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## What's Going on in Iraq? An Election Day of Hope

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Iraqi voters began heading for the polls this morning as the nation's first nationwide election for a non-provisional government began. As *The New York Times* reports, *The elections, which are expected to draw as many as 10 million Iraqis to the polls, will be the last formal milestone in the American-backed political process that was devised to foster a democratic government. The elections are being seen by Iraqi and American leaders as the definitive test of the Bush administration's assumption that a free vote is the best means for reconciling Iraq's vastly polarized ethnic and sectarian groups and defeating the Sunni Arab insurgency that is threatening to break the country apart. The voting itself is expected to reveal a fissure of another sort, between a Shiite coalition of religious parties on one side and a mostly secular array of Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish parties on the other. Between them are profound differences over the direction of the country and the nature of the Iraqi state, not just over how heavily it should be influenced by Islam but also over the powers of the central government and the autonomy granted to local regions. Implicit in those questions, for many Iraqis, is whether the country can survive at all.*

All persons of good will must pray for the peace of Iraq, and for the success of this important and unprecedented election.

WORLD COVERAGE: *The Guardian* [London], *CBS News*, *Taipei Times* [Taiwan], *The Washington Post*, *CTV* [Canada], *The Standard* [Hong Kong], *The Age* [Australia], *MSNBC*, *CNN*, *Fox News*. For local reports, see [Iraq the Model](#), a blog written by an Iraqi dentist. [HT, [Justin Taylor](#)]

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