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RELATION: NATIONAL SECURITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF IRAQ

Abstract: National security is a renewable concept with a growing complexity in the regional and international environment. It has moved from its narrow sense – military and political, – to a comprehensive and broad one. Research and economic studies on all of its aspects show that insecurity has significant consequences in all areas of the economy. In order to orient ourselves better, we need to look carefully at ways of perceiving the challenges to Iraq's economic security and security as a necessary condition for the country's development. There has been a lot of research on the state of Iraq by international and local organizations and institutions. Everyone has proven that the most serious challenge to development in Iraq is insecurity. In fact, with this material, we have to answer the main question: What is the reason for the decline of national security in the Republic of Iraq?

Keywords: Iraq; USA; security; causes; problems; challenges; measures; government; result.

Reflections on National Security in the Republic of Iraq

Considering the events and changes in the Republic of Iraq since 2003, putting them in their complex format and interpreting them as problematic is therefore not an easy endeavour. National security is a complex and renewable concept. It has moved from its narrow concept – military and political, – to a comprehensive and broad concept¹.

Research and economic studies on all of its aspects show that the lack of security has significant consequences in all areas of the economy, so that war, murder, displacement, theft, kidnapping and other deteriorating security factors do not allow any change, whether economic, political or social, to have a negative impact on it. One of the favourite phrases of the late Professor Alexander Fall is: "It all starts in Mesopotamia, the cradle of human civilization," but unfortunately, a few years after the 2003 war, the rapid fall of dictator Saddam Hussein and President Barack Obama's decision to withdraw the United States of America from Iraq, the uncertainty was totally violated. Iraq has squandered its resources, abandoned investments, halted the growth of its production, and stopped the wheel of economic development.

In order to orient ourselves better, we need to look carefully at ways of perceiving the problems to Iraq's economic security and security as a necessary condition for the country's development.

The results of the elections held in Iraq on 10 October 2021 reflect the changes achieved by the anti-government protests that shook the country in October 2019 at the level of individuals and parties

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¹ **Ali, M. S.** Strategic Challenges of the Iraqi National Security According to the International Variables. *Tikrit Journal for Political Science* (Arabic edition), 20, 30 June 2020, pp. 53–86. ISSN: 2073–1140.

ruling Iraq after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Since October 2019, Iraq has witnessed accelerating events and transformations in its economic, political, and even social system, which led to important results and development, and put its national security in front of new demands and problems. This forced it to look for different ways to deal with those problems that threaten its national security. Despite the diversity and multiplicity of these challenges, the following question remains in the light of internal tension and external interference: Can the next Iraqi government face challenges and find ways to leave situations of conflict and instability that threaten Iraq's unity and national security? The crisis in the country since 2003 has many components: political, economic, ideological, conflicts with other neighbouring countries, and rivalry between the United States and Russia. These components have different roots and should be addressed in the name of the country's socio-economic stability and security.

The National Security Strategy as part of the overall strategy for the development of Iraq, which was approved by the Iraqi National Security Council at its session No. 21 in October 2015, and by the Council of Ministers at its regular session No. 66 on 1 March 2016, identifies the problems of the national security sector, as well as the need for a comprehensive reform of this important sector and to enforce the law and achieve justice for all Iraqis. When we look at the security sector in Iraq, we find that security does not follow a parallel line but rather many different levels. While the Iraqi national security sector with its military and security apparatus has won a decisive victory over the terrorist organization ISIS², security and stability in Iraqi cities are still subject to violations and retreat. Among the most prominent dilemmas and problems facing the Iraqi national security sector that have a significant impact on Iraq's socio-economic development are the following ones³:

- lack of completeness and entry into force of laws regulating the work of the military and security institutions;
- abundance of security institutions in Iraq and an intersection in tasks and responsibilities, meaning a problem in the structure of the Iraqi national security sector, which manifests itself in the lack of centralization, coordination, and cooperation between these institutions;
- lack of clarity on strategies, policies, and working context for some security and military institutions;
- administrative and financial corruption, weak oversight, and political interference in the work of security services and institutions;
- lack of human resource skills in some scientific and technological disciplines;
- weak trust and deteriorating cooperation between security institutions, the military and citizens;
- overlap and weak coordination, cooperation and integration between institutions and intelligence agencies;
- lack of a central command and control system with powers to enable it to mobilize the country's human, material and military resources in order to counter internal and external threats;
- increasing tensions between the federal security services and the military, the Kurdish Peshmerga forces, and some of the People's Mobilization Forces (al-Hashd-al-Shaabi).

Iraq and its national security system suffer from two forms of challenges that hinder its progress and require a lot of effort and work to ensure that they are avoided: perceived, visible strategic problems whose merits and effects can be sought directly in kind on the one hand, and invisible strategic problems on the other hand. These challenges are a major dilemma for the political and economic stability of the country and for the stability of the Iraqi government. Hence, the formulation of any kind of strategy in Iraq, whether comprehensive or ancillary, is needed to meet these challenges, among other things, to analyze the internal and external environment in order to understand the strengths and weaknesses in the internal environment of Iraq, and to analyze the opportunities and threats in the regional and international environment. In this way, the country can address them according to rational planning methods,

² ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant).

³ **Alo. I.** Results and Pathways in the Light of Internal Conflicts and External Intervention (Analysis), 17 Oct. 2021, asbarme.com.

and come up with rational solutions, taking advantage of strengths and opportunities and dealing with internal weaknesses and external threats.

In recent years, the international community has faced several problems as a result of the transformations witnessed by the international system in the light of growing security shocks and unconventional threats, as well as the growing ambitions of other international powers, such as Russia and China. These disturbances and threats have affected the stability of the international system as a whole and the Eastern region. In particular, the Middle East and economic and geopolitical developments have affected the international community, most notably through fluctuations in oil prices and the emergence of a number of crises on the surface of regional cooperation, including the war in Yemen, the crises in Syria and Libya, and the Persian Bay dispute. However, one of the most important crises in the Middle East is the state crisis. In other words, a dangerous escalation in the model of cross-border roles played by actors outside the country, which calls on the major powers to intervene more to secure their interests in the region. And in the case of the United States, the danger is exacerbated from a strategic point of view due to the escalation of the influence of anti-American actors with the expansion of the arena for strategic operations. Therefore, in the recent past, it has often been observed that the American discourse on Iran's role in the region has deteriorated, accusing the country of funding and recruiting non-state actors from armed factions in a way that threatens regional security and stability. From this conviction comes the US National Security Strategy for 2018, which prioritizes the Middle East region since it is a roadmap for expanding American influence⁴. That is why we will try to shed light on the most important reasons that motivate the American decision-maker to support American forces in Iraq. The data show that the American decision-maker has a strong tendency to increase security cooperation with Iraq to achieve a number of goals, including those related to counter-terrorism efforts and others related to political stability in the region. It is worth noting that US policy in the region attaches great importance to Iraq for several reasons, some of which have to do with geostrategic location, and others with the reality of Iraqi policy and political conditions in the regional environment. US efforts to counter Iranian influence include two pillars: the first one concerns the type of regional allies that will play an acting role, and the second one the areas of operations in which the US strategy against opposition will be implemented. Iranian influence and actors close to Tehran will put a lot of pressure on the Iraqi government in this framework to maintain Iraq's policy of moving away from the Axis policy in the region, and promoting balanced and moderate relations with all countries.

The national security of the various countries in today's world is facing unprecedented problems not only in terms of their number or even diversity, but also of the degree of their danger and complexity. It has become unprecedentedly influenced by many factors, and enters a lot of data into its calculations. The concept of national security is no longer limited to the military, security or even economic dimensions, as is well known. It has rather expanded significantly to include social, environmental, technical, digital, and even health aspects. The pandemic of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) has posed new problems that have led us to reconsider this concept, to include aspects that have not been given much attention until recently. The most important thing, of course, is health or medical security and everything related to it in terms of scientific progress and the ability to respond effectively to emergencies that can have dangerous unexpected consequences.

Analyses by the Washington-based Middle East Research Institute consider the health system⁵, one of the key elements of Iraq's future, another sign of a crumbling country, noting that corruption has played a key role in this ongoing infrastructure collapse. The Institute added in a report that corruption in Iraq has had a negative impact on the health system, made all investments in the sector useless, and obstructed the Ministry of Health from implementing any tangible changes.

Moreover, the Washington Institute added that the Iraqi government has hampered improvements in health care for Iraqis in the public and private sectors due to fierce competition among politicians to

⁴ **Rajih Hadi, A.** Security Challenges for Iraq's National Security. <https://kitabab.com>, 2018. Source: *Political Attitudes* magazine, one of the publications of the Arab Democratic Center in Berlin, Germany.

⁵ **Al-Aloosy, M.** Washington Institute for New East Policy. Iraq's Health Care System is Another Sign of a Crumbling Country, 15 July 2021.

win the Department of Health to misappropriate drugs, noting that US courts are considering evidence against companies that paid bribes to win contracts from the Iraqi Ministry of Health. The report states that the Iraqi government and the Ministry of Health have been accused of selling drugs on the black market and have therefore been unprepared to confront the Crown epidemic and have failed to control the virus, and that many Iraqis believe the government lacks a clear strategy in this regard.

The Washington Institute's report further argues that improving Iraq's health care system as an important tool for developing the country's economy and security is inextricably linked to improving efficiency and fighting corruption (two conditions the Iraqi government has failed to meet since 2003), and that change is very difficult in Iraq today, simply because the forces responsible for the miserable conditions are the same beneficiaries and the same ones in power. Throughout history, security has been of great importance in the lives of people and societies where socio-economic development cannot continue or be stable without security. There were different conceptions of security as one of the important factors for the country's political and economic development, but in general it remained focused on stability and living in peace and without fear or threat. For long periods, the concept has remained related to the ability to repel external threats. It was therefore limited to the military and security dimensions as it continued to address the ability of the state to protect its borders and also its internal and external security from any military threat. Therefore, in the past, it was natural for the concept of national security to refer to military and security developments, including armed conflict, and to the balance of power at regional and international levels.

However, the concept of national security has evolved over the past few decades, especially with the growing importance of the economy for building a strong state and its growing role in relations between states where it develops. In its overall sense, the economy has become an important component for achieving national security of the countries. The military and security dimensions are definitely influenced by the strength of the national economy, which in turn affects the volume of spending in this area and the ability to modernize the military arsenal. With the development that the world is witnessing in different areas and the intertwining of interests between countries as a result of globalization, this concept has been extended to include many elements, such as food security and environmental security, as well as important terms related to national security, and an integral part of it, such as water security and food security, is emerging.

The concept of economic development and national security has expanded greatly and has begun to address all the opportunities and resources available to the state, allowing it to defend itself and its borders, and to protect its interests and even its values from external and internal threats.

Current Issues Facing the National Security of the Republic of Iraq

The Iraqi national security faces a number of visible problems that pose a direct threat to the strategic security system, and these problems, along with their essence and effects, can be sought directly, but the problems that constitute a greater threat to the strategic system of national security are the ones whose direct impact on the national security units cannot be sought. Therefore, the invisible problems to the Iraqi national security are manifested by a number of factors and influences that pertain to important strategic sectors in the country, such as the infrastructure sector whose effects affect the lives of citizens, as well as other problems facing the digital system represented by cyber threats in addition to the problems of population growth and strategic planning.

Typically, a national cybersecurity strategy consists of several short-, medium-, and long-term strategies that cover all national priorities and address national cyber risk exposure. Wars in their various traditional forms, whether military or economic, are not the only thing that threatens Iraq. There are rather new wars that may be more dangerous and more harmful in the political, security and economic sense, and they are cyberattacks, which today have become a threat and a source of concern facing the world without exception.

The risk is high in light of the increase in hacking and cyberattacks, which puts Iraq in front of the challenges of strengthening the cybersecurity system that guarantees the prevention of unauthorized use,

misuse and unjustified use of information, disruption of systems, and extortion of governments, companies and citizens. Iraqi cybersecurity needs legal and regulatory frameworks, as well as organizational structures in addition to technical and technological means, which are an expression of the joint efforts of the private and public sectors, local and international, which aim to protect the national cyberspace.

Talking about any democracy requires looking at the role of the media in deepening democracy and its role in increasing democratic awareness of different trends in society.

The functions of communication in open democratic societies acquire great vitality, great importance, effectiveness, and great influence, as it has been called the media authority (or the fourth authority) in an integration with the traditional authorities, which are legislative, executive, and judicial.

Naturally, media challenges are one of the most important invisible threats to Iraq's strategic security system and a factor with consequences, most of which are determined by connotations threatening national security to the Iraqi public where the media tries to control national attitudes. especially since they have great influence due to the modernity of the media engineering and the material possibilities it possesses. Therefore, Iraq suffers from strategic media exposure, and it certainly does not fall outside the scope of its classification of security threats.

Undoubtedly, free media are one of the prominent and important components of a democratic society, and without the presence of this media, no real democratic experience can grow, develop, prosper, and guarantee its successful future.

One of the most invisible problems facing Iraq's national security is the rapid increase in the population without having a positive impact on the levels of well-being and economic growth. The country's population has reached more than 37 million people, with the annual population growth rate remaining at 2.61% in 2017. The expectations of the Iraqi Ministry of Planning indicated that the country's population will reach 50 million people in 2030 in light of the annual estimates of the population that is increasing at a rate of 850,000 to one million people per year with an annual growth rate of 2.6%, with the possibility that the number will rise to 80 million by 2050.

Iraq's economic and service crises are exacerbating as the country records a continuous rise in the population, which will reach 50 million people in less than 10 years according to official estimates in light of the lack of government plans to confront this increase that threatens national security. As specialists say, it needs to build Millions of new housing units, schools, hospitals and health centres, with the expansion of existing infrastructure services and changing them in a civilized and sophisticated manner. This population increase is accompanied by many crises that Iraq suffers from, most notably unemployment, poverty and high food prices in addition to budgets that did not include any allocations for new appointments, and to the deterioration of infrastructure.

Planning is one of the main tasks of strategic leadership and an important element for the stability of the national security system, as planning is related to the future and use of futurology and modern scientific theories and methods that facilitate this. One of the issues facing Iraq is poor strategic planning for national security.

The weakness of performance management is one of the most important obstacles and challenges facing national security in Iraq, as well as the creation of a central body responsible for following up the achievement of national goals, large projects and initiatives by communicating, coordinating, and cooperating with ministries and governorates in managing performance, solving problems and achieving results, which is considered the highest priority of the state.

Mobilizing the effort in implementing national strategies is one of the important challenges that need to form an economic reform unit, and it is necessary that the policies of implementing national strategies be supervised by this unit because its position helps it influence, communicate, coordinate and cooperate with ministries and governorates, and solve problems arising from implementation with a quick response as this is in the service of the developmental orientations of Iraq.

When we talk about visible and invisible problems that threaten and impede the stability and security of Iraq, it is necessary not to forget the infrastructure that needs to be renewed in the name of Iraq's development and the well-being of its people. The interest in infrastructure has become a prerequisite for the stability of Iraq and the preservation of its national security, which needs to develop a clear strategic

plan based on structural and organizational foundations, taking into account everything that serves Iraq and national security today and in the future. We should clarify what infrastructure and superstructure mean as they are one of the important and relevant factors to ensure national security and economic development.

It is common to define the concept of infrastructure for any country as all the institutions and technical structures that support society and affect national economic, scientific, health and service security, such as schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, dams, stations, airports, factories, agricultural production, and electricity. As for the concept of superstructure, it means all the legislation, regulations, laws and the larger framework for them and other state institutions that used to govern the work of those infrastructures. It is also possible to add to the concept of infrastructure the system of values that society established and believed in thousands of years ago. It is indispensable to the process of growth and economic development in Iraq, as its presence is one of the most important elements of attracting investment and developing the national economy. The comprehensive development process in Iraq must be accompanied by parallel infrastructure services, which aim to improve the lives of citizens in Iraq through the provision of physical and social services.

Iraq's highest interests and national security are embodied in resolving its problems with neighbouring countries, defeating terrorist organizations, and identifying and ending regional and global competition and conflict in its region. Analyzing the problems of Iraqi security requires ways or mechanisms to counter any threat or challenge facing Iraqi national security in the 21st century, the most important of which are⁶:

1. Solving border problems with neighbouring countries, which historically exist and need:

A. striving to resolve the international problems of land, river and sea borders with regional neighbours, especially Iran, Kuwait, and Turkey, in a precise and fair manner in formal agreements registered with the United Nations;

B. seeking a bilateral international agreement with Iran to end the ceasefire status for the Iran–Iraq war and to formally end it;

C. seeking to return Iraqi lands provided by the previous political regime to some neighbouring countries or the lands that have been taken over by them.

2. Cessation of control by neighbouring countries Turkey, Syria and Iran over water resources reaching Iraq, namely:

A. concluding bilateral or multilateral agreements with coastal states, namely Turkey, Syria and Iran, guaranteeing the acquired rights in determining Iraq's water share as a downstream country;

B. insistence on neighbouring countries to accede to the 1997 Convention on the Right to Use Watercourses and International Non-Navigational Purposes (in force since 17 August 2014), and to resolve water issues and disputes on the basis of its provisions.

3. The presence of foreign forces in Iraq: political parties were divided on whether they continued to be present or not, in practice and in fact, as shown by the adoption and implementation of the parliamentary resolution voted by the House of Representatives on 1 May 2020 at its extraordinary session, attended by 172 members and hosted by the Prime Minister (the complainant) on the Government's obligation to end the presence of foreign forces in Iraq.

4. The remnants of international terrorist cells, especially those of the terrorist organization ISIS: there are still foreign organizations that support terrorism and its organizations in Iraq in terms of funding, recruitment and shelter in order to prevent the rebuilding of the country and its capabilities and resuming the international position it deserves in this vital region of the world.

⁶ **Hadi Alshakrawe, A.** International Threats and Challenges Facing Iraqi National Security and Ways to Address Them (Alnaba Information Network), 22 Mar. 2021.

In all these emerging problems and challenges, it is logical to ask the following question: What changes has the Iraqi economy undergone?

In recent years, the Iraqi economy has gone through difficult conditions as a result of exacerbations of structural imbalances and the global health crisis.

Iraq's economy faces a number of challenges that threaten Iraq's future and its economic, political and social security, such as poverty, unemployment, inflation, destroyed infrastructure, high production costs, administrative and financial corruption, environmental pollution, water problems, and the deterioration of agricultural, industrial, and other production. What increases the seriousness of these challenges is that they intertwine, overlap, and expand, inconsistent with the adoption (by the state) of strategies that will develop appropriate solutions to address these problems due to their security and terrorism concerns, which requires the development of an integrated strategy to address these challenges. The Iraqi economy is going through a critical phase in which it is impossible to withstand the contradictions and adventures of the various political parties.

Following the announcement of the results of last October's legislative elections, the country expects a government from the womb of these results, which will not be able to "judge and err" in diagnosing and treating economic crises.

Despite the enormous wealth of Iraq, it has suffered for years from a number of structural imbalances in the economic structure, which have recently been reflected in the sharp rise in unemployment and poverty.

Experts attribute the reasons for the decline and the difference between large investments of national resources and modest results to per capita income and guarantees for the economic future, poor planning, the spread of corruption, and the loss of a productive mind.

Many of the complications that hinder the lost stability in Iraq are crowded at various levels, but the economy is the cornerstone, otherwise all the consequences remain, experts say.

In 2020 and early 2021, the Iraqi economy faced major problems related to the fall in crude oil prices as a result of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the closure restrictions imposed by the decline in global economic activity.

Oil accounts for more than 85% of Iraq's total raw materials, making the country's rent-producing economy vulnerable to fluctuations in the crude oil market in the absence of consolidating state imports and finding alternatives.

These problems have led to major risks that have burdened the Iraqi economy in the pre-pandemic crisis, such as high debt levels, doubling internal and external structural problems, high budget deficits, and increasing fragility of public finances, which generates monetary pressure and undermines exchange rate stability.

According to many researchers, Iraq has obligations signed with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank that require the country to find solutions, so that it can communicate with the outside world through its economic system, and not, as some imagine, that the issue is limited to the needs of the interior and the arrangement of the local scene.

[/al-ain.com/article/iraq-economy-new-government-critical/](https://al-ain.com/article/iraq-economy-new-government-critical/) (in Arabic)

Iraq cannot tolerate more mistakes. Diseases have reached a dangerous stage, and diligence or experimentation will not help.

A lot of researchers claim that the current data confirm the recurrence of the government scenario, which strongly warns: "We will face catastrophic predictions, the smallest of which will be a torn map or a bloody uprising, both of which are bitter and costly options."

The main economic challenges /ifpmc.org 27/4/2020

Shaho Alkaradagi شاهو القره داغي (in Arabic)

Iraq's Spring 2020 Monitor, entitled "Sailing in a Big Storm", discusses recent economic developments and policies, and highlights some of the country's macroeconomic policy challenges. The report says pre-crisis conditions in Iraq will limit its ability to manage and mitigate the economic and social

effects of low oil prices, reduced oil quotas, and obstacles created by isolation measures to counter the COVID-19 virus. The dependence of the large Iraqi economy on oil and the broad role of the public sector in economic and trade activities are hampering the creation of jobs that are needed in the private sector for the population, most of whom are young people. In addition, growing public dissatisfaction with poor service delivery, rampant corruption and job losses is still relevant and even combined with the political stalemate over the formation of a new government. According to **Saroj Kumar Jha**, Mashreq's regional director at the World Bank, fiscal consolidation and economic diversification through increased private sector involvement are crucial to reducing Iraq's vulnerability to external shocks. The adoption of a reform-oriented growth programme will help restore and sustain the positive improvements made in the electricity and agriculture sectors over the past year. Such a programme is essential to create the jobs that young people need, and to restore the confidence of Iraqi citizens.

It is imperative that Iraq launch a comprehensive, forward-looking economic reform agenda to enable the private sector to stimulate growth and create diversity and job opportunities. Such a programme can be based on two pillars. The first one includes tackling comprehensive barriers to private sector-led diversification through financial sustainability and economic governance, financial sector reforms, business environment reforms, improving human capital outcomes, and social labour protection and system. The second one is related to improving governance and strengthening private sector participation in selected manufacturing sectors, such as agriculture, the food industry, electricity, and gas.

The Iraqi Economic Monitor's report also includes a special section highlighting the importance of Iraq's digital transformation and the urgency behind it. The benefits of a strong digital economy are numerous, and using it will help Iraq improve its economic opportunities, especially for its young people, and thus meet the demands of its citizens. The digital transformation of the Iraqi economy requires economic reforms and long-term development priorities that cover the five pillars of the digital economy framework to provide affordable, high-speed Internet access, to achieve widespread cashless payments, to provide digital government services, to improve data access, and to raise the skill level of young people by providing them with technological knowledge and expanding the digital ecosystem for entrepreneurship. The recent adoption of innovative digital solutions in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in different parts of the world is an example of the importance and urgency of digital transformation (www.worldbank.org).

Typical Problems to Be Solved for the Iraqi Economy

The development of the Iraqi economy has faced many problems of a complex nature for a number of internal and external reasons.

First: the collapse of oil prices. Iraq's economy is a rent-seeking economy that relies mainly on oil for 95% to meet the country's needs, and oil accounts for almost 99% of Iraq's exports. With falling oil prices, Iraq will suffer from a real economic crisis in the absence of any other source of revenue, as the country has failed to diversify its sources of income in recent years despite persistent requests.

Iraq's oil minister confirms that Iraq will reap half of what it earned in 2019 from oil sales in 2020, since last year Iraq earned \$78 billion from oil sales worth \$61 a barrel, while this year the amount will drop to \$40 billion.

It is clear that the decline in oil prices will affect the budget for 2020, which amounted to \$135 billion with a deficit of \$40 billion. This estimates the price of one barrel at \$56, while today, the price of a barrel has plummeted to around \$20. The expectations are that it will be difficult to rise again in light of the current crises, the spread of the coronavirus, and the declining oil demand due to the disruption of life in most countries.

What is happening today is a natural result of the economic policies that Iraq has pursued in recent years, as it has relied entirely on oil without thinking about the future or preparing for scenarios of falling oil prices, even though the country is moving in previous crises, especially in 2014, when oil prices fell.

Second: pervasive corruption and lack of transparency. Iraq ranks 162nd out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Official statistics confirm that Iraq has lost more than \$500 billion as a result of corruption from 2003 to 2019. It is certain that corruption has doubled these official figures because the government does not take seriously the disclosure of corruption files and real numbers, which prove the participation of all political parties in this case.

The most notorious corruption files are the smuggling of oil through parties and militias, the salaries of officials, defenders and advisers, the economic services of political parties, the seizure of state property, arms deal, and foreign exchange auctions, in addition to the files of fictitious or foreign officials who receive more than one salary, and represent a constant bleeding of the state budget.

Corruption affects not only the economy. This in turn leads to the accumulation of wealth for several people at the expense of the majority. The latter will suffer from poverty, destitution and need, and will gradually cause violence, political and security problems, and weaken public institutions. Government measures to fight corruption in Iraq are for immediate government responses to hold corrupt minors accountable before the election to win votes or respond to popular demands in order to numb and calm the streets. Strategic steps need to be taken within a comprehensive national plan to diagnose and control corruption.

Here it is important to mention Singapore's experience in this area. When **Lee Kuan Yew**, the founding father of modern-day Singapore, arrived, he decided to launch a strategic campaign to cleanse the country of all forms of corruption, from the election stage to the formation of a government and other stages. Because, according to him, pure government mainly starts from the election stage, and the dirtier the money is from the political position, the greater the corruption in the government, because the high cost of elections and political positions pushes the parties that reach the government to get back the money spent on the position, and to prepare new money for the next campaign, using the influence of and getting closer to officials, and influencing them through dirty deals. As a result of these policies, this campaign has succeeded and reflected positively on the state, and has become the most developed country in the region and the world.

Third: suspension of reconstruction projects and foreign investment. After the end of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), economic losses to Iraq were estimated at more than \$100 billion, while the World Bank estimated the cost of rebuilding devastated areas at \$88.2 billion despite a promise from the international community to give Iraq \$30 billion at a conference in Kuwait in 2018. Countries that have pledged aid have failed to meet their obligations due to poor security conditions, militia proliferation, extortion operations, armed factions, and groups with large impact in ISIS-exempt areas.

Survival and concentration of militias in liberated areas hampered efforts to rebuild those areas, and due to smuggling operations and security breaches in the shadow of militias, ISIS has been able to reorganize its ranks in many areas, and to resume terrorist attacks against people and security forces. This means a lack of stability in these areas in the next phase, which will disrupt all internal and external efforts to restore life in these devastated areas in the war on terror.

In addition, Iraq has become an environment that expels national capital and fails to attract foreign capital due to security problems, corruption, and the reluctance of foreign companies to enter Iraq due to the many obstacles and problems they are facing.

Iraq is ranked 172th out of 190 countries in the World Bank's 2020 Ease of Doing Business Index for 2020, which is based on a variety of evaluation criteria, including ease of starting a business, protecting investors, paying taxes, and dealing with default.

In addition to the main challenges, Iraq is facing the challenge of external and domestic debt, estimated at more than \$130 billion, a high poverty rate of up to 20% equivalent to 7 million citizens across Iraq, the spread of unemployment among young people, the dependence on foreign imports, and many other challenges requiring real efforts to overcome them amid escalating popular anger.

Choice of Options to Deal with Emerging Challenges

Deteriorating economic problems put Iraq's decision-makers to the real test of rescuing the country from collapse. The Iraqi leaders need to reconsider the nature of their relations with Iran, built on the

basis of common interests and mutual respect, and to put an end to the current situation which is causing great damage to Iraq.

In connection with this step, which also strengthens national sovereignty, the next Iraqi government must take serious steps towards reforms, fighting corruption, increasing transparency, recovering money looted abroad, controlling border crossings, and putting an end to oil smuggling in order to regain confidence on the Iraqi streets, and to give a positive image to the outside world, with a real will for reform and change in Iraq.

The next step requires more courage in the process of making critical decisions by political decision-makers in Iraq. It is important to focus on national interests at the expense of personal and party interests and the foreign agenda. If the Iraqi government fails to deal properly with these crises and the waves of challenges, Iraq's ship would be sunk.

Despite improving the outlook for the Iraqi economy and the recovery of global oil markets, the effects of the coronavirus and the challenges of climate change are new sources of risk. The economy is expected to recover gradually amid high oil prices and increasing production quotas of the OPEC + alliance, which is planned to be phased out in 2022. Despite expectations of improving oil-free GDP, it will remain at an average growth rate below (3%) over the years (2021–2023) due to the modified generations of the COVID-19 pandemic in addition to the challenges facing the Iraqi economy, most notably in terms of water and electricity, which affects agriculture and industry.⁷

Finally, it can be said that Iraq's national security system is facing a number of challenges that can be categorized as visible and invisible, the most dangerous of which are those that appear in the invisible image⁸. This would affect strategic security (of the individual and the state), which means that these challenges involve most governmental and non-governmental sectors and institutions that revolve around the basic infrastructure of the state to achieve citizens' cognitive security. These challenges vary from cyber threats to the state's digital system. The population is growing without this increase being affected by strategic planning, which is in line with developments and challenges facing formal and informal state institutions that pose a major challenge to Iraq's strategic security system. Therefore, there is an urgent need to focus and dominate research and anticipation efforts in this area, especially in light of the marked increase in the challenges facing Iraq's strategic security system.

Iraq is facing and continues to face the greatest and most dangerous security threats and challenges since 2003 that no other country in the world has faced⁹. However, it still achieves brilliant victories on many levels, including the fight against terrorist organizations and their sleeping cells. The final victory will be achieved and the Iraqi state will be rebuilt on new and developed foundations that will lead to the maintenance of Iraq's national security and to the strengthening of the work of its institutions and agencies in order to achieve its supreme strategic goals and interests.

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