

Workshop outline

IRAQ BEYOND ITS 2018 ELECTIONS: WHAT MIGHT BE NEXT?

Brussels, Wednesday 20 June 2018, Rue de Treves 59-61 (East West Institute)

Context

A nationalist, anti-corruption and pro-poor Shi'a religious leader who used to work with Iran against US forces just gained most seats in Iraq's elections – by working with, among others, communist parties. The pro-Iran Fatah alliance – mostly made up of Iran-sponsored paramilitary forces from the Al-Hashd al-Shabi - came second. The current prime minister, Haider Al-Abadi came third, gaining most votes among Mosul's Sunni (he himself is a Shi'a). Despite a comparatively poor domestic showing, he has amply demonstrated his ability internationally to work with both Iran and the US in relative harmony. On the downside, February's donor conference in Kuwait did not suggest that a serious anti-corruption drive or reforming Iraq's entrenched political interests is high on PM Al-Abadi's agenda. To top the electoral confusion off, the Kurdish parties – KDP and PUK – won a surprisingly large number of seats despite their poor performance in government, serious nepotism and a botched referendum.

Yet, all of this is only the start as the hard work of coalition formation is just beginning. Discussions on the division of portfolios will follow and a political program that can guide government implementation might see the light of the day at some point. In short, much is still up in the air - although the lines of the playing field have been somewhat redrawn. What game might ensue?

Purpose

This workshop will take stock of the significance of the 2018 Iraqi elections beyond the headlines. It seeks to accomplish this aim by analyzing the elections through the prism of the regional geopolitical competition to which Iraq is exposed, through the prism of deeper conflict issues and drivers behind the elections, and through the prism of the entrenched security roles and interests of the Peshmerga and Al-Hashd al-Sha'bi respectively.

It is our hope that a discussion along these lines will help maintain a realistic policy perspective on the possible directions and regional implications of Iraq's domestic politics.

Program

Brussels @Rue de Treves 59-61 (East West Institute) on Wednesday 20 June 15:00 – 17:30

Time	Speaker	Focus
15:00 – 15:10	Kawa Hassan <i>East West Institute</i>	Brief scene setter to frame the Iraqi elections
15:10 – 15:30	Hosham Dawood <i>Anthropologist at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Paris)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Zooming out: Iraq in the regional context• What do the election results really tell us?
15:30 – 15:50	Discussion	An opportunity to expand the conversation
15:50 – 16:10	Kamal Chomani <i>Non-resident fellow at the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deeper conflict issues and drivers• Case study: The politics of Iraqi Kurdistan
16:10 – 16:30	Discussion	An opportunity to expand the conversation
16:30 – 16:50	Feike Fliervoet & Erwin van Veen <i>Visiting fellow and senior research fellow at The Clingendael Institute</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The role of the Peshmerga in Kurdish politics• The role of the Al-Hashd al-Sha'bi in Iraqi politics
16:50 – 17:30	Discussion and closure	An opportunity to expand the conversation
17:30 -	Networking drinks	

Registration

To participate in this workshop, please contact Erwin van Veen (Senior research fellow) on even@clingendael.org

The discussion takes place based on the Chatham House rule.