

## **The Barriers to Political Developments in the Contemporary Iraqi Society**

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### **Abstract**

The consideration of the subject of political development in the Iraqi society became a necessity stemming from the results of pressure overburdening the Iraqi society, ranging from political anxiety that has started to affect the individuals' performances, their attachment to their country and their commitment to the laws and regulations that organize the social life. The course of this policy or experience as it appears requires revision and correction until it is put back on its correct course.

One of the most important tasks at this level is to determine the barriers that prevent the expansion of the process of political development in the Iraqi society while in the same time strengthen the foundations of the democratic structure and integrating the institutional and procedural aspects of democracy. The tasks stated above must be undertaken in order to support the democratic practice and enable it to reach its real potential. The problem confronting political development in the Iraqi society in our opinion is the level of integration of the Iraqi society that we regard as the most important problem that has encountered the consecutive

Iraqi governments from the day the Iraqi state was established and still faces them today.

## Introduction

A myriad of reasons accumulate making development programs in third world countries powerless to achieve their intended goals or even the minimal requirements of their devised programs. The most important reasons can be stated as follows:

- Shortsightedness.
- Lack of thoroughly studied plans.
- Lack of resources.
- Lack of political and social stability.
- The existing external challenges.
- Lack of serious care directed towards development itself.

Any combination of any of these stated reasons can lead to negative or abnormal results affecting the development programs. On the other hand, we find a number of developing countries that, on the contrary, have been actually able to perform a complete assessment of their current conditions and were able to balance the physical resources and combine them with their human resources. These countries were somewhat capable of measuring the level of activity on the international level by researching the regional and international status. In doing so, they became capable of initiating an ambitious development process that meets their current stage

requirements from one side, while seeking from the other side to build a physical and morale foundation for the next stage.

The reason that motivated us to consider this subject is the relatively sparse literature addressing the subject from a social perspective by analyzing the status of social development in the Iraqi society. Another equally driving motive is the importance of the subject in building the society and its advancement because both development and modernization aim at determining the means and forms that can ensure the advance of the society and its rise in various fields.

The research aims at achieving a number of objectives including:

- 1- Diagnosing the most important barriers towards political development in the contemporary Iraqi society.
- 2- Proposing a number of recommendations to stimulate political reform and development programs in the country.

This research manuscript is divided into four sections and a conclusion. Starting in the first, the introduction of the research including the research problem and objectives of the research work. The Second section makes clear the barriers that hinder the political development in the Iraqi society. The research is concluded by stating the most important results and a number of recommendations concerning the subject of the research.

## The Barriers to Political Developments

The most important barriers hindering political development in the contemporary Iraqi society can be defined by stating the most important obstacles that prevent the growth and development of political institutions in the Iraq society as follows:

### 1. The Pattern of Political Culture

The main barrier confronting political development and political participation in the contemporary Iraqi society is the widespread submission and subordination policies that dominate the government and authority relationships [<sup>١</sup>]. This pattern of political culture fits with paternal, patronage and coercive ruling systems that are characterized by the inferiority (from the systems point of view) of citizens who are kept at a distance from political participation and political decisions. Thus the secularity of political culture or in other words the propagation of civil culture is one of the first conditions to achieve democracy [<sup>٢</sup>].

### 2. Un institutionalized Political Process

The Iraqi society suffers from weakness in its political institutions stemming from the inability to fulfill the role in the

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[<sup>١</sup>]Dr. Hussein Alwan, Political Modernization and Political Participation in the Arab Homeland, Political Issue Journal, 2<sup>nd</sup> issue, College of Political Science, Baghdad University, Baghdad, Iraq, 2000. p142.

[<sup>٢</sup>]Dr. Hussein Alwan, Democracy and the Rule Succession Problem, Almustaqbal Alarabi Journal, Alwahda Alarabia Study Center, No.236, Beirut Lebanon, 1997, pp102-103.

political process which led to the dominance of negative manifestations and their influence on the political process including un institutionalization, disorganization, and depersonalization leaving no margin for the participation of citizens and the political forces in the society [١] .

### **3. The Ambiguity of the Political Statement**

The generality dominating the political statements when addressing the various trends of democracy makes the statements calling for modernizing forms but only apparently and not in really. These statements strip the ideas from their tenor, reducing them to mere abstract models that do not serve more than ideological purpose. Thus the political statements do not deal directly with the reality but in fact pivot around it in vain attempt to conceive statements calling for absolute salvation surrounded with glows of veneration.

The political statements attempt to avoid the direct absolute, abstract and general questions but they do not serve other than increasing the complexity of the obstacle confronting the case .They avoid the direct questions including the variance of intended democracy [٢], its capabilities in the Iraqi society, and the social groups that are charged with responsibility. They overlook the relationship of the cause with the beliefs of the leaders and the relationship between

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[١]Dr. Hussein Alwan, ,Political Process and Political Participation in Developing Countries, Almustaqbal Alarabi Journal, Alwahda Alarabia Study Center, No.223, Beirut Lebanon , 1997 , pp70-77.

[٢]Thanna Fouad, Abdulah, Mechanisms of Democratic Change in the Arab Homeland, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Alwahda Alarabia Study Center, No. 223, Beirut Lebanon, 1997, p61

democracy and the elimination of retardation, subordination, and fractionation in the Iraqi reality.

#### 4. The Weakness of the Civil Society

In fact, this weakness is not due to subjective problems and conditions in the social society's institutions alone but also the problems stemming from the relationship between the state and the civil society's institutions. The state attempts to impose its guardianship and subordination on these institutions and erase their independence completely [١]. The social society's institutions are considered the basic pillars of democracy because building a democratic system is unforeseeable without the effective role of social society's institutions in expressing the public interest and the participation and influence in the decisions and policies of the system by allowing the institutions a space to advance without the intervention of the state [٢].

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[١]Hussein Tatawfiq Ibrahim, Building the Civil Society : The Quantative Indices in the Book of (*Social Society in the Arab Homeland and its Role in Democracy*), A Number of Authors, Alwahda Alarabia Study Center, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Beirut Lebanon, 1992, pp683-716.

[٢]Thanna Fouad , Abdulah, Mechanisms of Democratic Change in the Arab Homeland, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Alwahda Alarabia Study Center, No. 223, Beirut Lebanon, 1997, p61.

## **5. The Legitimacy Crises**

Abdulilah Bilkizer states that the political legitimacy of the authorities in Arab states lacks the advanced democratic method. This legitimacy affects the total internal political life and hinders the development and advancement in the political arena<sup>[1]</sup>.

## **6. Rejecting the Circulation of Power**

The circulation of power is considered the alternating access of active political forces to power at the level of the political life. The alternation is considered one of the most prominent mechanisms of democracy. Thus the multiple-party system expressed in the democratic transformation in the Iraqi society will be devoid of any real meaning that can change its constitutional framework that organizes the transformation of power and determines the mechanism between the political forces active in the political arena.

## **7. Restricting the Political Activity**

The change towards the multiplicity of parties is considered a change in the structure of the Iraqi political system. However, the change hasn't been fully achieved because the concept of multiplicity of parties has taken a special meaning among the ruling elites and it carries obvious limitations to the scope and range of political activity, freedom from the influence of parties, forces, and political

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[1]Hussein Tatawfiq Ibrahim, Building the Civil Society : The Quantative Indices in the Book of (Social Society in the Arab Homeland and its Role in Democracy), A Number of Authors, Alwahda Alarabia Study Center, 1st ed., Beirut Lebanon, 1992, pp683-716.

organizations. The reason of this change is the escalating public and political pressure exerted on the field of political work [١].

The political practice followed by the ruling elites have been subjected to restricting the multiplicity of parties and limiting their existence in power[٢].

It is beyond dispute the restriction of the political activities of the parties and their role will not lead to appropriate satisfying conditions for all sides in the political struggle to resolve the political conflicts leaving no choice except for the probable escalating of the political conflicts towards accessing the power [٣]. This in turn leads to political instability and obstructs the political development process in the Iraqi society.

## 8. The Constitution

The constitution generally speaking refers to a group of regulations that formalize the shape of the ruling system, authority, and the rights and obligations of the individuals [٤].

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[١]Hussein Alwan, Political Modernization and Political Participation in the Arab Homeland, op.cit., p144.

[٢]Abdulilah Bilkizer. Democratic Movement in the Arab Homeland – Barriers and Capabilities , Almustaqbal Alarbi Journal, Alwahda Alarabia Study Center, No236 , Beirut Lebanon, 1998 , pp211-222.

[٣]Hussein Alwan, Political Modernization and Political Participation in the Arab Homeland , op.cit., p148.

[٤]Ahmad Thabit, Political Multiplicity in the Arab Homeland , Almustaqbal Alarbi Journal, Alwahda Alarabia Study Center, No.155, Beirut Lebanon, 1992, p15.



Besides it makes clear the conditions of the political societies and the developmental stages they pass through. Thus the most accurate point of view that can express the status of the political societies are the constitutional documents that were dominant during a specified period [١]. Iraq as a republic has witnessed a large number of constitutions since the birth of the republic in 1921 until the overthrow in 2003 and the period that followed. However, although these constitutions expressed the status of the political societies in Iraq besides the political, social, and economic development, they lacked some strategic dimensions or frameworks that commit all the ruling systems that have ruled Iraq to deal with Iraq's problems. In reality the conditions were worse.

## 9. Parties

The idea of parties is considered a modern concept in political terms but have received wide acceptance from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the western countries. However, the Arabic world did not witness this phenomenon until World War II [٢].

Although Iraq is one of the Arab countries that have witnessed the rise of political parties during the British colonial phase, the political advancement was hindered when the modern state took a new turn by abandoning the

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[١]Ahmad Thabit, Political Multiplicity in the Arab Homeland ,  
Almustaqbal Alarbi Journal, Alwahda Alarabia Study Center, No.155,  
Beirut Lebanon, 1992, p15.

[٢]Dr Mohammad Ameen Welidcidy, The Aspects of Political  
Participation in Mauritania, Alwahda Alarabia Study Center, 1st Ed.  
Beirut Lebanon, 2005, pp241-242.

multiplicity of parties since 1921, adopting instead a monarch system and followed by a single party system during the republic era until 2003 which was followed by the advent of unrestricted multiple parties [١].

In my opinion, the political parties in their various trends and multiple numbers lack the components that make them real parties because a real party must possess the elements of organization, programs, and interaction with the people.

Thus the people became oriented towards one direction and the parties to another reflecting the inferiority of the level of interrelation between the citizens and the political life affected by that, the work of political development and establishing stable institutions that are active in the political arena[٢].

## 10. The Social Phenomena

The phenomenon of loyalties is instilled in the social awareness of the Iraqi people and has direct influence upon them. The loyalties that dominate most of the third world countries are partial, tribal, sectarian, and ethnic besides

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[١] Hamdan, Ramadan Mohammed, Barriers Towards Political Modernization in the Contemporary Iraqi Society , Adab Alrafidayn Journal, Volume 47-4 , College of Arts, Mosul University, Mosul , Iraq , 2007 , p61.

[٢] Ibid, p62.

loyalties of interests...etc. These loyalties form barriers confronting political practice [١].

During colonialist administration, the state practiced its politics through the tribe, while in the national state, the situation changed and the tribe started to practice politics through the state. Thus, political performance has been and still is swinging in pendulum motion of disequilibrium between tribalism, sectarianism, and ethnicity on one side and the rest of modern political practices on the other.

It is worth noting that the political authority has started to deal with the tribal phenomenon directly after the tribe was able to impose itself as a reality that cannot be neglected [٢]. We do not exaggerate when we say that attempting to simulate modernity in the political practice has led Iraq into a regressive loop of tribalism that has been known since the time of Bin Khaldun the great Arab historian in (1332-1406) when he indicated that countries that are devoid from tribalism can readily achieve a state with more stability [٣].

### **11. Accumulated Debt**

There are no real and precise numbers stating these debts. Thus we find that the figures fluctuate, rise and fall as the largest part of this debt is an obligation promised by gulf

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[١]Ali Khalifa Al Kawari, Towards a Future Vision to Enhance the Democratic Course in The Gulf Cooperation Council, Alwahda Alarabia Study Center, No.267 Beirut, Lebanon,2001,p7

[٢]Dr Mohammad Ameen Weledcidy , op.cit., p239.

[٣]Abu Zaid Abd al-RaHmān ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun, Amuqaddim,Tunisia Publishing House, Tunis , 1984 , pp215-216.

countries and are no more than illusionary debts as they were extended to Iraq in the first place in the form of grants to support Iraq in its war with Iran in order to halt the expansion of the Iranian revolution to the Gulf countries. Later these countries considered these grants as debts on Iraq leading Iraq to bog down into a larger pitfall in invading Kuwait and resulted in the impose of economic sanctions that paved the way for the occupation.

To expound the ambiguity of these debts we refer to the report issued by the congress budget that stated that the compensation for the gulf war costs amounted to 199 billion dollars, the debts of foreign loans by 128 billion dollars, while the pending contracts reached 57 billion dollars. The report elucidates the size of these debts but it returned once again and expressed uncertainty towards the figures, claiming ends, size of the debts, and the interests rate[<sup>١</sup>]. The amount is so large that Iraq isn't capable of paying it with its current capabilities and oil exports[<sup>٢</sup>].

The debts led Iraq into loans from the World Bank and the granting countries, increasing the interests imposed on it, and increasing the barriers confronting political development.

## **12. Continuous of Violence and Insecurity in Iraq.**

The relationships between the ruling elite comes from political forces did not rise to the level of the democratic

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[<sup>١</sup>]Dr. Yarub Al Shereera, The Reality and Future of Humanitarian Development in Iraq, Nida Alhurria Journal, Nida Alhurria Center for Human Development, 1<sup>st</sup> Year. No.2 , Mosul , Iraq , 2006 , p27.

[<sup>٢</sup>]Ibid , p28.

game especially by substituting violent struggle for power with honest competition based on the collective recognition of the right of everyone to participate in the rule and authority through elections<sup>[١]</sup>. The violence experience accompanied the advent of multiplicity in the Iraqi society leading to instability and insecurity leading to the most problematic barrier towards the process of reconstruction and normalization of life and subsequent political development in the country if not retreating to point zero.

### **13. Administrative Chaos & Financial Violations (*political corruption*)**

Administration in Iraq encounters extreme crises and total chaos and the financial dealings are subject to blackmails, thefts, bribes and low morality besides the lack of honesty and trust. Embezzlements amounts to (millions–billions) of dollars while investigations in incidents related to embezzlement have amounted to nothing... If violation continues it will surely hinder the political and human development<sup>[٢]</sup>.

### **14. The U.S.A. Occupation of Iraq**

The occupation is the main barrier to political development in Iraq and despite and advantages that stated here or elsewhere including freedom and independent decision making that truly benefits Iraq are only amidst a sea of disadvantages and negative impacts.

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[١]Burhan Ghalyoon, Democracy and Human Rights in the Arab Homeland – The Problems of Transformation and the Difficulties of Participation, Al Mustaqbal Al Arabi Journal, Al Wahda Al Arabia Study Center, No.135, Beirut Lebenon, 1990, pp25-26 .

[٢]Dr Yarub al Shareera , op.cit., p28.

Whatever justifications may be stated for the forces to remain in Iraq claiming by some that it is the only mean to prevent a civil war, I find all these opinions unrealistic and I believe that the Iraqi people possess the wisdom, qualifications and dedication to their country that may prevent any of these anticipated events<sup>[١]</sup>.

The occupation affects national unity and consolidation and has mutual links with the efforts of development and modernization but the critical dimension in the occupation is that we find new established institutions under the control of an inexperienced element that will eventually lead to their failure.

The instability under the occupation has started to occupy many forms and dimensions including the attempts by some factions to drag Iraq into a civil war, political warfare, religious conflicts and sectarian clashes. Other factions are attempting to drive the country towards rebellion and separation. The instability in Iraq has a number of historical evidence in the political history of Iraq<sup>[٢]</sup> and the factors behind them are barriers to the political development.

In addition to the barriers to political development stated in this section, there are other factors that are interrelated with many different circumstance and conditions in Iraq including the political awareness, misconceptions towards democracy, citizenship, and human rights and other relatively modern concepts that are required for consolidation and unity among

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[١]Ibid, pp.26-27

[٢]Hamdan, Ramadan Mohammed, Barriers Towards Political Modernization in the Contemporary Iraqi Society, op.cit., pp 63-64.

institutions of the society and between the institutions and the state.

To those factors we can add illiteracy and both social and political ignorance among a considerable number of individuals. The sum of all of the above gives us the indicators of barriers towards political development in the Iraqi society and obstacles confronting its success.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

### **Conclusions**

By analyzing the Iraqi political status we come to a number of conclusions and recommendations as follows:

- 1- The Ba'ath party economic institution instead of was able to initiate and maintain a substantial development and to establish some new political institutions, but was not able to make these institutions more specialized and independent in their functions because of the traditional role adopted by the party.

Although the ruling regime under the Ba'ath party was able to initiate a substantial development at the Iraqi social level and was able to establish some new institutions and structures, it was not able to make these institutions more specialized and independent in their functions because of the traditional role they adopted. Thus the government succeeded in building structural institutions but failed in making them functional ones.

The institutions became merely legal and official structures lacking the functions they were built for in the

first place therefore didn't fulfill their objectives. Although a number of achievements were evident, there were periods when the rights of citizens were violated leading to the separation between large groups of the Iraqi people from each other because of the destructive policies that impoverish and exhaust the people and the catastrophic wars they were forced to fight. These facts crushed citizens and their rights and fractured the fabric between the individuals especial between the previously coexisting nationalities. The governments were dictatorships monopolizing political activity.

- 2- The racial, religious, ethnic, tribal ...etc loyalties negative impact on the maturity of the identity of Iraqi citizens and thus the project of Iraqi modern state.

There is a common fear from belonging to the Iraqi Identity among a large number of individuals. This sense of not-belonging is evident among the social groups within the Iraqi society (family, clan, neighborhood, or party) leading them to support ethnic and sectarian referential in the society. This fear appears variable and deep-rooted in the Iraqi individual setting fourth the question (what leads the individual to feel anxious and fear from belonging to an identity?)

If we attempt to gain an insight into this problem we find that the Iraqi society characterized by multiple ethnic, religious, and sectarian trends leading to a negative impact of the maturity of the project of the Iraqi citizen's identity. Therefore these trends negatively impacted the project of a modern state for all. Thus, the society itself bears part of the responsibility of the complication of the issue but the largest responsibility falls on the state The



state during the course of eight decades didn't make the Iraqi national identity a cofactor that assists in amalgamating the citizens' various affinities and loyalties to rise them to a level of citizenship.

- 3- Marginalization was general trend in the successive political authorities that access power towards all other elements in the Iraqi society.

Since the establishment of the modern state of Iraq eighty-two years ago alienation and marginalization were dominant characteristics and during the course of 37 years of monarchy in Iraq.

The marginalization process remained a characteristic implemented towards the Shi'a group in the society and the alienation was practiced towards the political currents in Iraq including the communist party, an active member since its establishment during the past century as the main influence on the Iraqi arena. Imprisonment, oppression and ban and other acts of persecution were directed against this party leading to the 1958 revolution supported by the opposition of political parties in Iraq led by Abdulkareem Qassim.

Qassim himself was motivated by his extreme nationalistic trend implementing marginalization measures against the national currents that formed a quite strong influence in the Iraqi street and which eventually carried out a coup in February 1968 leading to the dictatorship of nationalists in power.

Abdulsalam Arif was with the latter trend, and he pushed it further by oppressing and marginalizing the Ba'athists.

After years, when the Ba'athist gained control, they marginalized all the rest of the political forces on the ground.

- 4- Since its establishment, the state in modern Iraq was linked with the ruling authority making both vulnerable as the fall of one means the fall of the other.

Since the establishment of the modern Iraqi state, the state was fused with the ruling authority which led to the absence of the state which was completely cast in the mold of authority leading to its fall with all its institutions with the fall of the authority. Thus, no modern state with deep-rooted constitutional systems and public institutions embodied by the society ever raised in Iraq. On the contrary, authorities emerged and confiscated the role of the state leading to the absence of a legitimate and rightful authority coupled with low national standards with ethnic, tribal and sectarian trends. These authorities tended to fracture the national unity and exploited the concept of the authority of the state in justifying its existence and justifying the implementation of its narrow policies.

Based on above the overthrow of an illegitimate authority was always and still coupled with a destruction of the state as an eventuality following the intended fusion of state and authority in existence, function, and role. The fusion of state and authority led to the demise of the state afterwards.

## Recommendations

In order to integrate the activities of the governmental institutions and activate their role in the field of political development, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Achieving equality between all citizens in the society despite the differences in race, affiliations, and culture.
2. Participation of the people in democratic decision making through parliament systems legal and constitutional institutions.
3. Avoid concentrating the power in one body and achieve separation between the authorities with the right of objection and objective criticism besides granting the people their right to monitor the authority's instruments through legitimate institutions.
4. Authority must be based on reasonable basis and the administrative posts must be accessible to all, while the criteria of selection must be objective and the enforcing of authority must be legal within the scope of the constitution.
5. Raising peoples' awareness of their real problems and the way to deal with them reasonably.
6. Achieve political unity and integration among the components of the society by increasing the efficiency of political supporting systems and reaching at least a minimum agreement concerning political values and political loyalty to the central authority which is an important aspect in tribal societies.

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