



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on February 13, 2009

Iraq Elections No Victory for U.S.

Conducted under tight security, the elections were largely peaceful, although one suicide bombing killed 16, and three candidates and two election workers were shot to death. The election results have been reported in much of the global media as “a sweeping victory,” “a stunning victory,” or “an overwhelming victory” for al-Maliki’s Dawa Party, which ran this time as a coalition calling itself Enforcing the Law.



These descriptions are deceptive, however, in that they vastly overstate the margin of victory and paper over how fragile the current relative peace and stability in Iraq actually are. Al-Maliki’s Dawa coalition won pluralities in 9 of Iraq’s 14 provinces, but nowhere came close to a majority. His highest tallies came in Baghdad, 38 percent; and Basra, 37 percent. In Diyala it received only 6 percent of the vote; in Karbala, 8.5 percent; in Muthana, 10.9 percent; in Salahuddin, 3.5 percent; in Wasit, 15.3 percent. But these tallies look even more dismal when one considers that only 51 percent of Iraq’s 14.9 million voters turned out. Thus, in his best district, Baghdad, al-Maliki actually garnered only about 19 percent support, not exactly an “overwhelming victory.” This means, of course, that al-Maliki remains in a very weak position and will be able to govern only with the support of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC) and other radical, anti-U.S., pro-Iranian political parties.

The Obama administration has been making plans to transfer significant numbers of troops from Iraq to Afghanistan, based partly on the belief that Iraq is now stabilized. However, Iraq is far from stable, and could easily devolve into chaos and widespread sectarian and tribal warfare at any moment. The February 12 suicide bombing of Shiite pilgrims in Karbala, which killed eight and wounded more than 50, is a stark reminder of the true situation in Iraq. Other troubling indicators are the charges of vote fraud by those who lost and the threats and assassination attempts against winning candidates from Basra in the south to Mosul in the north. It is one thing to hold elections and quite another to translate that into actual governance.



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The likelihood (or, more accurately, near certainty) of a return to increasing and widespread violence in Iraq is not an argument for maintaining U.S. troops there, however. Iraq will be dealing with its age-old problems for many years to come. It may be the Iraqis will never sort out their differences and develop into a peaceful nation state. They may end up fracturing into separate, independent Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish states. Whichever course they take, the United States cannot afford the blood or treasure to continue the Iraqi occupation.

It is worth considering what our sacrifices have already bought in Iraq. Reporting in the major media would lead many Americans to believe that we should be rejoicing at the victories of Nuri al-Maliki and the Dawa Party. They are usually described as moderates, in contrast to even more radical Shiite forces, such as SIIC, headed by Abdul Azziz al-Hakim, and candidates endorsed by the Mahdi Army's Muqtada al-Sadr. However, like al-Hakim and al-Sadr, Prime Minister al-Maliki and his Dawa Party are closely tied to Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Shortly after the elections, on February 11, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki led a large delegation of Iranian officials to Baghdad for meetings with al-Maliki, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, and other top Iraqi officials. Many of the leaders of al-Maliki's Dawa Party, like the top leadership of SIIC, have spent much of their lives in Iran and identify closely with the Ayatollah Khomeini and his successor, Ayatollah Khamenei, Iran's current maximum leader.

Another indication of al-Maliki's Dawa Party "moderation" is its seating of condemned terrorist Jamal Jafaar Mohammed as a member of the Iraqi Parliament. Mohammed was sentenced to death in Kuwait for the 1983 bombings of the U.S. and French embassies in Kuwait that killed six people. More recently, he was commander of the Badr Brigades/Badr Organization, one of the principal Iran-backed terrorist group/militias in Iran.

Was it worth more than 4,000 American lives and hundreds of billions of dollars to achieve this, and has it made us safer?

Photo of Nuri al-Maliki: AP Images

See also "[Baghdad-Tehran Axis Grows](#)" and "[Talking With Iran's Terror Regime](#)."



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