Kurdish parties split over impending no-confidence vote of Finance Minister. The Kurdistan Alliance fractured over an impending no-confidence vote against Finance Minister Hoshyar Zebari, a member of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). Opposition parties, including the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Gorran, indicated that they would vote for Zebari’s dismissal in order to undercut the KDP’s influence. The division in the Kurdistan Alliance has also exposed a split in the PUK, which divides over the survival of Zebari. An Iranian delegation arrived in Sulaimaniyah on September 5 to meet with PUK officials on September 4 and 5. However, no vote occurred on September 6 due to a lack of quorum.

Suleimaniyah to meet with PUK officials on September 4 and 5. An Iranian delegation arrived in Suleimaniyah on September 5 to meet with the Kurdistan Alliance. Opposition parties, including the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Gorran, indicated that they would vote for Zebari’s dismissal in order to undercut the KDP’s influence. The division in the Kurdistan Alliance has also exposed a split in the PUK, which divides over the survival of Zebari. An Iranian delegation arrived in Sulaimaniyah on September 5 to meet with PUK officials on September 4 and 5. However, no vote occurred on September 6 due to a lack of quorum.

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8 Annan al-Hakim succeeds Ibrahim al-Jaafari who has held the position for six years as the National Alliance remained deadlocked largely over the political maneuverings of the Reform Front, Maliki’s party in the CoR, and PM Abadi’s attempts to reshuffle the Cabinet. Hakim succeeds Ibrahim al-Jaafari, who has held the position for six years. The decision, though unexpected, has received support from political parties across the spectrum, including Sunni and Kurdish parties. Hakim called on September 6 for national unity and for the reactivation of the General Commission to support consensus decisions.

9 Iranian Ambassador meets with Hakim. The Iranian Ambassador to Iraq, Hassan Danasari, met with ISCI leader Ammar al-Hakim and former PM Nouri al-Maliki on September 3 and 4, respectively, to discuss security and political developments, including efforts to reframe Maliki’s position in the upcoming elections. Danasari may be aligning with the Reform Front as he is losing his support base in Ethbad. He may try to appease and support the Reform Front in the hopes that the party will guarantee his survival as CoR Speaker.

10 CoR Speaker submits three nominations for Defense Ministry. The CoR Speaker Salam al-Jaburi submitted three names for the vacant position of Defense Minister to Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi on September 2. The list was reportedly submitted on behalf of the Sunni Ethbad bloc. Two of the three candidates are affiliated with the Reform Front, former PM Nouri al-Maliki’s shadow party in the CoR, and are from the Jaburi tribe. Jaburi later clarified his nominations, stating he was simply considering three names, not vetting candidates. Al-Jaburi may be aligning with the Reform Front as he is losing his support base in Ethbad. He may try to appease and support the Reform Front in the hopes that the party will guarantee his survival as CoR Speaker.

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12 ISIS launches double spectacular attacks near Tikrit. The Ministry of Interior reported that ISIS launched a two-step attack on September 4, targeting the village of Shah in south of Samarra. ISIS first detonated a Vehicle-Borne IED (VBIED) then an attacker detonated a Suicide Vest (SVVEST). ISIS claimed the attacks, which killed six people and injured nine others.

13 ISIS launches deadly attack on security headquarters south of Samarra. ISIS launched a multi-assy offensive against an ISF headquarters in Menialah District, south of Samarra, on September 2. A Sahal al-Dhe security source stated that the attack killed eight soldiers and police and wounded 20 others. The Popular Mobilization stated that the attack killed 54 fighters from the Jaburi tribe and injured eight others, but that the situation was now “under control.”

14 SVVEST detonates at checkpoint near Shia’s shrine in eastern Diyala Province. The Diwala Police reported that an attacker detonated a Suicide Vest (SVVEST) at a security checkpoint near a Shia’s shrine in Wadi Malqab, near the Iraqi-Iranian border in Diyala Province, on September 2. The blast killed a policeman and a child. ISIS has not yet claimed the attack.

15 ISIS detonates SVBIED in central Baghdad, site of massive July 3 attack. The Baghdad Operations Commander reported that ISIS detonated a Suicide-VBIED (SVBIED) in Karrada in central Baghdad on September 6, killing upwards of nine people and injuring twenty others. Karrada previously witnessed Iraq’s worst suicide attack since 2003 on July 3, which killed upwards of 290 people. ISIS claimed the attack, boasting that they had managed to bypass several checkpoints to reach the highly-secured Karrada district.

16 ISIS detonates SVVEST in southwestern Baghdad. The Ministry of Interior reported that an ISIS attacker detonated an SVVEST in al-Alam neighbourhood in southwestern Baghdad on September 5, killing a policeman and a child. ISIS claimed the attack.

17 Sadrist calls for labor and hunger strikes to pressure reformers. Sadrist Trend leader Moqtada al-Sadr called on September 2 for a nationwide labor strike on September 4 and 5 in protest of a hunger strike on September 9 and 10 in order to pressure the government to implement reforms. Demonstrations occurred on September 4 and 5 in Baghdad and the southern provinces, as Sadists and several non-Sadist employers carried out labor strikes outside primarily government offices.

Iraqi Kurdish parties fractured over the impending no-confidence vote against Kurdish Finance Minister Hoshyar Zebari. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Gorran, two Kurdish opposition parties in the Kurdistan Alliance, indicated on August 30 and September 1 that they would dismiss Zebari in order to undermine the influence of his party, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). However, several PUK leaders have recognized both that Zebari’s dismissal could empower former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to reclaim the premiership, possibly to the detriment of Kurdish political interests, and that the Kurds will lose their influence in the Iraqi Government if the Kurdistan Alliance fails to maintain a unified position. PUK Deputy Secretary Generals Kursat Rasul and Barham Salih tried to consolidate PUK support for Zebari by creating a “decision center” on September 2, but anti-KDP members, including political leaders Mulla Bakhtiar and Hero Ibrahim, wife of PUK founder Jalal Talabani, resisted the attempt. President Fuad Masoum, a senior PUK member, and an Iranian delegation visited PUK and Gorran leaders in Sulaimaniyah on September 4-6 in order to ensure Zebari’s survival and resolve the PUK’s internal issues. Continued Kurdish participation in Baghdad is necessary for stability in Iraq and the continuation of a single Iraqi state, key Iraqi interests. The attempts were reportedly unsuccessful. However, the Council of Representatives (CoR) failed to reach quorum on September 6, precluding a no-confidence vote against Zebari. The CoR will reconvene September 8, however the upcoming Eid al-Ahda holiday recess, starting on September 9, will likely also result in a lack of quorum, moving any no-confidence vote until after the holiday, around September 27. The holiday could give the KDP time to secure support for Zebari from other blocs and give PUK time to improve party discipline to support Zebari.

Meanwhile, the National Alliance, the pan-Shia bloc in the CoR, selected Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) leader Ammar al-Hakim as its new chief on September 5. The selection is likely an effort to revive the ineffectual Shia alliance, which fractured largely over the political maneuverings of the Reform Front, Maliki’s shadow party in the CoR, and PM Abadi’s attempts to reshuffle the Cabinet. Hakim succeeds Ibrahim al-Jaafari, who held the position for six years as the National Alliance remained deadlocked between electing Hakim or Ali al-Adeeb, a Maliki-backed candidate, as Jaafari’s successor. Hakim’s selection therefore indicates that Maliki was heavily pressured or incentivized to drop his case. Both Hakim and Maliki met with Iranian Ambassador to Iraq Hassan Danasari on September 3 and 4, respectively, who likely pressed on Iran’s insistence that the Shia’s parties reunite and that Maliki stand down on his refusal to support Hakim for the position. A fractured Iraqi Shia’s alliance could promote increased instability, limiting Iran’s influence in Iraq. Political parties, including both Kurdish and Sunni parties, have praised Hakim’s selection, as he is regarded as a moderate figure. A unified National Alliance could provide a stabilizing effect for the Iraqi political system which has rapidly deteriorated since April. However, it remains to be seen how Maliki and the Reform Front will respond to the National Alliance’s revitalization and whether or not the National Alliance will be able to unite Shia’s political parties in the CoR. Hakim may use the Eid al-Adha recess to reignite the Shia’s parties and to mediate ongoing crises amongst the Kurdish and Sunni parties in order to stabilize the government.