

# Sustainable Development in Iraq: Challenges and Proposals for Reform

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## Abstract:

In the past two decades, interest in achieving sustainable development in Iraq has increased as a result of the marked deterioration in the economic situation as well as the international economic changes that have imposed on Iraq not to rely on oil revenues as a major source of national income. There is no doubt that such circumstances have resulted in serious obstacles that hindered the development of effective strategies to achieve sustainable development in it. Accordingly, this paper aims to explore the most prominent challenges facing the reality of sustainable development in Iraq, as well as outline proposals to address these obstacles in a manner that contributes to strengthening the reality of economic development at various levels. The results show that there are four main obstacles facing the implementation of sustainable development strategies in Iraq are the political obstacles, economic obstacles, environmental obstacles, and health and technological obstacles. A number of methods have been proposed to understand or even manage complex societal transitions towards sustainable development. There are four common approaches to sustainable transitions, i.e. the harmonization of the political and social climate, the adoption of effective economic reforms, and appropriate arrangements for preserving the environment and developing the scientific and educational base. However, there is a lack of studies related to discussing and developing different methods and strategies in this field. This paper provides a comprehensive review of the four most common approaches, and more importantly, it identifies four critical challenges for future studies on methods for achieving sustainable development in Iraq. Thus, these challenges represent an area for future research related to this topic.

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## I. Introduction

In current circumstances, the question of moving towards an innovative system for the growth of the national economy is growing, since the development of technologies is becoming a key factor in increasing the productivity of the country and in addressing economic and social problems [1]. Green policies usually refer to economic development practices that encourage an environmental response to sustainable development for different sectors of national production and include the state's commitment and participation in supporting organizations and their applications in the field of sustainable development. At the same time, sustainable development can be characterized as economic development that reduces the degradation of natural resources [2]. The importance of sustainable development in Iraq is increasing, as it strives to achieve a degree of growth for its economy, especially after difficult political and economic stages through which Iraq has left its negative effects on its economy until the present time. There

is no doubt that such circumstances may result in serious obstacles, which have hindered the right path for sustainable development in its economic strategies [3]. Then it was necessary to pay attention to all the ways and policies that create a solid base towards a sound launch to correct the path of sustainable development in it. However, there is a lack of studies for the review that discuss the obstacles facing sustainable development activities and the different approaches in overcoming these obstacles in developing countries [4]. To this end, we must reduce the disparity in income distribution, create new job opportunities, stimulate aggregate demand, adjust the balance of payments position, by stimulating non-oil exports, and achieve a greater and more diversified capacity to increase total production. The escalation of political, economic and social problems in Iraq means the continued stumbling in the overall performance of its entire economy. This leads to the following question: How can these problems be solved in order to create a suitable ground for dealing with economic problems?

The paper aims to track the path of sustainable development in Iraq, and to identify the most prominent obstacles facing it, while trying to find proposed solutions to each other. Despite serious attempts to improve the level of performance of sustainable development in Iraq, it is still below the required level and its overall performance is still faltering. The remainder of this paper includes a discussion of the main obstacles to sustainable development in Iraq, proposals for improving the performance of sustainable development in Iraq, and finally a discussion of the conclusions.

## II. Obstacles of Sustainable Development in Iraq

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, it has become an urgent necessity to deal seriously with economic and development issues in Iraq [5]. In particular, especially with regard to sustainable development, to avoid improvisation and impasse in economic decision-making that prevailed before 2003. Naturally, there are complications that require facing restrictions, including the following:

- The dominance of the rentier oil sector as a primary source of financing for development plans in Iraq
- The exacerbation of the phenomenon of extreme inflation and external debt deadlock
- The dominance of ill-considered economic decisions (often) .... etc

These restrictions have all burdened the state budget with great burdens. This is in addition to a set of political, economic, social, scientific and cultural challenges, which together have constituted a serious threat to human and sustainable development projects in Iraq [6]. The proper planning of any development trend in Iraq requires the development of development plans based on the principle of transparency. Because this somewhat guarantees the prevention of the dangers of most of the obstacles that hinder the development process, especially since these obstacles cannot be excluded in the case of the ethnic economy.

### The Political Obstacles

The political and security problems and the accumulations of wars occupy the forefront among other obstacles that have been and are still hindering the path of the sustainable development process in Iraq. These obstacles are embodied in the case of security instability, widespread phenomena of administrative and financial corruption, weak administrative reform, misuse and waste of financial resources [7].

In addition, the major obstacle that impedes the right path for the sustainable development of Iraq [8], which is the absence of the complete institutional construction of the

majority of the state's security, legal, military and political institutions.

### The Economic Obstacles

Among the most prominent of these obstacles we mention, for example, but not limited to: the obstacle of the rentier feature that characterizes the Iraqi economy, which is derived from the acquisition of the oil sector on the largest part of the composition of the GDP compared to other sectors, which resulted in deepening structural imbalances in the Iraqi economy. This fact is self-evident and reflects the reality of this economy, even for the general public. To make matters worse, the performance of the industrial and agricultural sectors collapsed [9]. This resulted in a major collapse in the structure of the economy, in addition to the disintegration and collapse of the infrastructure in it. In the same direction, the economic obstacles deepened the path of sustainable development as a result of the absence of a clearly defined planning policy for rational investments in economic resources, and wasting the use of Iraqi human technical competencies. The prevalence of unemployment, the weakness of the private sector, and the decline of capital accumulations. In addition, the inefficiency and effectiveness of the macroeconomic policies that were adopted, as well as the distortions in the market and the inefficiency of their competitive capabilities in the global market, had generated in their entirety the inefficiency and ability of the Iraqi economy to activate and adapt the variables of these economic policies to achieve a positive impact on economic growth in general and Meeting development requirements in particular [10].

The most important of the above is that the adopted economic and social policies are still below the level of ambition, so the income level and the lack of equity in its distribution have decreased, as well as the increase in population growth, the deterioration of housing conditions, the decline in the proportion of education, illiteracy, poor health conditions and essential services, and the lack of protection systems Social insurance, up to the problems of social disintegration, are all indications of the continued failure of the aforementioned policies..

### The Environmental Obstacles

The continuous deterioration in all economic sectors in Iraq, and the resulting economic damages, have negatively affected the environmental resources, as one of the basic steps towards achieving sustainable development is the efficient economic management of natural resources [11]. However, in the Iraqi economy, incompetent economic management has led to a continuous deterioration in all its sectors, and economic damage has resulted in that negatively impacted on environmental resources [12]. Consequently,

one of the most important pillars of sustainable development has not been achieved, and the environmental challenges related to the problem of desertification and the problem of water scarcity and the resulting damage that represent the permanence of human life have been aggravated, especially those related to the lack of adequate health housing for the majority of poor families and the emergence of random housing units and the deterioration of many services including It includes sanitation services and the resulting risks of environmental pollution. Moreover, the remnants of successive and industrial wars and the resulting risks are not less than the previous ones, but much more dangerous than them. Also, the deterioration of a service or the generation of electrical energy since a long time without trying to find appropriate solutions, has led to countless problems, especially, and that this service may result in a greater deterioration in the joints of the daily life of Iraqi society [13].

### The Health and Technology Obstacles

These obstacles themselves represent a serious challenge that is heavier than any development effort in Iraq over the past years, starting from the fact that health arrangements and technological benefits represent an outlet to fight poverty [14], and then represented an indication of inferiority in the level of sustainable development in it [15]. Each of them can be discussed successively: -

1- Bad health services: This aspect has witnessed a remarkable decline, which can be inferred by following up the health situation in Iraq, which has continued to deteriorate since the nineties of the last century, and until the present time. This, in turn, led to a decrease in the average life expectancy at birth from (65) years in 1987 to (59.4) years during the second decade of the twenty-first century. This rate, if compared to some developing countries, in particular Arabic, is considered low. Table (1) shows some health indicators in Iraq until the end of 2018.

Table 1. Indicators of Health Situation in Iraq (2018)

The indicator	The Value
Life expectancy at birth (years)	59.4
Infant mortality rate (per thousand live births)	47.04
Under-five mortality rate (per thousand live births)	41
Adult mortality rate (per thousand people)	9.1
Crude death rate (per thousand people) for all causes	4.78
Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 live births)	84

Source: World Health Statistics, 2019

The previous figures do not reflect progress if compared to some developing countries, which means that the Iraqi individual still lacks the health services provided to him in terms of quantity and quality. The reasons behind this are almost unknown, including wars and the resulting economic blockade, the spread of diseases and epidemics resulting from them, in addition to the emigration of specialized doctors abroad due to the security threats experienced by the country .... etc.

2- The low number of beneficiaries of modern communications and information technology: - It is no secret that after April 2003, the use of receivers, mobile phones, various means of communication and dealing with the Internet has become unrestricted, after dealing with these technologies was prohibited before this date. However, despite the available freedom of use, the percentage of those who benefit from it at the country level hardly corresponds to that registered in most of the countries of the world. The reasons behind this are the high costs in relation to the segments that are poor so far, or the poor service provided sometimes, but the matter as reality remains much better for the pre-mentioned date, and we can infer that from Table (2).

Table 2. Indicators of Communication and Information Technology in Iraq (2017)

The indicator	2017
Number of fixed telephone lines (per 100 people)	7.3
Number of mobile lines (per 100 people)	6.9
The percentage of families who own a personal computer	10%
The percentage of Internet users (per 100 people)	21.23%

Source: Central organization of Statistics and Information Technology (COSIT), 2018.

### III. Suggestions to Improve the Performance of Sustainable Development in Iraq

In order to achieve sustainable development with its holistic concept and approach, there must be political will of states and a willingness of societies and individuals to achieve them. Sustainable development is a societal process in which all groups, sectors and groups must contribute in a coordinated manner, and it should not be dependent on a few categories and a single resource. Without participation and basic freedoms, it is inconceivable that society accepts an adequate commitment to the development goals and their burdens, and the sacrifices required in their way, or it envisions the enjoyment of development gains and achievements to the acceptable extent. It is also inconceivable to create a state of real equality of opportunity and the possibility of social mobility and the

equitable distribution of wealth and income. Each group of society must play its part to achieve sustainable development [16].

The procedures adopted to achieve the dimensions of sustainable development require the existence of a central authority that takes responsibility for accomplishing this task, within a timeframe based on sound scientific and applied foundations [17]. Because the complex nature of the framework of the work of the Iraqi economy system, you need to deal with it seriously and according to the methods of infinite precision and a comprehensive treatment nature. From this standpoint, a number of changes must be made to advance the reality of sustainable development, as follows:

### 3.1 Compatibility of The Political and Social Climate

As a proactive step for any action aimed at advancing the reality of sustainable development in Iraq, it must begin to establish a solid base of laws that establishes a comprehensive institutional system for the advancement of society and regulates the work of the executive branch in all its joints and formations [18]. This coincides with strengthening the rule of law and granting it all powers to monitor abusive situations and neglected groups within a framework that governs all political, social, economic and environmental aspects .... etc.

In addition, it is important to seriously strive to guarantee Iraqi human rights through the systems and legislation that secure the achievement of this goal. In the same direction, it is necessary for the state to adopt policies and programs that guarantee Iraqi human rights. In addition, the base of popular participation must be expanded and its effectiveness increased through the availability of political will, credibility and transparency in economic and environmental decision-making [19]. This requires the presence of channels of communication through which the Iraqi citizen can express an opinion. It does not happen without real activation of the role of associations specialized in protecting the environment, youth, women, human rights and other trade unions and organizations active in society.

The elimination of political conflicts must be the focus of everyone's attention, and this is done by looking first to the interest of the Iraqi people and making them above all considerations of any kind, giving up slogans and moving to practical application of them, especially those that relate to the service side. This requires community education and awareness through seminars, conferences and all media with a culture of fighting all kinds of administrative corruption as it is one of the most important reasons behind the waste and waste of resources and financial allocations that can be used to finance development channels. It is also necessary to accelerate the process of completing the building of the state's security, legal, military and political institutions and to benefit from previous wrong experiences in order to avoid them.

Because these institutions represent an imperative to secure the whole process, there is no development without security and stability. There must be real interest in protection net programs by restructuring the existing social protection system, which must include a system of social security, social insurance, and social safety networks [20]. This process itself calls for stripping the mentioned programs of all errors accompanying implementation through:

- Creation of administrative and functional staff with a high level of efficiency and honesty.
- Identifying and recognizing the numbers of those eligible for these programs.
- Excluding eligible people.
- Eliminate cases of fraud and manipulation.
- Reaching the poverty-stricken areas and trying to rescue them as much as possible.
- Other goals that serve society in general.

### 3.2 Adopting Effective Economic Reforms

In light of the trends calling for adopting the correct transition in the Iraqi economy from a planned central government to a liberal economy, this must be accompanied by a serious endeavor to accelerate the performance of sustainable development indicators [21]. This is done by adopting a specific strategy that fits the reality of the Iraqi economy, aiming to raise the standard of living for the individual and society in light of the circumstances in which this economy lives, with great concern for the seriousness of the means and goals, and the availability of political, social and economic will to achieve this. In addition to emphasizing the building of the social security network and providing financial benefits in cases of unemployment, incapacity to work and old age in a manner that secures adequate income and care that allows for improving the quality of life in the country [22]. Paying benefits to the unemployed (albeit symbolic) is necessary and even necessary, because the unemployed individual will inevitably spend these benefits on consumer goods, and then the demand for products increases, which leads to increased investments that absorb unemployment. For this purpose, unemployment rates will be determined by the employment offices, whose presence will be necessary in this case.

It is necessary to strive towards lifting the Iraqi economy out of the rentier plight, and taking serious steps towards diversification, in order to secure the necessary cash resources to finance development requirements, and this process as a whole requires great efforts and takes a long time to reap the benefits. In support of this, attention must be paid to the industrial sector, the manufacturing industries, the agricultural sector, etc., as a step towards achieving a balance between the structure of the economy

and society. Completing the infrastructure requirements to secure the basic base for building the Iraqi economy. This can be done by adopting a clear and rational investment policy that encourages all domestic and foreign parties. In particular, to encourage the private sector by enabling it to play a new and effective role in the Iraqi economy in order to meet the requirements of changing the distorted economic environment unilaterally and with a view to establishing a balanced economy. The development of the private sector is linked first to strengthening the investment environment, seeking to diversify the economy, developing the labor market, and a serious approach towards solving the dilemma of unemployment rampant in the body of the Iraqi economy.

The provision of financial, technical and technical support to the intermediate owners of the state to develop the personal initiative in setting up projects is necessary [23]. In addition to that, a socio-economic strategy must be drawn for the Iraqi society through which the socio-economic reality is known, and the extent of its impact on the process of community development supported by data that contributes to helping researchers to carry out their research tasks and present their future perceptions of community development, and exploring the future according to a democratic system, and this step requires:

1. Identifying the social groups affected by the repercussions, the transformations of economic reform, and implement the social protection program.
2. Focusing on the need to prioritize poor regions and governorates in order to initiate development programs.
3. Developing a development strategy for rural areas and involving women, combating administrative and financial corruption.
4. Developing socially and economically sustainable development plans and constantly reviewing them to enhance them in light of the facts of the facts and the changes taking place in the global and local economy.

### 3.3 Proper Arrangements for Environmental Conservation

The main pillar of sustainable development is (the environment), so the issue of preserving it is very important, and for this step to achieve success in Iraq, a number of measures must be adopted that secure the direction that needs to be achieved, including but not limited to:

1. Achieving rational use of natural resources and farmland reclamation by allocating the necessary financial resources.
2. In order to pay attention to the development of solid waste management, especially in

governorate centers, the private sector must be involved in this task through specialized companies whose work is required to adhere to health environmental requirements.

3. Continuous air quality monitoring systems must be provided in order to conduct a continuous assessment of the conditions of air pollution.
4. The main point that must be taken into consideration is that environmental considerations do not necessarily conflict with considerations of economic growth, as rationalizing the exploitation and use of energy can raise the efficiency of energy sources and at the same time serve environmental purposes by preserving these resources. It is not renewable, so the issues of environment, development and oil must be linked to relations of integration and mutual dependence, the development process cannot be continued based on the deterioration of the environment and natural resources, nor can the environment be protected and preserved under certain economic conditions that require action To raise the level of intestines Through achieving sustainable development.
5. Urban policies plans and organizations should play a central role in any national strategy to encourage sustainable development, and city and municipal governments are important actors in any strategy that is hoped for success.
6. The negative environmental impacts caused by oil production can be avoided as much as possible by applying modern methods and techniques to address these impacts.
7. The Iraqi governorates can, through their available budgets, allocate the required funding to provide their residents with healthy, safe and encouraging environmental conditions without leading to unsustainable requirements in terms of natural resources and ecosystems. A successful city, in this sense, is a city that meets multiple goals, including providing healthy living and professional environments for its residents, providing water supply and solid waste collection; providing sanitation, paved roads, footpaths, and other forms of infrastructure essential to health; and ensuring a sustainable relationship of The ecological side between the requirements of consumers, businesses, resources, waste disposal units and the ecosystems that depend on them.
8. Serious attention to the problem of desertification, the problem of water scarcity and the problem of providing electric power, and this

process requires increasing financial allocations and seeking the expertise and skills needed to address the apparent deterioration in these three aspects.

9. Resolve the problem of housing and building housing complexes in urban and rural areas for what this activity assimilates from idle working hands, so that this process becomes the engine for operating all sectors of the economy, especially the industrial ones.
10. Establish an environmental policy based on surveys and questionnaires and refer to environmental reports in specialized departments in the governorates by studying the environmental reality and how to implement plans and monitoring with the assistance of experts and other ministries according to a process that is planned in advance.
11. Establish strict controls to prevent the disposal of industrial or agricultural waste, etc.
12. Activating the Law on the Protection and Improvement of the Environment, including Law (3) of 1997, Health and Safety Law No. (74), and the General Conditions Law for Civil and Engineering Contracting Article (16).
13. Benefiting from the experiences of other countries in dealing with environmental problems.
14. Benefiting from international scientific institutions through conducting joint research and providing an opportunity for Iraqi researchers to participate in international scientific conferences dealing with environmental problems.
15. Cooperation between the Ministry of Environment and Iraqi universities through holding conferences and seminars that discuss the environmental situation in Iraq.
16. The problems associated with industrialization and technology require the necessity of changing the industrial way of life by minimizing the change in the environment, and this calls for better management of resources with the economy in consumption and the continuous maintenance of the environment.

#### 3.4 Developing the Scientific and Educational Base

The proper starting point for advancing the reality of sustainable development in Iraq is the need to develop the educational and educational system, to the extent that it is able to encourage capacity development, creativity and innovation and solve all kinds of problems [24]. It means

striving towards creating a new generation capable of discovering, organizing, managing, and converting information into (knowledge) that can be used to serve all aspects of life, including the part that is concerned with the economic aspect. In addition, it is necessary to build a scientific, knowledge and technological self-base, through which it can serve the goals with important priorities in the Iraqi society and economy. This stage involves directing efforts (whether material or human) and designing them in a way that highlights contextual strengths, sets goals that take into account global trends, and benefits from active global experience in this field. It is worth noting that it is necessary to work on introducing the knowledge economy courses in educational and academic institutions in the various academic stages and linking education and training outputs to the needs of the labor market.

The educational and educational system, in order to be continuous and responsive to the requirements of the Iraqi economy, must focus primarily on employing talents and capabilities, knowing that there is a new generation of creative students who need a lot of care and correct guidance [25]. This can be achieved through a number of directions, including, but not limited to, the establishment of periodic scientific gatherings. Appointing the distinguished in their specializations, assisting researchers, business owners, and inventors, so that they can use all their expertise and energies to serve the society and achieve benefit to it, urging researchers on how to make their research with tangible results on the ground, and directing the inventors to how to benefit from their inventions.

The process of knowledge building requires the development of the available and the development of new elements in this field, and this requires attention to basic research, in areas that affect the lives of current generations, but must take into account future generations, which includes elements (raising the level of income, improving the level of education, Preserve the environment, and improve the health standard). Provided that this interest in this type of research is accompanied by increased spending allocated to it in the annual Iraqi public budgets [26]. Transferring all technologies adopted by positive research and consolidating it, by focusing on applying its contents in the various economic sectors and elements of sustainable development. The most important step is to preserve, as far as possible, the sobriety of the scientific movement in Iraq, especially as Iraq has been taking over by the serious and ambitious scientific competencies that have made achievements at the local and global levels. This can be done by creating an integrated and fair policy based on equal opportunities in the matter of scholarships and its linkage mainly to the local needs of the country, and serious attention to this issue because it is in the end in the interest of the future development requirements of the country.

As an important step towards ensuring success in this direction, it is necessary to build balanced relations between the public and private sectors in the educational field. In addition, it is important to encourage the private sector to enter into this field, as well as to undertake fundamental treatments for the institutional framework that include:

1. The necessity of renewing the educational system to reach the stage of widening the scope of education in Iraq.
2. Raising the efficiency of work in cultural and educational institutions by encouraging educational contributions that would support and develop those institutions.
3. Developing technical and scientific approaches to ensure that they respond to contemporary challenges and elements of human economic development. For this purpose, it is possible to use local expertise that has been fully aware of the latest global developments in this aspect. There is no harm in using international expertise provided that its scientific and educational project does not intersect with the mentality and culture of Iraqi society.
4. Focusing on achieving the economic goal and the social goal of education.
5. Teacher training and curriculum adaptation in line with the reform of the educational system in Iraq.
6. Addressing poverty as an essential step towards literacy.
7. The expansion and diversification of secondary and university education institutions to meet the requirements of the labor market.
8. The development of scientific and technical staff and the development of academic educational processes in accordance with the latest methods and standards adopted internationally.
9. In our modern life, technologies are what determine the levels of competitiveness, just as information technology can play an important role in sustainable development, and these facts cannot be ignored in any case, because the enormous potential provided by information technology can be harnessed to bring about sustainable development. Comprehensive economic, social and environmental, through enhancing the role of technology for sustainable development, and this reality requires:
  - Promote research and development activities to promote new materials technology, information and communications technology, biotechnologies, and the adoption of sustainable mechanisms.
  - Improving the performance of private enterprises through specific inputs based on modern technologies, as well as the development

of new institutional patterns that include technology cities and incubators.

- Promoting capacity building in science, technology and innovation, with the aim of achieving sustainable development goals in a knowledge-based economy. In particular, capacity building is the only way to enhance competitiveness, increase economic growth, generate new job opportunities and reduce poverty.
- Setting plans and programs aimed at transforming society into an information society. So that new technologies are incorporated into social and economic development plans and strategies.

#### IV. Conclusions

Securing sustainable development requirements in Iraq requires the imperative of legislative, executive and judicial authorities with a strong influence that embraces securing the way for the development process to operate under a solid, financially supported institutional framework that provides a progressively reformed economy within a somewhat safe environment and a stable security situation.

In the current situation, any treatments or proposals that come out within this framework will not be useful if they are not expressive of reality and stem from it. It is imperative that you find these treatments and proposals, whether for this study or others, its opportunity from the application, especially for what is useful and realistic, and it is not wrong to be subject to criticism, analysis, amendment and addition. Rather, the mistake is ignoring the proposed proposals and remedies, which makes the bad conditions worse, and in this case we will inevitably move away from the desired goals. The truth that cannot be ignored is that the well-being of peoples in civilized countries was not achieved by raising slogans and issuing unfulfilled and empty directives from the active content, but rather from the serious and speedy application of the content of carefully studied scientific ideas that employed the available resources and capabilities in the direction that worked on their development and served interests Its people in general and its prosperity, which is the summary of the ideas of people who worked hard and honestly. These requirements are the totality of what we need in Iraq for the present and the future in order to advance its development reality in a sustainable manner.

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