

Political crisis in Iraq

What is the issue?

More than nine months after Iraq held its October 2021 parliamentary elections, political leaders have been unable to form a government.

What has led to the current deadlock?

- **No faith in democracy**- Iraq has failed to form a government after the October 2021 parliamentary elections in which Mr. Sadr's bloc won the most number of seats.
- Most Iraqis have simply lost faith that their democratic system will ever change their lives for the better.
- **Growing divisions**- A bitter power struggle between the country's dominant Shia parties have plunged the country into a deepening crisis, leading to the current violence.
- Usually in Iraqi politics, senior positions and ministries are parceled out to the three largest demographic groups in the country - Shiite Muslims, Sunni Muslims and the Kurdish ethnic group.
- Over the past few years, serious divisions have been growing.
- **Power struggle**- Part of the problem is the power struggle between Mr. Sadr and Mr. Maliki, the former Prime Minister who is a key leader of the Coordination Framework.
- **Foreign interference**- The rivalry has come about partially because al-Sadr is opposed to any foreign interference in Iraqi affairs, whether from the US or Iran.
- **The Coordination Framework** mostly represents militias formed in 2014 by local volunteers to fight against the Islamic State inside Iraq.
- These militias receive financial, military and even theological support from Iran and many members express allegiance to Iran over Iraq.

Under muhasasa system, President is Kurdish, Prime Minister is Shia and Parliamentary speaker is Sunni in Iraq.

What do Sadrists want?

- In protest against the rival parties' continued boycott of Parliament, Mr. Sadr asked all the legislators of the Sadrist Movement to resign.
- The Coordination Framework took advantage of the resignation of the Sadrist lawmakers and went ahead with plans to form their government.
- Mr. Sadr, now out of Parliament, called for protests in the streets.
- The protestors stormed the Parliament building in the Baghdad's Green Zone.
- **Demands**

- Dissolution of Parliament
- Early elections
- Constitutional amendments to clear blockades that stand in the way of Mr. Sadr forming a majority government

What lies ahead for Iraqi politics?

- **Sadr's demands-** As per the wishes of Mr. Sadr and his loyal followers, Parliament could be dissolved, and early elections could be called.
- Mr. Sadr's readiness to reach political tie-ups with the Sunnis, Kurds and left-leaning parties enhances his chances of forming a majority government, provided the political impediments are removed.
- **Shia Coordination Framework's demands-** The second possibility is the Shia Coordination Framework electing a new President and getting their choice elected as the next Prime Minister of Iraq irrespective of the protests.
- But, it runs the risk of violence as it would not be easy for the Framework to ignore their anger.

References

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