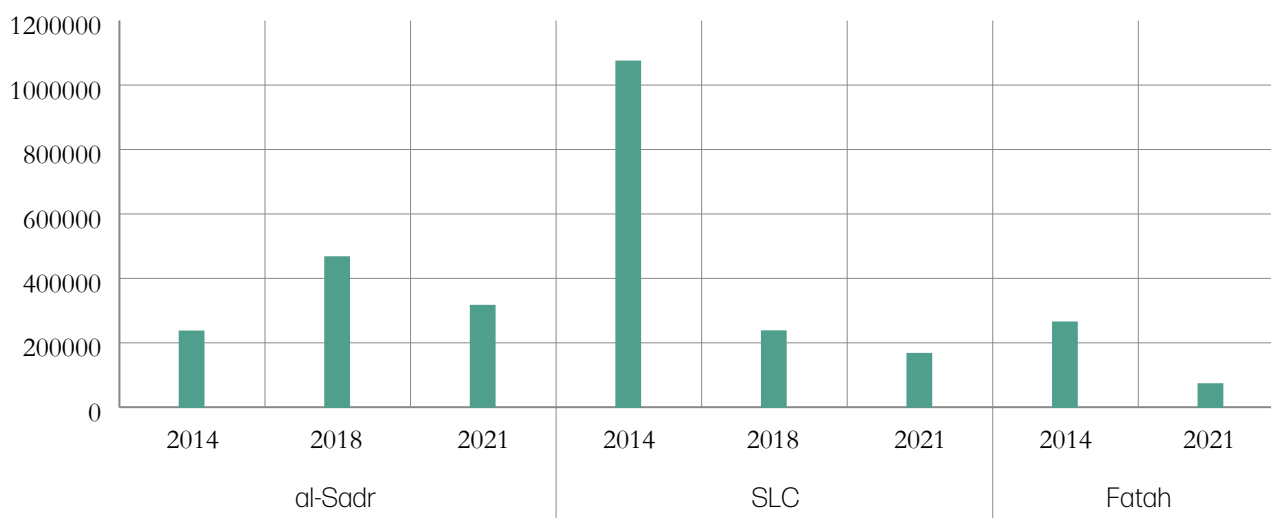
Source: Compiled by the author

(2) Decline of Fatah and Quwa (Alliance of National State Force)

Next, let us consider Fatah and Quwa, which lost the most seats in this election. Fatah, which was the second-largest party in the last election, lost a great number of seats and went from having 48 seats to 15, and Quwa, a large coalition of former Prime Minister Abadi's Nasr (Victory) Alliance (42 seats in the last election), and Hikma (the Wisdom Alliance) led by Hakim (19 seats in the last election), won only four seats. Where can we find the cause of this?

One of the most significant reasons may be the failure to adapt to the SNTV system and strategically select appropriate field candidates. In other words, the votes were split. If we look at Fatah alone, we see a large number of surplus votes, where a small number of candidates received an excessive number of votes. A typical example can be seen in Basra province. There are no candidates for Fatah in Basra's first district, which has four seats, and only one candidate in the second and sixth districts, which have four to five seats. Thus, except for Ninawa province, Fatah has made a clear strategic error.

Nevertheless, in reality, Fatah was the largest of the three mainstream parties that the Popular Mobilisation Units (PMU), under the influence of their leader Hadi al-Amiri, contested against. In other words, in addition to Fatah, a total of two parties took part in the election: the Huquq Movement, whose parent organisation is the Hizbullah Brigade, and which is considered to be the most influential of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, and al-Aqd (National Contract), led by Falih Fayyad, which is the official commander of the PMU. There was a split in the vote between the candidates of these three parties. Let us consider an example. In Basra's fifth district, Fatah's candidate received 4,982 votes, while Huquq's candidate received 4,438 votes, amounting to a total of 9,420 votes. If the candidates had been unified, they would have defeated al-Sadr Tendency candidate (5,879 votes), who won the women's advance election. Similarly, in Basra's sixth district, Fatah's candidate received 6,595 votes, while Huquq's and al-Aqd's candidates received 2,996 and 4,129 votes, respectively, and their combined total of 13,720 votes is more than the number of votes received by al-Sadr Tendency candidate who won second place in the same constituency (8,528 votes) and Tasmim's candidate who won third place (7,732 votes). There are similar cases in Baghdad's districts 2-5, 7, 11, 12, 14, and 17, Babil's district 3, Wasit's district 1, Karbala's districts 2-3, Najaf's district 3, Muthanna's districts 1-2, Dhi Qar's districts 2 and 5, and Maysan's district 3, for a total of 21 districts. Of course, this is not to say that Fatah would have gained 21 seats, because there is no guarantee that the votes would have been consolidated even if the candidates had been unified in these constituencies. Nevertheless, the possibility that many seats could have been missed due to strategic mistakes should be considered. While al-Sadr Tendency fielded candidates who were prepared for the changes to the SNTV system, Fatah went into the election with no change in strategy.

The question arises as to why such a strategic error was made? At the time of writing, it is not clear, but it has been pointed out that the PMU were proud of their role in the victory over the Islamic State, and were therefore confident in

their ability to win this election.[7] The possibility of losing seats was not taken into consideration at all, and they aimed to expand their seats further by running as a three-party. The candidates of all three parties received a good number of votes in each district, so it may not be a case of misplaced overconfidence. In addition, the PMU, which Fatah represents, does not have a consistent chain of command, as evidenced by the fact that they started out as a loose umbrella organisation of various militias of many forces, and it is highly possible that they did not have the coordination capacity to integrate candidates under Fatah. In other words, each force had its own candidates that it wanted to field individually, and it was difficult to achieve coordination among them.

Nevertheless, Fatah's decline is not surprising if we consider the voters' preferences. **Figure 7** shows the responses to the question, 'What do you think of Iran's intervention?', in a poll conducted by the author in Iraq in 2019, disaggregated by sectarian ethnicity. As shown, even the Shiites, who are religiously identical to the Iranian majority, have a very negative opinion of Iran's intervention, with about 90% of them saying that it must be stopped or stopped completely [Yamao 2020]. The PMU and Fatah are symbols of the Iranian intervention. They are the most pro-Iranian forces, backed by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, which is why many voters were critical of them.

Figure 7 **Opinion on Iranian Intervention**
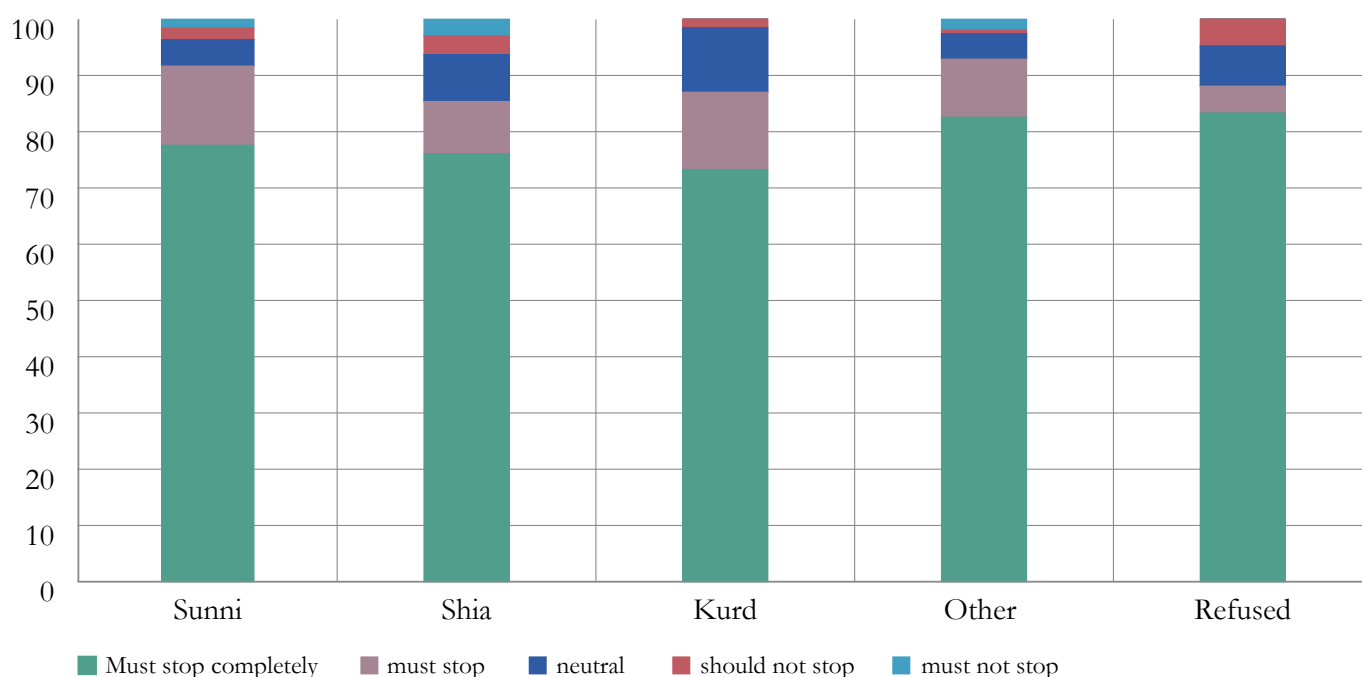
Source: Compiled by the author

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7 Interview with Ali Taher Alhammood (Bayan Center), conducted online via Zoom on 25 October 2021.

Another reason for the growing criticism of Fatah and the PMU is their active involvement in the crackdown on the demonstrators of the 'October Revolution' in 2019. For example, in January 2020, a journalist from Dijla TV, who had been covering the 'October Revolution' and was critical of the regime, was attacked and killed in Basra along with his cameraman. Two members of the Hizbullah Brigade, the mainstay of the PMU, were detained as perpetrators of this incident. As mentioned earlier, the Hizbullah Brigade participated in the main election as Huquq and was under the influence of Fatah. This suppression of the 'October Revolution' faction was a major factor in the loss of support from the masses.

As for the decline of Quwa, it can be pointed out that, like Fatah, it was unable to strategically respond to the institutional change to SNTV. As shown in **Figure 3,** the vote obtained by Quwa is not that low. Nevertheless, it did not lead to more seats than Fatah. The main reason for this could be that the number of candidates it fielded in a single constituency was larger than other parties. In other words, there was a split vote. If this election had been held under the proportional representation system, Quwa would have won a reasonable number of seats.[8]

(3) State of Law Coalition (SLC)

What about the SLC? Looking at the percentage of votes cast and the number of seats won in **Figure 3**, the SLC is between al-Sadr Tendency and Fatah, and it is safe to say that the SLC was able to efficiently win a reasonable number of seats with a relatively small number of candidates. The election of female candidates in each constituency was also well strategized and can be regarded as the result of an election strategy that understood the SNTV system. This is why the SLC was able to avoid the fall, even though it did not field many new candidates and fielded the same political elite as before. In mobilising the tribal base for the elections, the charisma of the former Prime Minister Maliki and the development and concession-spreading policies that had continued under Maliki's administration were used as the basis to bring in the tribal chiefs. Thus, the appeal of former Prime Minister Maliki, his interest in the tribal chiefs, and his ability to formulate a strategy suitable for the new electoral system might be the secrets behind the SLC's ability to maintain its number of seats.

(4) Taqaddum (Progress) and Azm (Determination)

Next, let us examine the two Sunni parties that made great strides in this election. First, the most important factor behind Taqaddum's success was the political power and charisma of its parliament Speaker Halbusi. Speaker Halbusi, whose main constituency is the area around Falluja in the western part

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8 As for the large number of candidates, some analysts say that the candidates were not well coordinated between former Prime Minister Abadi of Nasr and Hakim of Hikma [*NAS*, 24 October 2021].

of Anbar Province, has been praised for his ability to hand out benefits and interests from the capital to his local constituency and for his ability to appeal to the youth, which he developed during his governorship of the Anbar Province. Taking advantage of his youthfulness (he was born in 1981 and was 40 years old at the time of this election), he mobilised the youth by visiting sports clubs and cafes, and gradually changed the political landscape of Anbar Province, which is strongly dominated by conservative tribes. In addition, in the Sunni areas after the war, where religious parties such as the Muslim Brotherhood-based Iraqi Islamic Party and extremist groups such as al-Qaeda and Islamic State were dominant, many youths were critical of the growth of religious forces.[9]

The election strategy based on the charisma and mobilising power of Speaker Halbusi was successful to some extent. The number of candidates was large, and therefore the election rate was not very high (**Figure 5**). In some cases, candidates were not selected after careful consideration of the number of constituencies. Nevertheless, compared with Azm, which will be discussed later, the fact that the candidates were selected from the right places for the right positions probably resulted in winning a higher number of seats as compared with the percentage of votes cast.

As for Azm, led by Khamis Khanjar, it may be a mishmash of influential Sunni figures with an anti-Halbusi stance. Their target age group for mobilisation is higher, which is in sharp contrast to Taqaddum, which conducted a systematic mobilisation targeting the youth. Nevertheless, it is not necessarily true that Azm had an inferior strategy than Taqaddum, except for Anbar province. As seen in **Figure 4**, except for Anbar province, the two parties' share of votes was close, with Azm winning more votes in Salah al-Din and Diyala provinces. Nevertheless, the large difference in seats was because Azm's election strategy was not suitable for SNTV.

(5) Factions of the 'October Revolution'

Finally, I would like to consider the rise of the forces of the 'October Revolution', which probably attracted the most attention in this election. As I pointed out at the beginning of this article, it was the 'October Revolution' that triggered the general election. However, many of the forces of the 'October Revolution' did not participate in the election. This is because the revolution itself did not have a clear leader, organisation, or political programme. Without a leader, party organisation, or political programme, one cannot participate in elections. Hence, many of them declared a boycott.

Nevertheless, among them, the Imtidad movement in Dhi Qar province made progress in organising political party. Led by 'Ala al-Rikabi, Imtidad mobilised the youth and liberal intellectuals of the South with a secular political programme calling for reform. Imtidad won a certain number of votes in the southern

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9 Interview with Ali Taher Alhammood (Bayan Center), conducted online via Zoom on 25 October 2021.

provinces of Iraq, most notably in the province of Babil, where it won two seats with 7.5% of the total vote, and in its home province of Dhi Qar, where it won five seats with 31.8% of the total vote. Al-Sadr Tendency, who could properly deploy their candidates, won nine seats in Dhi Qar with only 15.7% of the vote, a feat that Imtidad could not have achieved strategically. Nevertheless, Imtidad was far ahead of al-Sadr Tendency in terms of vote share. Even in the top ten national candidates with highest votes shown in **Table 3**, Imtidad's candidate from Dhi Qar's district 2 was in third place overall, and Imtidad's leader from the same province, Dhi Qar's district 1, was in seventh place overall. This indicates that the voters' expectations of Imtidad were very high. In this sense, the 'October Revolution' faction, represented by Imtidad, made a breakthrough. Seven of the top ten candidates with highest votes in the country were candidates for the KDP, which shows how strong the KDP's constitutions are. Chairman Halbusi, in sixth place, is the leader of Taqaddum.

The other 'October Revolution' faction, which succeeded in gaining a significant number of votes and seats, is Ishraka Kanun. Unlike Imtidad, the party's reformist political programme has a strong religious inclination. It was against this background that the party received a large number of votes in the holy city of Karbala.

As represented by the rise of the 'October Revolution' faction and the surge of al-Sadr Tendency, many new candidates were elected in this election. This was also a sign of distrust towards existing political elite, who had been so focused on their own interests and corruption that they ignored the interests of the people. This trend was evident in the last election as well: the percentage of first-time winners in the fourth parliamentary election in 2018 was a whopping 65.35%, exposing the high expectations voters had for the newcomers. A similar trend might likely be observed in this election, since many leading politicians were not elected in the main election. For example, among the Shiites, former al-Sadr Tendency politician Baha' A'raji, who served as deputy prime minister,

Table 3 **Top Ten Candidates**

	After	Seat	Note	district
1	Jamal Ahmad Muhammad Saydu	56,702	Independent (KIP)	Duhok, 1
2	Nahru Mahmud Qadir Sa'id	44,928	KDP	Erbil, 1
3	Dawud Aydan al-Ta'i	41,399	Imtidad	Dhi Qar, 2
4	Shaykh Wan Talabani	37,744	KDP	Kirkuk, 1
5	Siban 'Aziz Khadar	37,099	KDP	Erbil, 1
6	Muhammad al-Halbusi	36,793	Taqaddum	Anbar, 1
7	'Ala al-Rikabi	34,870	Imtidad	Dhi Qar,1
8	Muhammad Sadiq Yasin	33,656	KDP	Erbil, 1
9	Muwaffaq Shihab	29,990	KDP	Duhok, 3
10	Khalid al-Rikabi	29,083	KDP	Duhok, 1

Source: Compiled by the author based on electoral law

former youth and sports minister Abd al-Husayn Ubutan, and former Najaf governor Adnan Zulfi, who was a candidate for prime minister in 2020, were among the prominent figures who were not elected. The same is true for the Sunnis, including former Defence Minister Khalid Ubaidi, who ran in Ninawa province for the Victory Alliance in the last election and won the second-highest number of votes nationwide after former Prime Minister Maliki, the former parliamentary speaker Salim Juburi, Haytham Juburi, Muhammad Karbuli (leader of the Reform and Development Party), and Accord Front's significant figure Zafir Ani, former chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Salman Jumayli, former Minister of Planning, Muzahim Tamim of the Bani Tamim Tribal Council, and Salaf Juburi, former Minister of State, who is an important politician in the Reconciliation and Justice Commission, were not elected. In the Kurdistan region, we can see the unsuccessful election of Ala Talabani (PUK), a relative of former President Jalal Talabani. Thus, reflecting distrust in politics, the results depicted the failure of leading politicians and the election of new candidates. Hence, this distrust of the existing elite was behind the rise of new forces such as the Imtidad.

Conclusion

To understand this election, it is important to focus on the effects brought about by institutional changes and voter preferences. Under the SNTV system, in which the strategy for fielding candidates was more difficult than in the proportional representation system, it was clear that the success or failure of the election strategy was largely reflected in the number of seats secured. Al-Sadr Tendency, who placed the appropriate candidates in the right places, succeeded in winning the largest number of seats with a relatively small number of votes, while Fatah and Quwa failed to increase their seats in proportion to the number of votes they received because of poor election strategies. In contrast, Fatah and Quwa failed to gain seats despite the number of votes they received. If we look at voter preferences, we can see that widespread distrust of politics led to a decline in voter turnout, while antipathy towards the political elite and the establishment encouraged the election of new candidates and the rise of the 'October Revolutionaries'.

Thus, changes in the electoral system and voter preferences seem to have affected election outcomes. However, when we look at the trends that led to the 'post-election crisis' and the formation of the new government, it becomes clear that it is not appropriate to emphasise these changes too much. Al-Sadr Tendency increased their seats significantly but fell far short of a single majority. Therefore, it is essential to negotiate the formation of coalition governments. As a result, the process of forming a new government is likely to be similar to that of the past.

This means that al-Sadr Tendency, who have set the formation of a national majority government (Ḥukūma Aghlabīya Waṭanīya) as their goal [*NAS*, 31 October 2021], will also have to seek cooperation from other parties in the cabinet negotiations. In short, to gain the support of many parties, resolve the 'post-election crisis', and break the cycle of violence that has led to the formation of a new government, al-Sadr Tendency, for better or worse, will have to form a

government of national unity similar to the previous ones.[10] Otherwise, Fatah and others will continue to accuse the government of electoral fraud, and the 'post-election crisis' will never be resolved.

If this is the case, the new government that will be formed after the negotiations is likely to be similar to the existing government of national unity, regardless of which party will be the main force in government. This outcome was not envisioned when changing the electoral system to SNTV. As we have already pointed out, the change to the SNTV system was intended to enable the election of legislators who are responsible for their local constituencies and the formation of a stable government. As far as the 'post-election crisis' is concerned, it has not resulted in the 'formation of a stable government'. Rather, as I have repeatedly highlighted in this paper, the change to SNTV has highlighted the negative aspects of the loss of a representative system that reflected the party support structure and the diverse preferences of voters.

In addition, it is clear from the Japanese case that the emphasis on 'responsibility for local constituencies' can easily result in the promotion of profit-driven party politics. There are other concerns. Under the system of electoral districts, splitting up existing political parties is disadvantageous; the disadvantages of splitting up the same forces to field candidates should have been keenly felt by Fatah, Huquq, and al-Aqd in this election. In contrast, if it is difficult to coordinate a unified candidate, as in the case of Fatah, or if there is an insurmountable conflict of views within the party, the result is the formation of multiple factions within the party. There is no shortage of such examples in post-war Japan where factional politics has tended to become a significant reason for money politics. There is a possibility that such profit-driven factional politics will be seen in Iraq in the future.

Another concern is that the redrawing of electoral districts will evolve into gerrymandering. This could result in sensitive political battles, and re-districting could play a role in creating sectarian and ethnic constituencies and fixing sectarian and ethnic differences. There is a danger that these will ultimately accelerate sectarian conflict. Hence, it is necessary to keep a close eye on how changes in the electoral system will change the future of party politics and elections, and ultimately the future of Iraqi politics.

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10 Nevertheless, the 'October Revolution' faction, led by Imtidad, has emphasised that it will form an 'Independent Bloc' (Kutla al-Mustaqillīn) and become the first 'opposition' force in post-war Iraq [*Skynews*, 17 Oct 2011]. Even if this is the case, it remains to be seen to what extent it will be able to play a role as an opposition party, since the total number of seats of the parties that have been confirmed to participate in the bloc is only about 15, at present.

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Power Struggle in Kurdistan and Political Mobilization in Disputed Territories: from Analyses of 2021 Iraqi Election

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Introduction

Iraq held parliamentary elections across the country on October 10, 2021. These were held without waiting for the expiration of the four-year parliamentary term in order to renew the political process in the wake of the growing anti-government protests by young people that broke out in Baghdad and the south two years ago. In the autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan, the political situation is different from the rest of Iraq as the KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government) oversees administration there rather than the Iraqi government. However, the situation in the Kurdistan Region has similarities with that in southern Iraq since the existing political parties in power have remained largely unchanged for a long time, and a growing number of citizens, especially young people, are becoming increasingly frustrated with the difficult economic situation and corruption among political party officials. In fact, anti-government protests against the KRG have occurred many times in the past although they were not as large as the 2019 "October Revolution" in southern Iraq. With this background in mind, this paper will evaluate the changing political trends in the Kurdistan Region as reflected in the recent Iraqi national elections in the first part.

Looking at the results of the Kurdish parties' seats in this election, the KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) share increased by six seats. PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan), another ruling party that runs the KRG together with KDP, retained 18 seats, the same as before the elections. This has brought the total number of seats for the two parties to 49, the largest number since 2010, when the parliament became its current size. This increase in the number of seats was not materialized by the Kurdistan Region itself but rather by the good performance of the ruling Kurdish forces in the disputed territories whose territorial ownership is still legally undecided between the Iraqi government and the KRG. The situation in the disputed territories has been through significant turmoil, such as the rise of the IS (Islamic State) in 2014 and the withdrawal of Peshmerga following the independence referendum in 2017.

How have those events affected the mobilization of political parties in elections? Since the changes in the electoral system have made it possible to examine each electoral district in the governorates for the first time, I will take up and analyze several electoral districts in Kirkuk and Ninawa Governorates in the second part as these are where the influence of Kurdish parties is particularly strong.

1. Election Results in the Kurdistan Region

(1) Results overview of Kurdish parties

First, I will review the results of the Kurdish parties in this election, focusing on the Kurdistan Region. As in the past, the five Kurdish parties[1] dominated all the seats in the three governorates of Kurdistan[2], which were divided into 12 electoral districts following the shift from the proportional representation to the SNTV system. The total number of seats won by the five Kurdish parties is 63, which is the largest in the past 10 years. However, the number of seats held by the Kurdish parties as a whole in the Iraqi parliament has lost its significance in recent years. The intensification of factional conflicts in the Kurdistan Region has led to each party competing against each other even in Baghdad. In the current political map of the Kurdistan Region, KDP and PUK are the ruling forces, Gorran and the Islamic parties are the opposition within the regime, and New Generation is the radical opposition party which strongly denounces the power monopoly and corruption especially of the two major parties. Therefore, it is likely that KDP and PUK will align themselves with each other to some extent in the Iraqi government formation process or in the Iraqi parliament, while New Generation will take completely different positions.

It should be noted that for Kurdish parties, the Kurdistan parliamentary elections are considered more important than the Iraqi parliamentary ones as the former directly affect the KRG's cabinet formation and the decision making in Kurdistan. The last Kurdistan parliamentary elections were held in September 2018, and the term of office will expire by the fall of 2022. The Iraqi parliamentary elections held in 2021 are positioned as a prelude to the expected Kurdistan parliamentary elections in 2022.

KDP, the largest ruling party in the Kurdistan Region, won 31 seats, while its junior partner, PUK, which used to have equivalent power with KDP, has fallen to

Table 1 **Kurdish Parties' Seats in the Iraqi Parliament**

	2010	2014	2018	2021
KDP	43	25	25	31
PUK		21	18	18
Gorran	8	9	5	0
New Generation	-	-	4	9
Others	6	7	6	5
Total	57	62	58	63

Source: Created by the author based on IHEC data

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1 KIU (Kurdistan Islam Union) did not run in the election as a party, and the candidates were formally registered as individuals. However, since the four candidates who were elected were fully supported by KIU, their seats are treated as those of KIU in this paper.

2 Precisely, the number of governorates in the Kurdistan Region is four, including Halabja, but since the IHEC (Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission) has set Halabja as part of Sulaymaniya Governorate, this paper refers to the Kurdistan Region as three governorates.

almost two-thirds of KDP seats. (Table 1). Given the fact that PUK is in the midst of an internal conflict among its leadership, as explained later, it can be said that retaining the 18 seats was more of a success than a failure. The Gorran formed an electoral coalition with PUK in this election for the first time, but failed to win a single seat in the Iraqi parliament despite fielding seven candidates. Gorran emerged in the late 2000s as an opposition party in the Kurdistan Region, splitting off from PUK, and later joined the KRG in 2014 to promote reforms within the regime. However, it failed to achieve results and disappointed its supporters who had expected Gorran to remain outside the regime as a staunch opposition party. New Generation, which won four seats in the 2018 elections, more than doubled its seats to nine this time.

Comparing the election scene in the Kurdistan Region with that of Iraq as a whole, the common feature that can be pointed out is that the long-established parties are still dominant, while an emerging force under the banner of reform is expanding. Another similarity is the decline in voter turnout; in 2014, the three northern governorates had an extremely high voter turnout of 74-76%, but in 2018, this slumped to 45-49%[3]. This time, Duhok and Erbil showed a slight rebound to 59% and 51% respectively, while Sulaymaniya had only 41%. The relatively low voter turnout, especially in Sulaymaniya, reflects voters' distrust in politics, not in the Iraqi government, but in the KRG. The political and economic situation in the Kurdistan Region since the mid-2010s faces multiple difficulties, such as the war against IS, major influxes of internal refugees, fierce political confrontation between KDP and Gorran, the ill-fated independence referendum, the fall in oil prices and the suspension of budget transfer from the Iraqi government, and the repeated delay in the civil servants' salary payments. This situation left voters with a feeling of stagnation and without hope in the current political process, and this has been reflected in the low voter turnout since 2018[4].

(2) KDP

Looking at the results of the elections for each party, the strength of KDP stands out. KDP fielded 11 candidates and won eight seats in Dohuk, and in Erbil, 10 seats by fielding 12 candidates. When the ninth KRG term was inaugurated in 2019, longtime KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani became KRG president and was replaced by his cousin, Masrour Barzani. This was the first election under this Nechirvan-Masrour regime. KDP, the largest ruling party in Kurdistan, was in a position to take responsibility for the difficult economic environment in the region in the past years and it has also often been criticized for its suppression of free speech with journalists and activists being arrested [Human Rights Watch 2021]. However, this seems not to have affected the election results. KDP has a strong patron-client network that can distribute

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3 In the Kurdistan parliamentary elections held in September 2018, the percentage picked up slightly, but was still around 55-62%.

4 This feeling of stagnation has also been a factor in the recent surge in migration from the Kurdistan Region to Europe [Gerdžiūnas 2022].

Figure 1 Number of Votes Cast for Kurdish Parties in Iraqi Parliamentary Elections
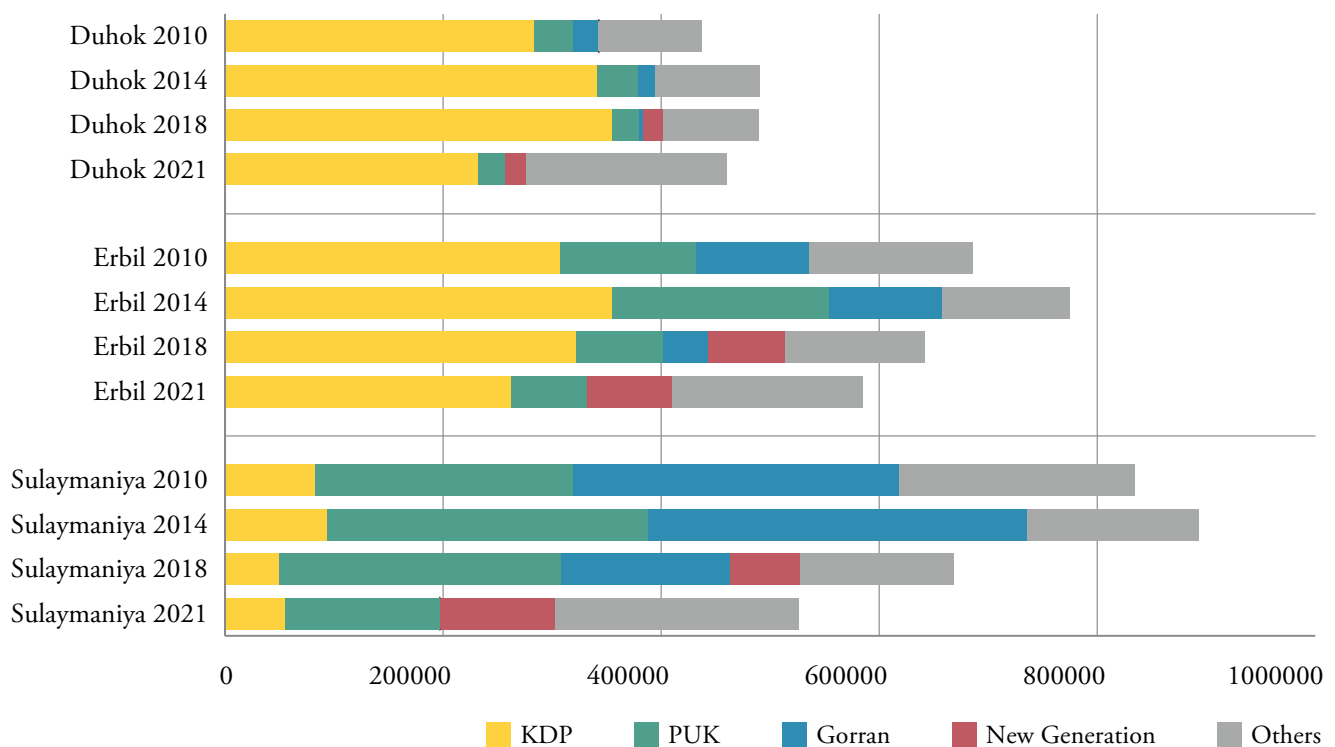
Source: Created by the author based on IHEC data
Note: The votes cast for PUK-Gorran coalition in 2021 were shown as PUK votes.

jobs and economic interests to its supporters, and many citizens are embedded in this network. As such, KDP's support base has not wavered. It should be noted, however, that KDP has not succeeded in increasing the number of votes it has received; compared to the 2018 elections, votes received have decreased from 353,102 to 261,543 in Dohuk and from 321,920 to 261,518 in Erbil (**Figure 1**). In fact, the support for KDP among all voters in Dohuk and Erbil has rather shrunk, relying more on organized bloc votes.

(3) PUK

PUK is now suffering an internal party dispute. Jalal Talabani, the party's founder and longtime leader suffered a stroke in 2012 and effectively retired from politics. From that time, PUK was virtually without clear leadership until February 2020 when Bafel Talabani and Lahur Sheikh Jangi finally took over as co-leaders of PUK. However, a year and a half later, a conflict between the two erupted when Bafel ordered the replacement of top members of the party's security apparatus close to Lahur. A warrant was issued for Lahur and his close associates, and he was effectively ousted from his position as head of the party. In November it was reported that he had been expelled from the party.

The parliamentary elections were held in the midst of this turmoil. Since Lahur was the architect of the PUK-Gorran alliance, there were concerns that this

would possibly affect the outcome of the elections. It turned out that PUK maintained the eight seats in Sulaymaniya Governorate. Nevertheless, the number of votes cast for PUK almost halved from 259,378 in 2018 to 141,660. PUK received only this number of votes despite allying with Gorran, its biggest rival in the governorate, which had garnered 154,947 votes in 2018. This reflects the party's difficult position. The turnout in the governorate was low at 41% as mentioned earlier and this is also a sign of distrust in politics among citizens.

Even though PUK retained the same number of seats in the Iraqi parliament, the gap between KDP and PUK has widened. PUK has thus far maintained the Iraqi presidential post, which is a de-facto quota of the Kurdish parties, but already in 2018, KDP was open about its ambitions for the post. The PUK will find itself in an increasingly difficult position.

(4) New Generation

New Generation, a new political party formed in 2018, succeeded in gaining more votes and seats in this election. The leader, Shaswar Abdulwahid, is a young businessman who owns media and real estate companies and has strongly criticized the corruption in the two major political parties. New Generation gained attention for its "No for Now" campaign in the 2017 referendum opposing independence, saying that people had been fooled by Barzani and independence would never be announced [Park et al. 2017]. In the first Iraqi parliamentary elections for New Generation in 2018, it gained 152,645 votes in the three northern governorates and increased them to 204,375 in 2021. It also doubled its seats from four to nine.

Shaswar Abdulwahid is a charismatic and popular leader as he alone earned more than 100,000 votes of the 127,115 cast for New Generation in the September 2018 Kurdistan parliamentary elections. On the other hand, his personality and behavior have caused various conflicts; Between 2019 and 2020, scandals broke out in the party, and some members of both the Iraqi and the Kurdistan parliaments left in protest against Shaswar's party governance. Shaswar also caused controversy in February 2019 when he compared KDP and PUK leaders to those of the Ba'ath Party and said they would one day be hanged [Utica Risk Services 2019]. In addition, he has been critical of the whole establishment and has been dismissive of cooperation among opposition parties such as Gorran and the Islamist parties. There is no doubt that New Generation has gained support from mainly the young population wishing for radical reforms and tangible changes. However, it is still quite unclear whether New Generation will be able to play a constructive role in the Iraqi parliament and in the Kurdistan Region.

2. Kirkuk Elections

(1) Electoral districts and election results

In the second and third chapters, I will address the elections in the disputed territories. In Kirkuk, a multi-ethnic area, high political tensions have required

Figure 2 **Electoral Districts in Kirkuk and Ninawa**
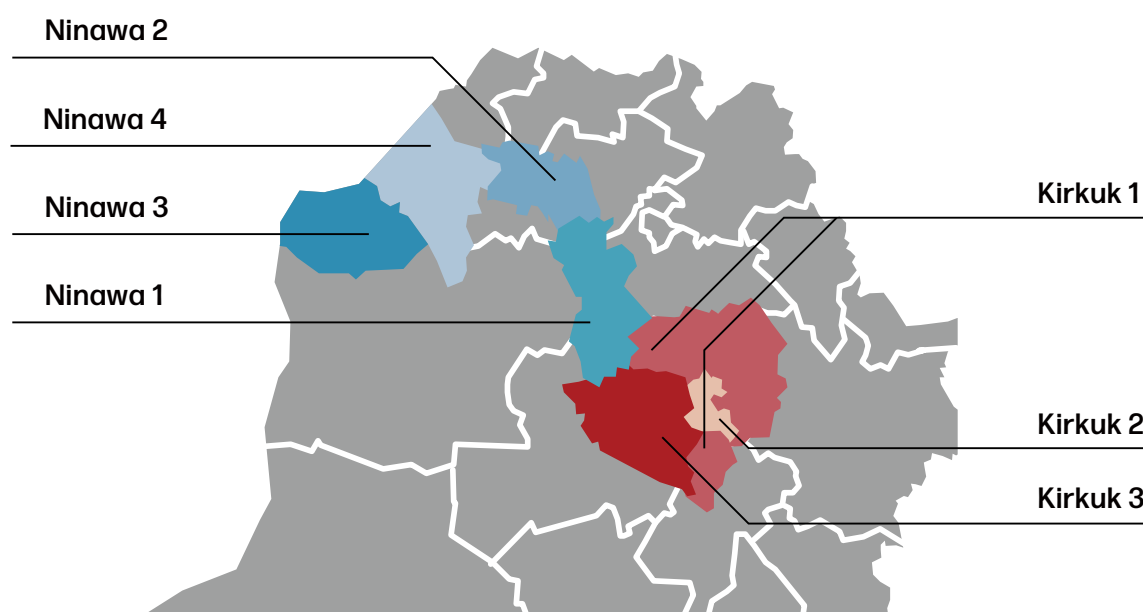
a delicate balancing due to the complex background, such as the influence of an Arabization policy by the former regime and the political maneuvering by the KRG to annex it to the Kurdistan Region[5]. The boundaries of electoral districts there were inevitably determined along ethnic lines, and Kirkuk was divided into three electoral districts; the mainly Kurdish-populated areas in the north and southwest as the first district, the Turkoman-populated central area as the second district, and the Arab-predominant southeast area as the third district[6] (**Figure 2**). However, it is not possible to draw simple lines for an ethnically mixed area. Therefore in the case of Daquq, located in the second district, the votes from the polling stations in the Kurdish and Arab residential areas were assigned to the first and third districts respectively. This effectively means that in Daquq, only the Turkoman votes are left for the second district. The same system applies to Altun Kupri where most residents are Turkoman and Kurdish, but the town itself is in the first electoral district. Here, the votes from the polling stations in the Turkoman area are added to the second electoral district [Bakr 2021].

The May 2018 elections were boycotted by KDP, claiming that Kirkuk was "under occupation" by federal forces after the Peshmerga withdrawal the year before. Since it is difficult for a smaller party to win seats outside the Kurdistan Region, PUK was the only Kurdish party to win six seats in Kirkuk Governorate in the previous election (**Table 2**). This time, KDP

Table 2

Seats Won by Kurdish Parties in Kirkuk Governorate (12 seats)

	2010	2014	2018	2021
KDP			-	2
	6	6		
PUK			6	3
Gorran	0	0	0	0
New Generation	-	-	0	1
Total	6	6	6	6

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5 Hence, the Kirkuk governorate election was held only once in 2005 and has not been held since.

6 For a list of electoral districts, see: https://electionsiq.org/constituencies

decided to participate in the election in Kirkuk again, and thus KDP and PUK became the main players in the first and second electoral districts, their main battlegrounds in Kirkuk. Kirkuk has originally been a PUK stronghold and it was only a month before the election that KDP reopened its office there, which had been closed since 2017. Nevertheless, KDP succeeded in securing one seat in each of the two districts by fielding a high-profile former MP in the first district and a female Kakai candidate in the second district to attract minority Kakai votes.

PUK, which had six seats before the election, officially fielded four candidates in the first district, but due to internal party conflicts, the party withdrew its endorsement of Ala Talabani who was close to Lahur Sheikh Jangi, and instead supported Dilan Ghafur, an incumbent who was running as an individual candidate. As a result, Dilan and another candidate won the seats, defeating Ala. PUK was also able to win one seat in the second electoral district. However, the number of seats in Kirkuk was halved to three. The number of votes was similarly halved, from 177,920 for PUK and 14,914 for Gorran in 2018 to a combined total of only 84,881 this time around.

On the other hand, for the first time, a Kurdish party other than KDP and PUK succeeded in winning a seat in Kirkuk. A New Generation candidate, Omed Muhammad, a Baghdad correspondent of NRT TV gained a seat in the first district. New Generation's votes also steadily increased from 13,665 in 2018 to 25,409, although it is still limited.

As for the Arab parties, in the third district, Taqaddum's Muhammad Tamim, the former education minister; Rakan Juburi, the Kirkuk governor who ran from the Kirkuk Arab Coalition and Aqd's female candidate, each won a seat. In the Kurdish-majority first electoral district, an individual candidate familiar with Azm, led by Khamis Khanjar, was also elected. In the second electoral district, Ghareeb Askar, a Shiite Turkoman candidate fielded by Fatah, beat a female candidate of the Turkoman Front to win the seat after a close race.

For the Turkoman party, which depends on Sunni Turkoman votes in the second district, gained only one seat, although the Turkoman Front leader and incumbent Arshad Salihi was the top winner. The new delimitation of electoral districts turned out to be a tough challenge for the Turkoman Front.

(2) Frozen ethnic mosaic

Thus, the Kurdish parties have won six seats in the Kirkuk Governorate (12 seats). This is the same number of seats as in the 2010 parliamentary elections. Then, in 2014, they had won eight seats, with PUK getting six and KDP two. In 2018, KDP boycotted the elections, but PUK retained six seats, even though the KRG lost effective control in Kirkuk politics due to Peshmerga's withdrawal. The election results led to many objections from Arab and Turkoman parties. In addition, since the electronic counting system was introduced for the first time in 2018, it has been pointed out that the election results might have been pre-programmed [Kurdish Institute for Election 2018; Toorn 2018]. The issue of election fraud grew into a major scandal involving the whole of Iraq and in the
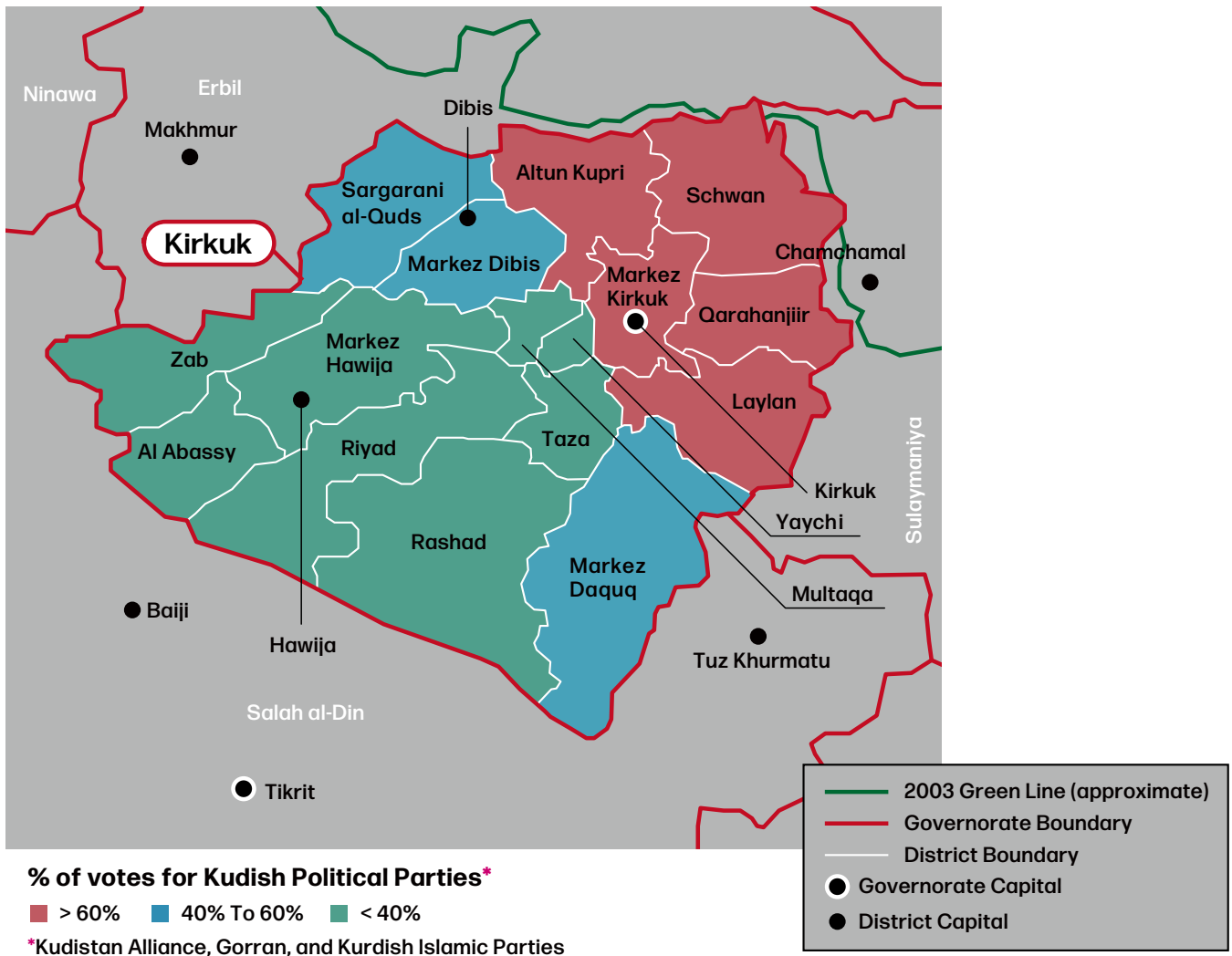
Table 3 **Kirkuk Election Results Before and After the Recount in 2018**

	Before	After	Change	%	Seats
PUK	183,283	177,920	-5,363	-2.9	6
Kirkuk Arab Coalition	84,102	86,452	2,350	2.8	3
Kirkuk Turkoman Front	79,694	82,033	2,339	2.9	3
Nasr	24,328	23,804	-524	-2.2	0
Fatah	18,427	19,735	1,308	7.1	0
Wataniya	14,979	14,758	-221	-1.5	0
New Generation	13,096	13,665	569	4.3	0
KIU	4,631	4,784	153	3.3	0
Bayariq al-Khair	3,088	3,150	62	2.0	0
Hikma Movement	2,386	2,417	31	1.3	0
Elites Coalition for Change	700	734	34	4.9	0

Source: Created by the author based on IHEC data

end, the Iraqi parliament and the judiciary decided to recount all the votes at the polling stations that had been challenged. The results of the recount, announced about three months later, showed that PUK had lost about 5,000 votes, but still managed to retain six seats, leaving the election results unchanged (**Table 3**). In the 2021 election, the Kurdish parties still hold a total of six seats, as previously mentioned.

This ultimately shows that the ethnic demographic composition of Kirkuk Governorate has changed little over the past decade. When the KDP-PUK unity list won 6 seats ten years ago in the 2010 parliamentary elections, the Kurdish parties won more than 60% of the votes in the northeast districts and 40-60% in the southeast and northwest districts (**Figure 3**). The issue of the legal status of the disputed territories, including Kirkuk, was not settled through Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution in 2005, nor through the UNAMI mediation proposal in 2009. In the past decade, Kirkuk has gone through turmoil, such as collapse of the Iraqi army following the rise of IS in 2014, the war against IS by Peshmerga, PMUs (Popular Mobilization Units) and federal forces, the 2017 Kurdish independence referendum and Peshmerga withdrawal, which led to the loss of the governorship post and security functions held by the Kurdish parties. However, the results of the 2018 and 2021 elections show that the ethnic mosaic of the local population has changed little and has been left frozen. It should be pointed out that the implicit ethnic fragmentation has become more visualized and fixed in the form of electoral districts now, whereas a tangible political settlement has been postponed several times.

Figure 3　**Kirkuk Election Results in the March 2010 Elections**

% of votes for Kudish Political Parties*

■ > 60%　■ 40% To 60%　■ < 40%

*Kudistan Alliance, Gorran, and Kurdish Islamic Parties

— 2003 Green Line (approximate)
— Governorate Boundary
— District Boundary
◉ Governorate Capital
● District Capital

Source: *Kane* (2011)

3. Ninawa Elections

(1)　Results in electoral districts 1-4

The Ninawa Governorate is divided into eight electoral districts, of which districts 1 through 4 are the most important for Kurdish parties (**Figure 2**)[7]. In the first electoral district (three seats), including Makhmur, Hamdaniya, and Bartella, KDP gained two seats and PUK one, while candidates from Fatah and Aqd came in fourth and fifth, missing out on seats. The second district (four seats) included Bashiqa, Sheikhan, and Talkaif where three of the four KDP

7　Some areas of Ninawa Governorate that were controlled by Kurdish parties before the Iraq War in 2003, such as Aqre and Bardarash, have effectively been annexed to Duhok Governorate since they are part of the Kurdistan Region. In this election, they are in the third electoral district of Duhok Governorate. On the other hand, the southern areas of Erbil Governorate that were not controlled by Kurdish parties as of 2003, such as Makhmur, Gweyer, and Qaraj, are under the administration of the Ninawa Governorate. They were made part of the first electoral district of the Ninawa Governorate in this election. For more information on the relations between the boundaries of the Kurdistan Region and the provincial borders, see Yoshioka [2015].

candidates won seats and the only candidate put up by PUK also narrowly won after manual recounts. The third district (three seats) is a predominantly Yazidi area, including Sinjar and Qahtaniya, and three KDP candidates swept the seats, all of whom were Yazidis. The candidates of PUK, Aqd, and the Yazidi Free and Democratic Party which has close ties to PKK were unable to win a seat. The fourth district (four seats) includes Talafar, Zummar and Rabia. The KDP candidate was the top winner, with two seats won by individual candidates and one seat won by a female candidate from the Hasm Trend, which is affiliated with the former Salah al-Din governor, Ahmad Juburi. Neither of the Fatah's male or female candidates were able to win any seats though their losing margins were narrow.

In this way, the Kurdish political parties, especially KDP, are strong in the northern areas of Ninawa Governorate. In this election, KDP gained three more seats in Ninawa, bringing its total to nine (Table 4). PUK also gained two seats, bringing the total number of seats for the Kurdish parties to eleven, one-third of the total seats in Ninawa Governorate.

However, KDP's votes in 2021 were 136,663, which was less than the 139,093 votes in 2018. It was an electoral strategy that enabled KDP to increase their seats even with less votes compared to the previous election. The electoral system was changed dramatically from proportional representation to SNTV in this

Table 4

Seats Won by Kurdish Parties in Ninawa Governorate (31 seats)

	2010	2014	2018	2021
KDP	8	6	6	9
PUK		2	1	2
Gorran	0	0	0	0
New Generation	-	-	0	-
Total	8	8	7	11

Source: Created by the author based on IHEC data

election, and the parties' strategy to adapt to the new system made the difference between winning and losing. In other words, what had a major impact on the outcome is whether the party was able to select appropriate candidates who could win and then thoroughly mobilize votes for those specific candidates. It is the top-down-style single political parties rather than the political blocs composed of several parties that make it easier to implement such an election strategy in every electoral district. In southern Iraq, this was the case for al-Sadr Bloc or the State of Law Coalition. al-Sadr Bloc received 314,748 votes in the capital Baghdad compared to 467,029 in 2018. Also, in Basra, the largest city in the south, the number of al-Sadr Bloc votes decreased from 121,111 to 78,387. However, in terms of seats, there was a significant increase from 17 to 27 in Baghdad and from 5 to 9 in Basra. The State of Law Coalition also lost votes, declining from 237,216 to 167,748 in Baghdad and from 94,584 to 41,594 in Basra, but even so, the Coalition increased their seats by four in both governorates.

Similarly, KDP succeeded in fielding candidates through top-down leadership, and inducing supporters to vote for certain candidates, thereby increasing the number of seats won. In Ninawa Governorate as a whole, KDP succeeded in converting 17% of the votes into 29% of the seats (Figure 4). This is the main reason for the KDP victory.

**Figure 4** **Percentage of Votes and Seats in Ninawa**
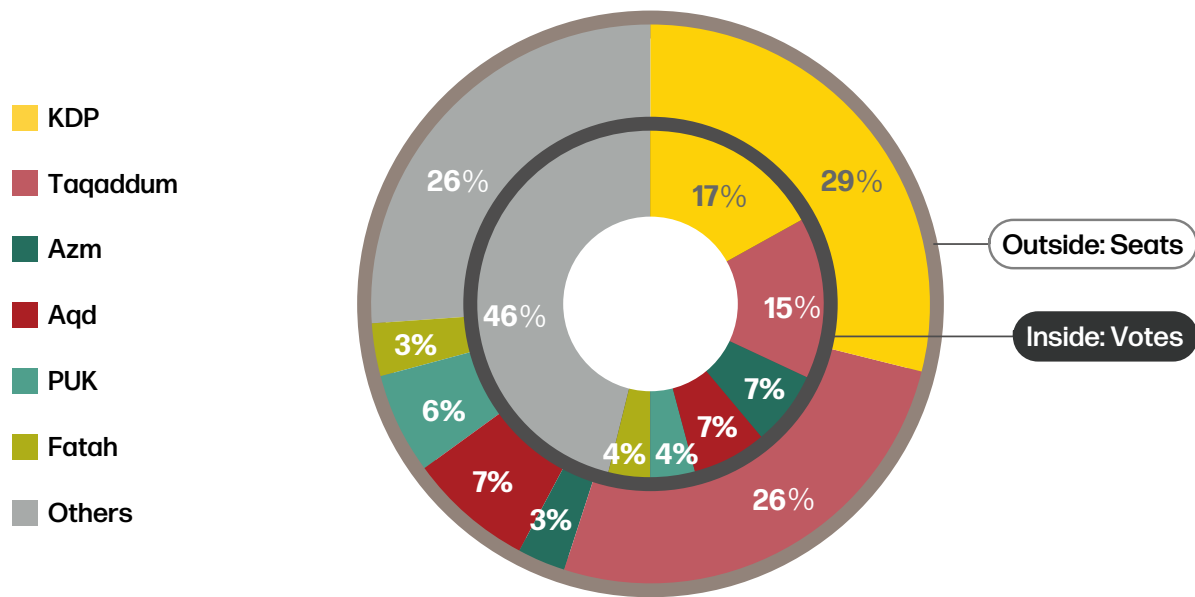
Source: Created by the author based on IHEC data

(2) Influence through non-state security actors

In past elections, the Kurdish parties gained 255,949 votes in Ninawa in 2014, which dropped to 177,894 in 2018 and to 167,201 this time. In terms of vote share, that of the Kurdish parties dropped from 25.9 percent in 2014 to 18.9 percent in 2018, and further to 18.7 percent in 2021. The main factor for the decline between 2014 and 2018 is that Peshmerga were forced to withdraw from many of the disputed territories in October 2017 due to military pressure by the federal forces and PMUs. In Ninawa Governorate particularly, Peshmerga completely withdrew from many areas such as Sinjar, even though they still retain effective control in limited places. (Figure 5). Undoubtedly, this must have had an impact on the vote-gathering in elections.

However, that decrease in votes was not as serious as to lead to a decrease in seats, and the percentage of votes has seemed to bottom out at around 20%. In the current election, thanks to the electoral strategy, Kurdish parties succeeded in increasing their number of seats. Why have they been able to maintain a certain level of influence in Ninawa even after losing effective control of most of the disputed territories? The answer could be local security actors.

IS had taken control of one-third of Iraq's territory from Mosul in 2014 before being defeated at the end of 2017 by the Iraqi federal forces, PMUs, and Peshmerga with support of the coalition forces. During the war against IS, it was mainly the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) and the emergency response units of the federal police that fought on the front lines. However, since they basically moved from one front to another, other forces had to oversee security maintenance in towns after they were retaken from IS. On the other hand, the

Figure 5 Territory Lost by Kurds in 2017
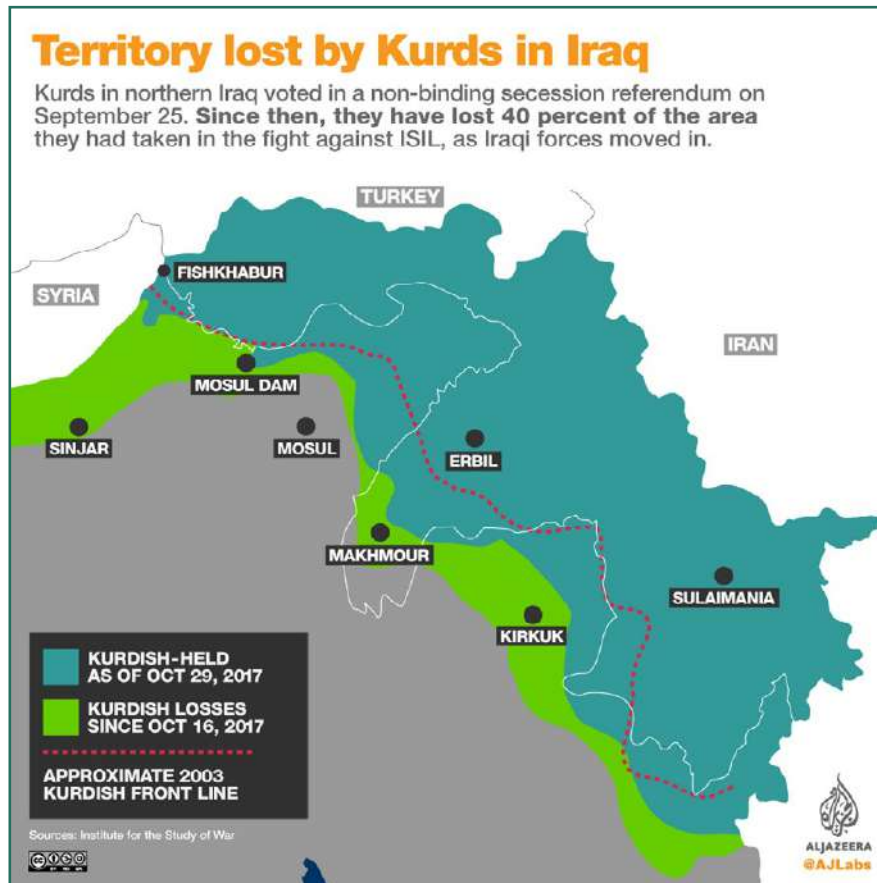
Source: *Aljazeera*, Nov 1, 2017. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/11/1/territory-lost-by-kurds-in-iraq

Iraqi army and federal police were still being rebuilt and were not able to play a full role. PMUs tended to gain influence in the towns they liberated, but even so, local cooperation was essential to maintain daily security. Therefore, in the former IS-controlled areas, including Ninawa Governorate, a number of security forces were formed among local Sunnis and minority groups, either directly recruited by the Shiite PMUs or by the US military. With those numerous local security actors, the political and security situation remain extremely fragile in former IS-controlled areas even after the declaration of victory by the Iraqi government [Gaston and Derzsi-Horvath 2017; Skelton and Bahnam 2019].

In the disputed territories, Iraqi forces and Peshmerga used to conduct joint patrols, and Peshmerga seized the opportunity to take full control there and recaptured some lands IS had briefly conquered. However, it was not just the KDP and PUK Peshmerga that were deployed there but also various local forces linked to them or to other forces in and outside Iraq. For example, Rojava Peshmerga, a Syrian Kurdish militant group supported by KDP, were deployed in northwestern Mosul. In Rabia, an Arab town on the Syrian border, the Jazeera Brigade, a local Arab force, was formed under the umbrella of KDP, which was in effective control at the time. In the Ninawa Plain, KDP also operated the NPGF (Ninawa Plains Guards Force), which consisted mainly of

Christians. Even though the referendum resulted in Peshmerga's withdrawal from many of the disputed territories in October 2017, these local organizations and Kurdish forces have remained in place since then, and the Kurdish parties' influence through them still cannot be neglected [Jiyad 2021]. This explains KDP's strong vote-gathering power in this election, especially in the first, second and fourth electoral districts.

Among the disputed territories, the third electoral district of Sinjar is particularly fragmented and has complex governance structures. While the KRG considers Sinjar to be part of Kurdistan, there is not necessarily a consensus among the local Yazidis about their Kurdish identity. Because Peshmerga, which was responsible for security in Sinjar as of 2014, failed to protect Yazidis from IS, PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan), and PMUs as well as the Peshmerga of Iraqi Kurds, all joined the war against IS. Currently, many local forces such as Yazidi Peshmerga supported by KDP, YBS (Yekîneyên Berxwedana Şengalê) backed by PKK, Yazidi Hashd formed by PMUs, and HPE (Hêza Parastina Êzîdxanê) which retains some independence, are all involved in governance and are competing for influence [Barber 2016; Toorn et al. 2016].

It is not only KDP and PUK who are exploiting the influence on local security actors for election mobilization. Even though KDP won all three seats in the Yazidi-dominated third district, Naif Khalaf, who won the Yazidi's minority quota seat, belongs to the PKK-backed Yazidi Progress Party. In addition, as mentioned earlier, Fatah candidates came close to winning in the first and fourth districts, and so did Aqd candidates in the first and third districts. The electoral mobilization of both parties, who have deep ties to PMUs, can be attributed to their influence on local security actors.

Conclusion

The results of the Iraqi parliamentary elections for the Kurdish parties in 2021 showed that the status quo was basically maintained in the Kurdistan Region. KDP showed stable strength under the new administration and ran a clear electoral campaign for the newly introduced SNTV. PUK has managed to maintain the same number of seats and the former opposition Gorran finally lost their seats in the Iraqi parliament. The dominance of the two major political parties with organized votes remains unchanged. However, the number of votes won by these two parties has been declining, indicating the spread of distrust in politics especially among youths. From the late 2000s to the mid-2010s, high expectations and popularity were pinned on Gorran as an opposition party that aimed for reform, but that failed. Partly because of that, the more radical New Generation now tends to gain votes, though their seats and influence remain limited. As long as the current political balance remains, the ruling parties must bear the responsibility of responding to citizens' dissatisfaction and calls for reform.

In the disputed territories, the election results showed that the political influence of the Kurdish parties is still significant in the northern parts of Kirkuk and Ninawa Governorates. Especially under the SNTV system, where electoral

strategy matters more than under the proportional representation system, KDP's organizational strength had more advantages than that of its rivals. At this point, there are no prospects for the next governorate council elections, but if they are held, Kurdish parties are expected to gain enough seats to show their presence in Ninawa and Kirkuk Governorates.

This election reflected the current situation in the disputed territories where the difficulties of the complex ethnic balance and unstable governance are piling up without clear political solutions. It is feared that the ethnic mosaic in Kirkuk may further be reinforced by the newly introduced electoral districts. In the case of Ninawa Governorate, it became clear through the elections that local security actors scattered throughout the governorate after the war against IS have the political mobilizing power. This means that in the former IS-controlled areas, there is still a gap between the official administrative bodies and the actors who control the field. Originally, the issue of the disputed territories was a question of territorial ownership between the Iraqi government and the KRG. Because of the ambiguity of ownership, it was unclear who was responsible for maintaining security and public services, which affected the lives of the residents. Now, such uncertainty about administrative entities is not only limited to disputed territories but has been observed in many former IS-controlled areas, affecting economic reconstruction and the return of internally displaced people. The Iraqi government and the KRG must reconcile the interests of stakeholders, including the PMUs and local forces, to find a political solution in the disputed territories and the former IS-controlled areas at large.

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Iraqi Parliamentary Election 2021: Unexpected Results?

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The electoral race in Iraq finished on October 10, 2021. Based on a large-scale boycott, surprises were obvious in the eyes of specialists.

Competition within the Iraqi parliamentary election has resulted in an important set of realities that can indicate profound transformations in Iraqi society, and it should receive the attention of those concerned before it manifests into unfortunate consequences.

A large-scale survey conducted by Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies[1], published ten days before the balloting date, indicated a significant advantage for parties such as the State of Law Coalition (SLC), Taqaddum (Progress) Party, as well as independents and some parties that adopted the discourse of protests in October 2019, especially Imtidad (extension) Movement. Meantime, it also predicted a significant decline in supporting Fatah and Aqd (the National Contract). The survey showed clear progress for the lists of the Sadrist bloc and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), and a decrease in people's inclination towards Azm (determination) Alliance. Perhaps the paradox between the survey result and the reality lies in Quwa (Alliance of National State Forces), the reasons for which I would like to explain as follows.

In general, several fundamental lessons can be extracted from what happened in the electoral surprise on October 10, 2021:

1. Perhaps the most prominent shock in the election was the limited influence of religious authority on the course of this process. The 2021 election was the first that did not witness a clear and decisive impact of the *Marjaʿiya* call for participation while its voice had a significant impact on people abstaining from voting in 2018, and increasing the participation rates in prior elections.

   The decline of the influence of the gravitational centers of society in general, and the *Marjaʿiya* authority, in particular, portends the society's loss of impenetrable dams that prevent it from being emotional and reckless in important historical moments that nations may face. Whatever the reasons are for this social orientation, objectively, those engaged in politics will be on a date with other serious requirements in which the *Marjaʿiya* may not have the same influence as in the past.

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1 https://www.bayancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/survy211.pdf

2. The election was generally (but not completely) free from sectarian appeals or intimidation from the Ba'athists and other phenomena that were no longer a source of legitimacy (here in the sense of acceptance by the people) for the candidates. This coincided with public opinions that reject sectarian division, the cause of quota systems at the government level. Thus, return of some political forces to vague and opaque positions, as in the case of "Shiite coordination framework", represented a response to the nature and atmosphere of the election. In addition, such a framework (supposed to be Shiite) appeared to be, in the midst of the crisis of accepting the election results, nothing but "pro-government, opposition framework", as it was not possible to assume that about 10% of the total member of the new parliament consisting of *Tishriniyun* (supporters of October Movement) and independents would be present alongside Sadrists in "Shiite coordination framework". And what about a large audience (more than the number of participants) who are not regarded as Shiites, who boycotted the elections? This paradox in political action may have more severe effects on the Shiite community itself, which is resentful of its political forces and its leaders.

3. According to the preliminary results, remarkable numbers of *Tishriniyun* have won their seats in the next parliament. The secular left, communists in particular, used to dominate three arenas (media, civil society organizations, and political oppositions present in the streets), but the new rising power in the parliament represents the liberation of civil secularism reconciled with religion, i.e. a departure from secularism in its *laicité* version that rejects religion and the religious. Unless the traditional political forces notice, acknowledge, and deal with this shift in the mood of the young Shiite mass, this shift is likely to return to embracing the left once again.

4. Since 2014, neighboring Iran witnessed three shocks in its dealing with the Iraq portfolio that showed the depth of the wrong strategic reading by Tehran. The first of these was the fall of Mosul, as this was an indication of corruption and failure exhibited by the leaders who were entrusted with the task of building the Iraqi State as well as communicating with representatives of the opposing provinces regardless of their regional positions and internal transformations in these provinces. The event shifted focus onto the fall of large parts of the country at the hands of ISIS. On the other hand, "the October events" have caused a second shock letting them realize the depth of the gap between the political leaders and the revolting Shiite mass who reject its political forces, while the results of the 2021 election were the culmination of the successive shocks to Tehran. The Islamic Republic had previously put its weight in supporting lists of Fatah and Aqd, as they reflect the Shiite depth in Iraq, and support well-known projects of the Islamic Republic in the region. However, the election results showed a loss of the bet on a political project that did not necessarily stem from the priorities of Iraqi society in general, and of Shiite in particular. Here, of course, it is necessary to separate the project of "the Popular Mobilization Units", which still represents a strategic option confronting terrorism and other internal and external dangers, and the project of Political Conquest (Fatah) with its elements that confront Iraq's external and internal discourse in economic and social policies.

5. Iraqi voters banged the political process twice by boycotting and participating in the elections. The boycott represented an eloquent rejection of the regime and political forces, which insisted on going down to the citizens (or not going down to the citizens, as we witnessed in many examples in this election!), staying with the same chronic faces, and literally without "programs". It was as if voters were required to vote on history, slogans and moods, and not according to goals and programs. As for the voters who took part, they cast their votes "punitively" wherever they had opportunities to do so.

6. The losers reaped what they had harvested, in condescension to people, not touching their concerns, with lack of interest in the rising young generation, and gave importance to portfolios that are not among the priorities of citizens' lives. Obvious signs have emerged from the street indicating that it is no longer a demand for water and electricity, but the citizenry are now convinced that the problem is at the foot of the regime, which no longer deserves to be identified as "Iraqi". The burning of the consulates, the way the Saudi team was received in Basra a few years ago, and October itself; in these manners they confronted the street with bullets, kidnappings, militia parades and humiliating threats against even the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces.

7. The winners in this round, in the case of the Sadrist bloc, took advantage of the feeling of reluctance to vote through public discipline and good organization, as well as speaking the language of the people. Meantime, several factors contributed to the remarkable rise of SLC, including the fact that this coalition was a qualitative opposition to the Sadrist movement as well as voters' conviction that SLC and its leader would be able to control scattered weapons and get the country back to economic prosperity. Likewise, an important part of Fatah's supporters who opposed its policies directed their votes to SLC, according to the data. As for Taqaddum's list, betting on young people and communicating with them, in addition to bypassing traditional social networks, were the reasons for electoral advances in the western provinces.

8. The political process itself achieved a victory with arise to 97 women (as a preliminary announcement of the results); a remarkable number exceeding the established quota of 83 women. It was to the credit of political forces to nominate strong female figures in order to garner votes, and they won their seats with their votes, which could increase the effectiveness of women in the next parliament, although the assertion of this may be delayed for some time.

9. Political sociology of the October 2019 protest movement has produced important phenomena. The leader of Imtidad obtained votes and outperformed big leaders without costly campaigns. She is the youngest female candidate. Gathering the highest female vote as a female candidate, she has recorded a victory in the most prominent religious city (Najaf). Also, there were fierce competitions with seniors in the most powerful constituencies such as Karrada in Baghdad. Observers should not ignore all of these.

On the other hand, political sociology of the traditional conservatives on the Shiite side showed an irrational scramble. Nomination of competitors in the guise of independents alongside official candidates, and unfounded confidence in a plurality of candidates in some constituencies were seen, and they did not campaign on the streets but were satisfied with costly propaganda. Thus, they have reaped results that were not to their expectations.

Post-election: Crucial Entitlements

What the post-election political process should look like will be associated with a set of decisive measures and policies for change, given the change in the mood of public opinion and the entitlements of the political blocs according to the results and numbers. The following are some of those required policies:

- The election, with its results, shall be a catalyst for a radical change in the regime's orientations, with both demands of the boycotters and the desperate on the one hand, and the demand of participants who punished political forces on the other hand. If not, the results of this election may also lead to a repetition of the previous equation of harmonious quota, which means that a serious stalemate will face the political system and push it towards the revival of protests in which October Movement would look like a joke!

- Stagnant voices that make up the silent majority in Iraqi society may not remain as such in a state of stalemate. Political forces need to understand this and adapt to it, and to consider it in formulating the government and in the proposed upcoming policies.

- Political forces have greatly relied upon international legitimacy, but the latter has apparently become conditioned on real reforms to be carried out. Also, if the political system is convinced of its voluntary isolation from the international community through creation of a strong kleptocratic regime, compulsive tyranny through the suppression of political and civil liberties, a "system of rentier and clientelist economy" will be reproduced only for a while.

- It does not seem that the election's outcome will result in an unexpected cabinet line-up. Since there is no sufficient safe distance between the political forces that own militias, it pushes them to form the government by a majority. Elections have always been a means of restoring the balance between the forces carrying weapons, rather than a means of representing the people. In this sense, it is expected that a government of consensus among all parties shall be formulated, in order to avoid a civil war. In this regard, the sit-ins for the forces that lost in the election, and even the attempt to assassinate Mustafa Kazimi, and similar incidents of violence, can be considered as ways to calm down and bring the conflicting parties back to the dialogue table, as a form of warning. Militia forces are keen to avoid civil war because the political consensus on forming the government brings them far more value than open war. Despite all of these, small forces such as

Imtidad and some independents, whose total numbers do not exceed 20-30 deputies out of 329 parliamentarians will remain, representing the new political opposition. As the performance of this opposition is contingent on a triad (leadership, organization, program), which is still in the process of maturation and development by the emerging parties. The success of their project shall be delayed.

Which Political Parties Won the Votes, in Which Constituencies, with Which Geo-historical Background?: The Case of Baghdad in the 2021 Election

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Party politics in Iraq since 2003 are often explained by the demographic factor, focusing on sectarian/ethnic differences. It is taken for granted that the Shiite-based Islamist political parties, such as the al-Da'wa Islamic Party (al-Da'wa), Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq (ISCI), and the al-Sadr bloc (al-Sadr) have consolidated their support base in Shiite society and carried out their activities among their co-sectarian fellows. On the other hand, Sunni-based political parties were late to join post-war party politics, and did so only after the first parliamentary election, and experienced difficulties in establishing a single representative body for the whole of Sunni society.

However, the ethno-sectarian factor fails to explain the differences in the support bases among the intra-sectarian political groups, which are often wider than inter-sectarian discrepancies. Differences among al-Da'wa, ISCI, and al-Sadr are often explained by the differences in their ideologies, diplomatic stances, supporter generation, and religious origin; for example, rivalries between former expatriates and home-grown Islamists (al-Da'wa and ISCI vs. al-Sadr), between pro-Iran and Iraqi nationalists (ISCI vs. al-Sadr), between dependence on the US presence and anti-US sentiment (al-Nasr [Victory] faction of al-Da'wa and the Hikma [Wisdom] splinter from ISCI vs. al-Sadr and Fatah), elder generation of traditional elites vs. youths (ISCI vs. al-Sadr), or among religious notable families (al-Hakim of ISCI vs. al-Sadr of al-Sadr and al-Da'wa). In the case of Sunni-oriented political parties, ideological (Islamist of the Iraqi Islamic Party vs. ex-Ba'thists of the Iraqi National Dialogue Front) and regional (Usama al-Nujayfi from Ninawa vs. Rafi' al-Issawi from Anbar) differences as well as personalities in the leadership matter.

As Iraq shifted its electoral system from a party-controlled closed list system of proportional representation, which was introduced at the beginning, to a more candidate-centred open list system since in 2010[1], the electoral campaign policy

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1 Since the open-list proportional election system was introduced in 2010, voters have been able to vote for candidates individually from lists prepared by the electoral blocs.

shifted from focusing on promises and ideologies of the political parties to focusing on the social fame and activities of individual candidates. Lists of the candidates for each electoral bloc show the candidate nomination strategy of each of the parties [Sakai 2020].

Furthermore, the SNTV (single non-transferable vote) system which was introduced in 2021 required each political party to consider what kind of candidate would be suitable for each constituency. This meant "that voters will choose an MP from their own residential districts for the first time, rather than choosing a political coalition or candidate at the provincial level," and political parties "need to put candidates forward who are well regarded in their electoral district, and constituents will be able to hold MPs representing their areas to account as candidates must be local residents" [Jiyad 2021: 9]. In other words, the electoral policy of a political party and electoral coalition in the electoral constituency reflects what kinds of social groups they target to mobilise in the constituency, how they understand public opinion in the constituency, and where they think their support base is in the constituency.

Thus, the difference in patterns of electoral campaign and of fielding candidates among the major political parties/electoral coalitions reflects diverse specificities of their support base, which may differ according to the social and historical characteristics of each constituency. Questions which can be raised here are as follows: does the social and historical diversity of the constituency affect the behaviour of the political parties in their electoral campaign and the candidates they field? Can diversity be an obstacle for certain parties in expanding their influence to a wider area? How do they attempt to gain more support from the constituency when the political party finds itself alien to their support body?

The case of Baghdad constituencies, which can be thought of as representative of the whole of Iraq, are taken up in this paper not only because of Baghdad's ethno-sectarian heterogeneity and because of the size of its population (19% of Iraq's total population), but also because of the variety of origins of the residents in Baghdad as a result of vast rural-urban migration in the middle of the last century. Baghdad is a microcosm of society and politics of the whole of Iraq.

1. Differences in Electoral Strategy between Each Electoral Bloc in General

First, we overview the patterns of electoral behaviour of the major political parties/electoral coalitions in general which gained more than one seat in Baghdad constituencies, which are al-Sadr, SLC (State of Law Coalition), Taqaddum (Progress), Azm (Determination), and Fatah (Conquest)[2]. We can find major differences in the following points: number of candidates, their

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2 Smaller coalitions such as Ishraqa Kanun, Huquq and Fratayn each won one seat, but these are excluded from this analysis.

social and political careers, continuity in candidates' party affiliations and electoral campaign methods. In order to analyse the above factors, I have collected the information regarding candidates from the official website of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC)[3], CVs published through candidates' Facebook pages and twitters, and news data from major internet news sites[4].

(1) Pattern of candidate selection: Narrow down, or put up more candidates?

In selecting candidates, some electoral coalitions select the exact number of candidates who might possibly win seats, or at most a smaller number of candidates than the number of seats available in the constituency. Good examples of this pattern are the al-Sadr bloc and SLC. Al-Sadr fielded a total of 32 candidates in all of the constituencies in Baghdad, and of them, only five failed to win a seat. This means that 85% of their candidates succeeded in obtaining seats. To a lesser extent, SLC succeeded in having 62% of their 21 candidates win seats. It can be said that these coalitions succeeded in choosing the right candidates in the right constituencies with the least or small losses.

On the contrary, Fatah and Azm failed to narrow down the number of candidates. Among 16 Fatah candidates, only three won seats. Azm put up 40 candidates for a total of 69 seats in Baghdad and only seven succeeded in securing seats. Azm put up six candidates in constituency No.12 where only five seats were available, five in constituency No.13 with a maximum of four seats, and six in constituency No.17 with a maximum of four seats. Taqaddum limited the number of candidates to 29, 11 of whom succeeded in gaining seats throughout Baghdad. Nevertheless, the number of Taqaddum candidates in constituencies No.13 and 17 exceeded the total number of seats in each constituency.

This difference in party or coalition behaviour can partly be explained by a lack of knowledge about SNTV. However, it can also be explained as a problem of the leadership in the political parties or electoral blocs. The reason why these blocs put up more candidates than the total number of seats is that they cannot regulate the will of the candidates to run for the election, and individual candidates, not the party leader, decide their electoral policy. In other words, al-Sadr and SLC have a strong leadership and top-down decision-making system, while Azm (and Taqaddum to some extent) are no more than gatherings of independent political and social figures.

(2) Political and social career of the candidates: Established politicians or inexperienced youths?

As I argue in my paper on the previous election in 2018 [Sakai 2021], al-Sadr bloc candidates and those of other established political parties are quite different

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3 https://ihec.iq/

4 For example, *Rudaw,* https://www.rudawelections.com/arabic/ancamakan, and *NAS news,* https://www.nasnews.com/view.php?cat=71752

in their political experience. In the 2021 election, only four had previously been elected as members of parliament among 27 winners from the al-Sadr bloc, two of whom were elected more than twice before 2014. This shows a coincidence with the winning profile of the Sa'irun coalition led by al-Sadr in the 2018 election, which is "young, highly educated with professional knowledge, but amateur, unknown, and inexperienced in the existing political arena" [Sakai 2021: 13].

On the contrary, five of 13 from SLC had experience as MPs in the previous national parliaments, and one in the provincial council. Among these five, three were elected more than twice. Dependency on experienced candidates can be seen in Taqaddum which there were eight ex-members of parliament among 11 successful candidates. As for Azm, all the winners had been elected in previous national elections[5]. Winners from Fatah can be located in between the al-Sadr pattern and that of elite political parties, as only one among three had been elected in 2014 and 2018.

This fact shows that the political parties, which have been among the ruling coalition since the previous elections or which were split from them, rely on established political elites in the election, while the anti-establishment political parties such as al-Sadr put up new candidates.

(3) Continuity or discontinuity of party affiliation

I have argued that al-Iraqiya, the former Wataniya led by Iyad Allawi, attempted to expand its support base by recruiting established elite politicians from other medium-sized political parties such as the Iraqi Islamic Party and ex-Ba'thists, as well as local notables and tribal leaders [Sakai 2020]. This pattern of recruiting individual politicians can be seen in the strategy of ISCI and SLC. In other words, leading coalitions such as Iraqiya, ISCI, and al-Da'wa consolidated their support base by relying on the mobility and fluidity of political affiliation of individual political elites.

We can see a similar pattern of fluidity among the candidates in the 2021 election. Among 11 winners from Taqaddum, five had transferred from Wataniya (currently Iraqiya) from which they ran in previous elections, and only three had no prior party affiliation. Five among six winners from Azm used to be either in Muttahidun (led by Usama al-Nujayfi), Baghdad Alliance (led by Mahmud al-Mashhadani), or Iraqi National Dialogue Front (led by Salih Mutlaq) in previous elections. On the contrary, none of the successful candidates from the al-Sadr bloc had previously changed their affiliations. SLC had only two who shifted from other coalitions (al-Nasr, led by Haydar Abadi, and White Iraqiya which split from Allawi's Iraqiya).

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5 However, two of the winners in the 2018 election were rejected after a recount of the votes.

(4) Patterns of electoral campaigns

Most of the major political parties/electoral blocs took similar strategies in their electoral campaign: (i) organizing gatherings for voters to support candidates; (ii) inviting local elites and notables, such as tribal or religious figures and/or receiving courtesy visits from them; (iii) visiting voters' families, and/or receiving them at candidates' offices or homes in order to listen to their claims and demands; (iv) inspecting streets and houses to know more about the people's living conditions and the situation regarding social and economic development in the constituency.

(i)   There are two patterns of gatherings: large-scale party-led gatherings, and home party style gatherings (similar to *diwaniya* meetings in traditional *mudif*), inviting local people as well as leading figures. The al-Sadr bloc frequently organised large-scale gatherings in playgrounds, streets or parks with strong leadership of the party and with great help from young campaigners. Meanwhile, SLC and Taqaddum candidates often took leadership in organizing gatherings by themselves. They invited supporters, leading figures, local authorities to the luxurious rooms of their gorgeous offices, and homes, or to gardens.

(ii) What is noteworthy is that SLC, Taqaddum and other electoral blocs invited leading tribal figures to these gatherings as important guests, while it was only al-Sadr that invited religious figures and asked them to play important roles in the gatherings. In the meetings among the tribal leaders and SLC or Taqaddum candidates, we often notice tribal flags and pictures of tribal ancestors hung on the walls, while in al-Sadr bloc meetings, pictures of not only Muqtada al-Sadr but also his father and uncle (Muhammad Sadiq and Muhammad Baqir) as well as *hawza* ayatollahs are often witnessed.

(iii) There are clear differences between the al-Sadr bloc and other political parties in the social strata of their supporters if we look at whom they visit during the electoral campaign. The al-Sadr bloc mainly visits residents in lower social strata, while SLC and Taqaddum put more priority on visiting tribal and local leading figures. It is common phenomena for all the coalitions to target the youths and to promote sports among youth supporters.

(iv) Not a small number of SLC, Taqaddum and Azm candidates inspected the streets and commercial activities in their constituencies to check on where they were lagging behind in social and economic development. Candidates with a tribal background in SLC, Taqaddum and Azm appealed their personal efforts to reconstruct the infrastructure in the region, showing how they brought in bulldozers and other construction equipment and hinting at future pork-barrel spending in the districts. This contrasted with al-Sadr bloc candidates who appealed their efforts to keep roads and buildings clean, or to teach children.

2. History of the Socio-political Development of Each Constituency

Whether the above electoral strategies of each party attract voters or not depends on voter preference based on the historical and social background of the constituency. The history of transformation of administrative districts (*qada*) and sections (*nahiya/baladiya*) in Baghdad have reflected changing socio-political characteristics in each administrative unit. When we analyse the performance and results of the political parties in the election, a basic understanding of the various historical backgrounds of the individual districts/sections in Baghdad is necessary.

Here I will briefly review the process of expansion of Baghdad from the early days of the establishment of Iraq.

(1) Old traditional Baghdad (traditional Rusafa, Kazimiya, Azamiya)

During the Ottoman dynasty, Baghdad was a small, old town consisting of Rusafa on the east bank of the Tigris and Karkh on the west bank, surrounded by the castle wall until 1869, together with the shrine towns of Kazimiya for Shiites and Azamiya for Sunnis. Since Najm Pasha built a dyke surrounding Rusafa and Azamiya, a commercial area developed inside the dyke, and expanded to Mansur and Jadriya by the 1940s. Parallel to the expansion of the urban activities in the embanked region, poor migrants from rural areas (mainly from the southeast governorates of Iraq such as Maysan and Wasit) flooded into Baghdad and they settled either as squatters in the city centre, or outside of the embankment, building *sarifa* (simple reed-thatched huts)[6]. These slums brought serious social problems to Baghdad in the fields of security, health conditions, and environment, as well as changing the demographic and social class structure of the city.

(2) City development plan in the late 1950s-60s

It was in the latter half of the 1950s when large-scale urban planning was first introduced[7]. Based on a masterplan by Doxiades, the Iraqi government launched slum clearance in 1955, and built 20,000 houses in Thawra City (*madina*

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6 According to Hilmi [1978], more than 40% of residents with non-Baghdad origins in Baghdad were from Maysan, and 14.5% were from Wasit in 1957. In Maysan, more than one-third of its population migrated to other governorates, 63% of them settling in Baghdad. As one-third of the population in Baghdad lived in Thawra by the late 70s, according to al-Douri [1980], migration from rural areas increased the percentage of Shiites and Kurds in Baghdad's population [Farman 1978: 96].

7 For details on rural-urban migration and slum clearance projects in Baghdad during the 1950s-70s, see Batatu [1978], Philips [1958/9], Azeez [1968], al-Salim [1972], al-Douri [1980], Sakai [2003], Al-Saaidy [2020], and Gupta [2021].

al-thawra) for *sarifa* dwellers, who had completed relocation by 1963. Slum dwellers in Karkh were forced to move to Shu'ala section where 4,000 houses were built.

At the same time, the government under Abd al-Karim Qasim, who grasped and consolidated power through a military coup in 1958, constructed a residential area specially for military officers in Yarmuk on the west bank of the Tigris and Zayuna on the east bank.

(3) City development plan during the Ba'thist regime

Qasim's policy to appease socially low strata migrants from the south and military officers was passed down by the Ba'thi regime until the middle of the 80s. Saddam Hussein renovated Thawra City and the Sha'b section in order to obtain support from the lower income class. Renaming the former Saddam City in 1979, the government promoted social infrastructure in Saddam City and encouraged employment of its residents in the public sector. At the same time the city was placed under strict control and surveillance as it often became the centre of underground activities by opposition forces, first the Iraqi Communist Party in the 50-60s, then the al-Da'wa Party in the 70s-80s[8].

The government under the Ba'th Party had undertaken vast infrastructure reconstruction projects backed by ample fiscal revenues generated by the surge in oil revenues following the oil boom in the mid-70s. Due to the rapid industrial development, more and more residential facilities were needed for increasing the numbers of workers and civil servants in the urban area. Dawra oil refinery, which was built in 1955, and the power plant associated with the refinery expanded its capacity as electricity consumption in Baghdad soared, and development of housing facilities for oil workers became necessary. Considering the increasing demand for housing estates, New Baghdad, Zafraniya sections in Rusafa and the western part of Rashid section in Karkh were developed as areas for middle/low class workers and military officers[9]. In Rashid, housing estates were allocated to government officials, army and security officers, as well as professionals such as doctors and engineers.

Except for the shanty towns for migrants from the south, residential areas built during the Qasim and Ba'thist regimes developed as less sect- or ethnicity-concentrated mixed areas; this was partly due to the Iraqi socialist policy in urban planning, which focused more on social classes rather than on ethnic/sectarian factors.

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8 According to Wiley [1992: 56-57], one-third of 32 Islamists who were executed by the government during 1979-80 originated from al-Thawra City.

9 Zafraniya is located as a suburb of south Baghdad and prior to 2003, developed as a base town for Rashid Military camp as well as flourishing industrial sites run by military-related companies. New Baghdad was established during the monarchy era, developing as one of the largest residential areas for the middle class in Baghdad. It was characterized as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious mixed district, including Kurds and Christians. See https://almadasupplements.com/print.php?cat=19038

(4) Demographic transformation and forced migration after 2003

Since 2003, party members and senior government officials under the Ba'thist regime have left or were forced to leave Baghdad due to the regime change. According to research by Izady in the Gulf/2000 project[10], Shiization can clearly be seen in the area surrounding al-Sadr City (the Sha'b to the northwest and al-Ghadir to the southeast) in Rusafa, and Hurriya, Washshash (south of Kazimiya) and Saydiya (the eastern part of Rashid section) in Karkh, while the Firdus and Dawra areas (both in Karkh) experienced Sunnization after 2003 [Izady 2020].

During the quasi-civil war in 2006-7, residents in mixed areas were frequently the targets of intimidation from the opposite sect-oriented militant groups. Seeking expansion of their control, violent fights occurred among militias, guerrillas, US armed forces as well as government security forces in the urban area, which resulted in consolidation of sectarian segregation. Krohley [2015] describes in detail how the US/Iraqi forces clashed with the Mahdi army in Nisan district[11], the quasi-civil war bringing almost all of Rusafa under Shiite dominance, except for the sections of Azamiya, Shabab, and the northern part of the old city centre. As for Karkh, Rashid district became Shiite-dominated, especially the residential areas to which the Ba'thist official and military/security officers of the former regime had evacuated.

T-walls were built in various sections in order to protect US or governmental institutions from the attacks or to separate fighting parties[12], but they resulted in deepening ethno-sectarian divisions, as a sect-based community surrounded by a wall became increasingly isolated and lost communication with different sect-based groups in their neighbourhood [Izady 2020:60-62].

How, then, does the heterogeneity of the urban development and ethno-sectarian inclination in the process of political development affect the political representation of the residents? In the next section, I will survey the behaviour and political tactics of the political parties in the electoral campaign in each constituency in Baghdad.

## 3. Where Did Each Electoral Bloc Gain Votes?

(1) Administrative units and electoral constituencies

Electoral constituencies in Baghdad in the 2021 election do not necessarily coincide with administrative units in Baghdad. **Figure 1** shows the map of

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10 See "Infographs, Maps and Statistics Collection" by Michael Izady in the website of the Gulf/2000 project. https://gulf2000.columbia.edu/maps.shtml

11 7 Nisan (April 7th; anniversary of the founding of the Ba'th party) district was renamed 9 Nisan (April 9th, the day of the fall of Baghdad in 2003,) after the regime change, then divided into three districts (New Baghdad, al-Ghadir, and Mu'amil).

12 Adil Abdul Mahdi, appointed prime minister in 2018, announced the removal of T-walls.

Figure 1 **Map of Administrative Units (*Baladiyat*) in 2012**
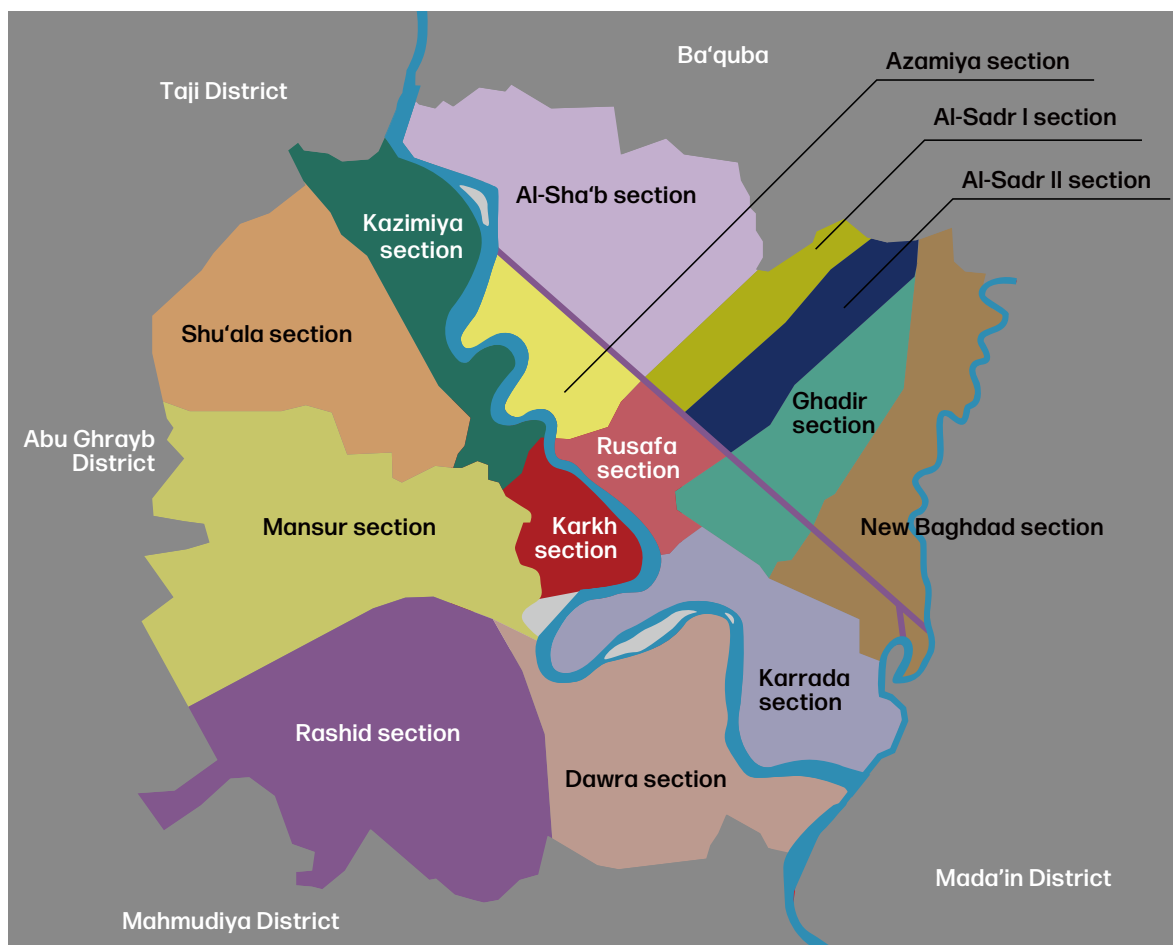
Source: Baghdad Municipality, Department of Basic Design, 2012

administrative units (*baladiyat*) in 2012, originally issued by Baghdad Municipality[13]. Divisions and sections have frequently been revised and their borders redrawn since 2003. New sections of Husayniyat and Mu'amil were added in 2013 and 2015 respectively[14]. Azamiya district was divided into two (Azamiya and al-Sha'b), and Karrada was separated from Zafraniya in the same municipality revision in 2016, which brought the number of districts in Baghdad to twenty[15].

Constituencies in Baghdad in the election 2021 were set based on the

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13 See al-Taif and Bahjat [2018]. In 2009, Baghdad was divided into 10 districts (*qada*) according to the Ministry of Planning. http://www.cosit.gov.iq/AAS2016/physical%20features/nat(2).htm

14 Husayniyat is located north of Rusafa. Mu'amil district, which is located between New Baghdad and al-Sadr City, was newly established by merging two sections from Diyala Governorate in 2016. See also note 11.

15 Al-Sadr City was divided into two districts, Sadr I and Sadr II. See *Al-Mada* [2016]. Prior to this revision, INA reports on changes in 2015, including the elevation of Mansur and Rashid as independent districts in Karkh. *Wakala al-Anba al-'Iraqiya al-Mustaqilla* [2015].

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administrative districts in principle, but there were several changes, both minor and major (see **Figure 2**)[16]. Karrada was amalgamated with Zafraniya, Shu'ala with Kazimiya, and the borders between Dawra and Rashid as well as between Mansur and Abu Ghrayb were slightly altered.

### (2) Election results by electoral blocs

Electoral results differ widely among constituencies. A quick look shows that the votes gained by the al-Sadr bloc were unevenly distributed between the constituencies, while the SLC votes were evenly distributed between the constituencies. Even in the same Sunni neighbourhoods, Taqaddum and Azm had different vote-winning patterns. Here in this section, I will describe the votes of each electoral bloc in the constituencies.

(i) al-Sadr: Dominated al-Sadr city (I and II) and al-Ghadir (75-80% of the total seats in constituencies No.2, 3 and 4), and surrounding areas such as constituency No.9 (east of Sadr City, 75%), 7 and 10 (north, more than half the seats).

In constituency No.6 in Rusafa, and constituencies No.11, 14, 15 and 17 in Karkh, al-Sadr put up only one or two candidates, although all of them succeeded in gaining seats. On the other hand, al-Sadr candidates failed to win seats in constituencies No.1 and 8 in Rusafa and constituencies No.12 and 16 in Karkh. It was only in constituency No.13 in Karkh that it did not field any candidates.

(ii) SLC: Its policy was to put up one or two candidates in all the constituencies, and all the candidates won seats in each of constituencies Nos.1-4, 6, 8-9 (Rusafa), and No.11, 14-5 (Karkh). In constituencies No.5, 7, and 11, only one of the two candidates won seats, while it lost seats in constituencies No.10, 12, and 16-7.

(iii) Fatah: It could win only three seats, in constituencies No.1, 8 and 15, while it put up candidates in all the constituencies except No.13.

(iv) Taqaddum: It put up four to six candidates in constituencies No.12-14 and 17 in Karkh, where some of them won seats (one out of four in constituency No.12, two out of six in constituency No.13, three out of four in

Figure 2 **Map of Constituencies in Baghdad**
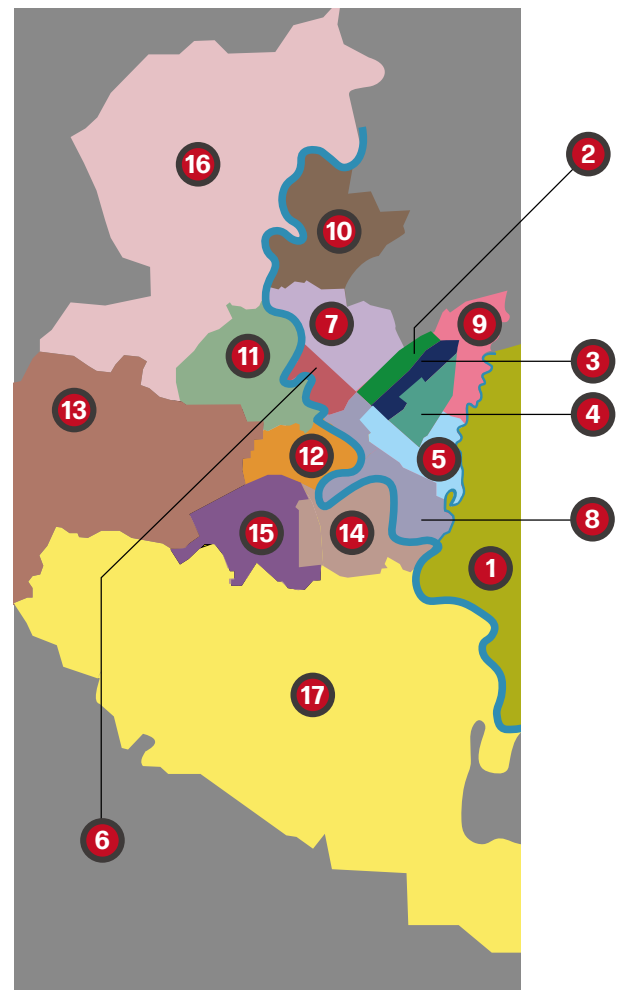
Source: *Rashidiya News*, 2020. Nov. https://m.facebook.com/alrashidia/ posts/1359667261035002

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16 See also the official map of constituencies on the IHEC website. https://ihec.iq/%d8%a7%d9% 84%d9%85%d9%81%d9%88%d8%b6%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b9%d9% 84%d9%8a%d8%a7-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%b3%d8%aa%d9%82%d9%84%d8 %a9-%d9%84%d9%84%d8%a7%d9%86%d8%aa%d8%ae%d8%a7%d8%a8%d8%a7%d8% aa/

constituency No.14 and two out of five in constituency No.17), while it did not put up any candidates in many of the constituencies in Rusafa (constituencies No.2-4, 7-10). Taqaddum put up candidates in constituencies No.5 and 6 (Rusafa) and constituencies No.11 and 15 (Karkh), but won no seats. On the contrary, it showed its strength in constituencies No.1 and 16, as all of its candidates won seats.

(v) Azm: It did not put up candidates in most of the constituencies (constituencies No.2-5, 7 and 9). In the remaining part of Rusafa, Azm won two seats of the three candidates only in constituency No.6, and the others were all defeated. Azm concentrated its electoral campaign mainly in Karkh and won seats in constituencies No.13, and 16-17, but the number of winners was very small compared to the number of candidates.

(3) Analysis

From the above results, the major findings are as follows:

(i) Despite the impression of a landslide victory, al-Sadr could only gain seats in its home ground, i.e., al-Sadr City and its neighbourhood, which have been dominated by Shiite migrants from the south for the past half a century. Outside their home ground, al-Sadr was successful in al-Ghadir, New Baghdad and al-Mu'amil (all former Nisan district) in consolidating its power and gaining seats as a result of the war between Mahdi Army and the US in 2006-7, which had changed the nature of the districts from mixed areas with middle or working class residents to Shiite-dominated areas. It also succeeded in winning seats in similar districts, such as al-Sha'b, Shu'ala in Kazimiya and al-Husayniya to some extent, where the residents share a similar background of having migrated from the south of Iraq after the 50s.

On the contrary, al-Sadr did not have much appeal in the suburban areas such as Mada'in, Talmiya and Zafraniya, in spite of the presence of Shiite residents there. This shows that al-Sadr's support base is limited to migrant-origin urban poor, and does not include settled rural Shiites or poor Shiites in general.

(ii) As a result of the evacuation of the former elites of the pre-2003 regime and forced migration in the quasi-civil war in 2006-7, Karkh and the old city centre were also affected by serious demographic changes. However, al-Sadr did not show very much promise in the newly Shiite- dominated areas west of Army Canal. For example, in Zafraniya, which became Shiite-dominated from a Sunni-dominated industrial area, SLC and Fatah were successful instead of al-Sadr. In Rashid district on the west bank, where Shiites occupied the land after former officers and government officials left after the regime change, it was SLC and Fatah that won seats, not al-Sadr. SLC candidates appealed their various socio-political traits as elites, underlining their parliamentary career (Zafraniya and Rashid), their contribution in the security field and their tribal background (Rashid). By the same token, the Fatah candidate appealed his high educational career (Rashid).

This does not mean that SLC abandoned its efforts to challenge al-Sadr's dominance among the migrant-origin urban poor. As I mentioned above, SLC distributed its candidates throughout all of the constituencies. In al-Sadr City and its neighbourhood, SLC put up candidates with tribal backgrounds (Sadr City II and al-Sha'b), with previous careers in the local or national parliament (Sadr City I and al-Sha'b), or hinted future redevelopment (al-Mu'amil), and challenged al-Sadr's community-based activism with institutional support.

This pattern of highlighting candidates' networks with established ruling circles (MPs and government officials) is not necessarily alien to al-Sadr. In al-Sadr City I, all the winning candidates from the al-Sadr bloc made claims about their parliamentary careers (al-Sadr City I), as did other ruling parties. This hints at the phenomenon that even al-Sadr politicians who claim to be non-established amateur social activists tend to rely on their careers as elites when competing with each other within the al-Sadr group. In other words, appealing their non-establishment characteristics is useful against established ruling elites, but not among the unestablished.

(iii) The failure of Fatah shows that the experience in PMU (popular mobilization units) or participation in national defence against IS in general was not taken into account in choosing candidates. In my analysis on the previous election in 2018, I showed that the MPs who claimed to have made contributions in PMU were very few, and most of them were from the Badr Organization [Sakai 2021]. Among 69 candidates who won seats in Baghdad this time, only three claimed to have had a career in PMU, one of whom was from Fatah (Mada'in), one from Ishraqa Kanun (Kazimiya), and the other was an independent (Mansur).

On the other hand, five from the al-Sadr bloc highlighted their contribution to Saraya al-Salam, which was formed as an armed defence organization against IS under the al-Sadr bloc in 2014. They ran for election out of al-Sadr City, from al-Mu'amil, al-Ghadir, al-Sha'b and Azamiya, where the al-Sadr bloc had ample experience in armed activities during the civil war.

This trend is not confined to parties with Shiite militias. One candidate from Taqaddum highlighted his career as a military officer, and another emphasized his MA degree in military science.

(iv) While SLC hints of the introduction of a pork-barrel system for the purpose of attracting voters in the constituencies of a communally mixed area (Azamiya) or on the peripheries of al-Sadr's unchallenged dominant area (Kazimiya), Sunni blocs such as Taqaddum and Azm used the same tactics in the suburbs in the west and north of Baghdad (Abu Ghrayb, Talmiya, Dawra, Mahmudiya and Husayniya), focusing on the problems of lack of reconstruction and development, and underlining their ability and readiness to tackle these problems. Interestingly, no pork-barrel policy was introduced in al-Sadr City or hard-core pro-Sadr constituencies, which may be related to the al-Sadr policy against "corruption"[17].

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17 The exception is Atwan al-Atwani, mayor of Baghdad from SLC, who obtained the largest number of votes in al-Mu'amil, an al-Sadr-dominant constituency. He emphasized his frequent inspections of reconstruction activities, showing his concern for economic development in the area.

Table 1 Historical Background and Demographic Changes in Each Constituency and the Number of Seats Gained by Each Electoral Bloc

Constituency		Main districts	Historical background	Demographic changes since 2003	Number of winners/candidates
Rusafa	1	Mada'in district	Suburb of urban Baghdad	Few changes (Shiite dominance/mixed)	Sadr 1/2 Taqaddum 1/1 SLC 1/1 Fatah 1/1 Azm 0/2
	2	al-Sadr City I district	Established as a residential area for low-income ex-slum dwellers from the south in 60s. Renamed al-Sadr City from Saddam City in 2003	No change (Shiite dominance)	Sadr 3/3 SLC 1/1 Fatah 0/1
	3	al-Sadr City II district		No change (Shiite dominance)	Sadr 4/4 SLC 1/1 Fatah 0/1
	4	Southeastern part of al-Sadr City and al-Ghadir district	In previous regime, Habibiya was for educated middle class professionals and Baladiyat and Mashtal for workers in municipality, government ministries including Christians. Became a battlefield between Mahdi Army and US army during the civil war*	No change (Shiite dominance)	Sadr 3/3 SLC 1/1 Fatah 0/1
	5	Southern part of al-Ghadir and New Baghdad	Zayuna developed as officers' town in the late 50s. New Baghdad was established in the 30s and developed in 60-70s as a mixed area for the middle class with a large Christian population. Became a battlefield in the civil war	Shift from mixed to Shiite dominance after 2006-7 civil war	Sadr 2/2 SLC 1/2 Fatah 0/1 Taqaddum 0/1
	6	Azamiya district	Azamiya developed as a traditional Sunni shrine town. During the civil war and was surrounded by a T-Wall leaving the remainder of the district Shiite-dominated**	Little change in Sunni-dominated Azamiya. Shift from mixed to Shiite dominance after 2006-7 (Waziriya, Maghreb and remainder)	Sadr 1/1 SLC 1/1 Azm 2/3 Taqaddum 0/2 Aqd 0/2 Fatah 0/1
	7	al-Sha'b district	Residential area for migrants from south, renovated in the 70s	Shift from mixed to Shiite dominance after 2006-7 civil war	Sadr 2/2 SLC 1/2 Fatah 0/1
	8	Rusafa and Karrada/Zafraniya districts	Rusafa and Karrada developed as a traditional merchant and business area since Ottoman era. Zafraniya developed as an industrial and residential area for the Rashid Military Camp after the monarchy	Few changes in mixed nature of old city centre. Shift from mixed or Sunni dominance to Shiite dominance in Karrada, Jadiriya and Zafraniya	Sadr 0/2 SLC 1/1 Fatah 1/1 Azm 0/2
	9	Mu'amil district	Fadaliya and Shawra wa Umm Jidr became a battlefield in the civil war. Migrants from marsh regions and supporters of Sadiq Sadr in 90s*	Shift from mixed to Shiite dominance after 2006-7 civil war	Sadr 3/3 SLC 1/1 Fatah 0/1
	10	al-Husayniya district	Developed as an agricultural area. Production of weapons-grade uranium was planned in this area in 80s-90s***	Shift from mixed to Shiite dominance after 2003	Sadr 2/2 SLC 0/1 Fatah 0/1 Azm 1/2

*Krohley [2015]   **Izady [2020]   ***Albright [2001]   Source: Created by author

Constituency		Main districts	Historical background	Demographic changes since 2003	Number of winners/ candidates
Karkh	11	Kazimiya district	Kazimiya developed as a traditional Shiite shrine town. Shu'ala established as a residential area for low-income ex-slum dwellers from the south in 60s	No change in Shiite-dominated Kazimiya and Shu'ala. Shift from Sunni-dominated Hurriya and mixed area of Utayfiya to Shiite dominance after civil war 2006-7	Sadr 2/2 SLC 1/1 Fatah 0/1 Azm 0/3 Taqaddum 0/1
	12	Karkh district and eastern part of Mansur district	Karkh developed as a market of ancient Baghdad in Abbasid dynasty. Yarmuk as an officers' residential area developed in 60s. Mansur and Haifa Street renovated as a modern business/residential area in 80s with middle/upper class	Mixed or Sunni dominance with frequent changes inside the district during the civil war	Sadr 1/2 SLC 1/2 Taqaddum 1/4 Azm 0/6 Fatah 0/1
	13	Eastern part of Mansur district and Abu Ghrayb district	Abu Ghrayb Prison used for political prisoners both under Ba'th regime and US occupation	No changes in Sunni-dominated Abu Ghrayb. Shift from mixed and Shiite dominance in Khdra and Ghazaliya to Sunni-dominated during the civil war	Taqaddum 2/6 Azm 2/5 SLC 0/2
	14	Dawra district and eastern part of Rashid district	Dawra refinery established in 50s and developed as an industrial complex and residential area for workers in 70s-80s. Suffered military attacks during the civil war	Shift from mixed Dawra district to Sunni dominance after the civil war. Some areas in the west became Shiite-dominated	Sadr 1/1 Taqaddum 3/4 SLC 1/1 Azm 0/5 Fatah 0/1
	15	Rashid district	Residential area for officers, professors, police and doctors in Amil and Baya under Ba'th regime	Shift from mixed to Shiite dominance after 2003	Sadr 1/1 SLC 1/1 Fatah 1/1 Azm 0/1 Taqaddum 0/1
	16	Talmiya district	Production of weapon-grade uranium was planned in this area in 80s-90s[***]	Few changes (mixed)	Taqaddum 2/2 Azm 1/4 Sadr 0/1 SLC 0/1 Fatah 0/1
	17	Mahmudiya district	Mahmudiya, Yusufiya and Latifiya became the site of frequent Sunni insurgencies and terrorist attacks during 2004-07	Few changes (mixed)	Sadr 1/1 SLC 0/1 Fatah 0/1 Taqaddum 2/5 Azm 1/7

[***]Albright [2001]

Source: Created by author

Conclusion

From the above analysis, Baghdad can be divided into two areas, one of which is fully dominated by the al-Sadr bloc, and the other offering some room for other political parties to enter the political competition. In the latter case, political parties are keen on attracting voters by showing their ability to distribute wealth and social services through party financial resources and their connections with established elite circles, as well as tribal networks and military

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capability. To put it differently, the election in 2021 inherited the rivalries from the previous election, the two different images for the preferred political representation, which are al-Sadr's being "young, highly educated with professional knowledge, but amateur, unknown, and inexperienced in the existing political arena," and Fatah/ SLC's "sufficient experience in central government and local politics, or tribal leaders with traditional influence" [Sakai 2021: 13].

This division shows the fact that there remains no room for the previous middle/ upper class, which had occupied a large part of Baghdad's society during the 60s-80s, to be represented in the current political situation. The upper class from the previous regime disappeared and was replaced by new elite circles under the post-2003 regime, and these were pursued by the ruling political elites such as SLC and ISCI as their support base. Decomposition of the middle class in the 90s and after 2003 paralleled the military destruction under the quasi-civil war in the mixed districts such as Nisan (New Baghdad, al-Ghadir etc.) and some areas once allocated to government officials and the army during the 60s-80s (Yarmuk, Rashid and Zayuna). The pork-barrel policy taken by SLC and Taqaddum was aimed at consolidating their power in the areas which experienced drastic demographic changes and suffered from radical transformation of social strata.

On the other hand, al-Sadr remained and consolidated their representative position among the lower class in the migrant-origin urban poor. Nevertheless, al-Sadr's image of "supporters for the marginalized" cannot be shared in the regions outside of al-Sadr City and its neighbourhood. It is worth noting that a considerable number of independent candidates ran for election in Baghdad (151 among a total of 899 candidates, which is more than any electoral bloc) and won five seats. Two of them are from business circles, possibly from the urban upper middle class in Mansur and Karkh. On the contrary, an independent candidate won in constituency No.8, which included Zafraniya, raising the slogan of "Zafraniya First (zafraniya awwalan)," and showing how this region was left far behind in construction and development.

Although they were unable to win seats, newly formed political parties based on the October Movement were expected to some extent to fill this vacuum, which post-2003 political parties have failed to fill. Imtidad put up ten candidates in Baghdad: in al-Sadr City II, al-Sha'b, Kazimiya, Mansur, Dawra, Talmiya and Mahmudiya. National October Alliance (Tishrin) put up seven candidates, in Rusafa city centre and urban districts on the Karkh side. From the I'm-going-to-take-my-right Movement (Nazil akhad haqqi), five ran for election in New Baghdad, al-Sha'b, Mansur, Abu Ghrayb and Dawra, most of which had suffered fierce quasi-civil war fighting in 2006-7[18].

From the fact that a nonnegligible number of independent candidates and

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18 The movement was named after the protest song, "nazil akhad haqqi" (I am going to take my right), by famous Iraqi singer Rahma Riyad in 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yE9ZTpajjW0

protest-oriented activists challenged both incumbent ruling elite circles and movement organizations representing migrant-origin urban poor in this election, post-2003 political parties, no matter whether they have been in a ruling position or in opposition, are no more eligible to reflect the voices of the voters in Baghdad, even while the new political figures have yet to mature.

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Center for Relational Studies on Global Crises (RSGC) was established in April 2017, as Chiba University's first center for social and human sciences. We aim to be a hub for establishing a new research area called "Relational Studies on Global Crises" at the university. Our purpose is to search for new interdisciplinary and cross-cutting academic approaches. We combine various analytical methods in the human, social and natural sciences so as to get a comprehensive grasp on this "new global crisis", find a way out, and pursue a future global society based on co-existence with diverse social, political, economic and cultural groups.