

Roundtable: Fractured Axes: Iran's Post-War Strategy and Iraq's Political Landscape after the Parliamentary Elections

Iran's nuclear program

The origins of Iran's nuclear program date back to the 1950s and 1960s. After the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the program was suspended, but Iran resumed it in the 1990s. In 2011, Iran built its first nuclear power plant with assistance from the Russian Federation.

In 2015 was signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Under the agreement, Iran committed to limiting uranium enrichment to 3.67 % for civilian energy use, granting the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) full access to all nuclear facilities, and reducing the number of operating centrifuges. However, in 2018, the United States withdrew from the JCPOA and reimposed sanctions. Since then, Iran has increasingly violated the agreement's restrictions.

In December 2024, it was reported that Iran was accelerating uranium enrichment and had reached levels above 60 %, which is relatively close to the 90 % enrichment required to produce a nuclear weapon. In June 2025, the IAEA officially announced that Iran was in non-compliance with its obligations. That same month, Israel cooperating with the United States conducted strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities. These attacks are believed to have damaged research centers and resulted in the deaths of several key scientists, significantly delaying Iran's ability to develop a nuclear weapon. However, it is assumed that not all components of the facilities, particularly underground ones, were destroyed.

Publicly, Iran maintains that it is not pursuing nuclear weapons. Even within Iran, opinions on possessing nuclear weapons are not unified. Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, has issued a fatwa prohibiting the possession of such weapons.

Post-War Axis of Resistance

The fall of the Assad regime in Syria created a major gap in the so-called Axis of Resistance and disrupted Iran's land connection to Hezbollah, its strongest ally. Iran also lost a key regional partner with Bashar al-Assad's removal. Following the war with Israel, Hezbollah has been significantly weakened, as has Hamas. Iran itself has been severely affected by Israeli and U.S. strikes on its territory, as well as by ongoing sanctions.



Fig. 1 Ethnic composition of Iran

Source: Vox

Domestic political conditions in Iran are therefore highly susceptible to internal unrest. The economic crisis in the region could provide motivation for separatist groups belonging to various ethnic minorities to take action, as Iran is an ethnically diverse country.

Iraqi Parliamentary elections 2025

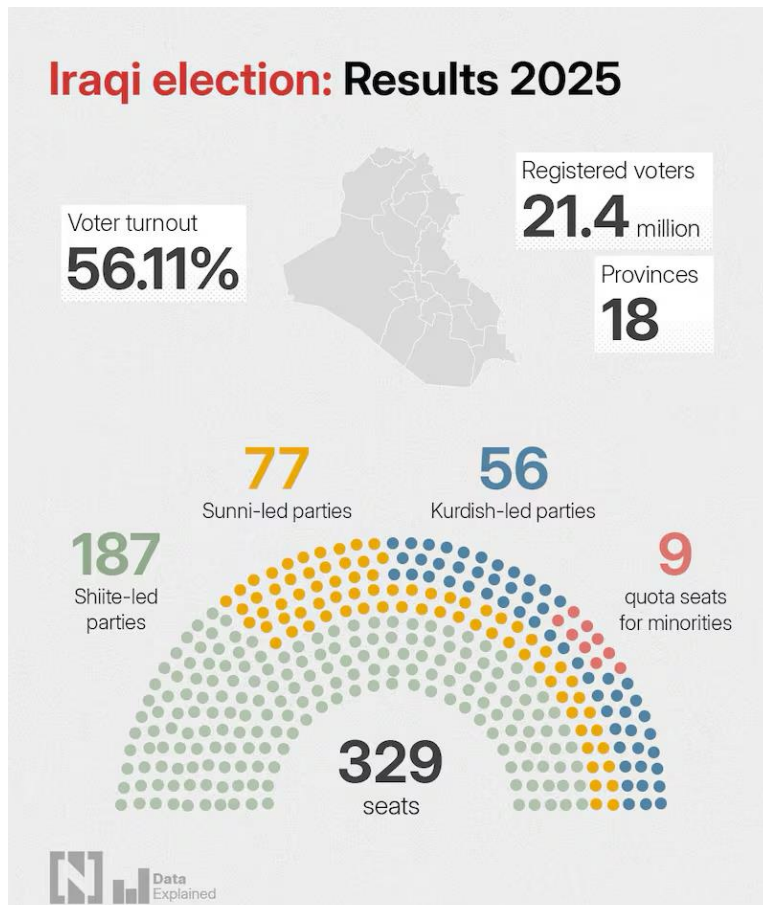


Fig. 2 Iraqi election results on November 2025
Source: The National

Iraq is a country with a highly heterogeneous ethnic composition, which significantly affects its political landscape as well as the legal requirements that must be observed in parliament. Political parties are often divided along ethnic and religious lines, with major blocs representing Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds. The Iraqi parliament also follows several mandatory quotas, including the requirement that at least 25% of parliamentary seats must be held by women and a quota ensuring representation of minorities such as Christians, Yazidis, and Mandaeans. The Council of Representatives consists of 329 seats.

By long-standing political convention, the prime minister must be a Shiite, the speaker of parliament a Sunni, and the largely ceremonial presidency is reserved for a Kurd.

Parliamentary elections in Iraq were held on 11 November 2025, with voter turnout slightly above 56%. The winner was the incumbent prime minister, Muhammad al-Sudani, whose Reconstruction and Development Coalition secured 46 seats. He was followed by former prime minister Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law Coalition with 29 seats, the National State Forces Alliance led by Shiite cleric Ammar al-Hakim, the Badr List headed by senior politician Hadi al-Amiri, which won around 18–21 seats, and the Al-Sadiqoun List, political wing of Asaib Ahl al-Haq led by Shiite cleric Qais al-Khazali, which secured 27 seats. Among Kurdish parties, the best performer was the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), led by Masoud Barzani, which won 27 seats, the same number secured by the Taqadum Coalition.

Even though al-Sudani won the election, this does not necessarily mean he will be able to form a government or remain prime minister. The future governing coalition is highly uncertain; based on previous experience, the process of forming a government may take nearly a year.