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Iraq's governorate council elections and capacity to develop local economies Challenges and hoped-for role

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Challenges and hoped-for role

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Summary:

- The results of the elections produced a complex political reality in which it would be difficult to achieve economic projects and programmers. Most of the parties that won the elections formulated ambitious electoral programs from an economic point of view and relied on the established pattern of managing the Iraqi economy based on the expansion of benefits.

- The central government needs to be serious about giving greater powers and empowerment to local governments in the provinces. That would reduce the pressure on the central government and relieve mass and popular pressure, and local governments would be able to address local problems in the province.

Provincial councils and emerging local governments will have to work to increase cooperation and participation among the population, thus helping to move citizens from indifference to active participation. This requires building a development strategy that enables them to communicate with community actors, including tribes, individuals, local trade union groups, and civil society organizations.

- Administrative efficiency coupled with the ability to plan through knowledge of the possibilities available, along with proper diagnosis of problems, and the ability to govern financial monitoring, particularly

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those that have a significant social resonance in their treatment, will enhance the competitiveness of markets that will be affected by local populations, when the process of balancing and competing will be able to be monitored by the population.

- The provincial councils in Iraq have considerable powers, similar to those of the Iraqi Parliament in financial matters. The administrative efficiency of the funds involved is dependent on enhancing the possibility that the provincial council will have the most prominent role in local development if that function is good.

- Prioritize building a network of coordination between the local and central levels any reflection on performance that may be negative between central and local actors in financial, legislative, or even emergency crises, May make the provincial council constrained by the most important restriction, which is restricted to funding plans and projects and is not achievable, Or it will resort to routine unambitious operational plans that do not give the desired feasibility.

- Local governments will have to build disaggregated databases, high interest in databases, and analytical capacity, as they will work to diagnose the determinants, developmental potential, available resources, and comparative advantages of conservation.

- Political convictions will play a pivotal role in the formulation of economic decisions, and the impact of political economy will be crucial in the development of local economies. This must be done early by councils to remove obstacles to political economy.

The economic programmers of the governors must be unique in vision, implementation, and evaluation. The needs of the governors are varied and it is not possible to work in the same manner. Thus, the ability to develop local economies will give a more general and

comprehensive picture of the ability of local administrations to develop and address economic failures. In addition, failing on it would prompt a change of those in charge of the election.

Introduction:

Local elections for Iraqi provincial councils ended on 18/12/2023, more than ten years after Iraq's last local elections, and more than four years since they were dissolved by the events of October 2019, demonstrations, and sit-ins that have lasted for more than a year at the gates of the Green Zone, the headquarters of Iraq's central government. After Mustafa Al-Kazimi was appointed Prime Minister, the provincial councils were dissolved and are unable to function until the present time. It is hoped that they will proceed after the final results of the elections have been approved. The results of the elections reflect a complex reality caused by the boycott of the elections by some parties and the reluctance of a large public to participate for several reasons.

These challenges and problems, coupled with the fact that the situation on the street awaits the rapid influence of these councils in the shadow of a bad reality, lagging projects, and political, partisan, and factional conflicts await the first chance of failure to spread, The new councils, therefore, are on the verge of a very significant challenge, which must take into account that waiting, lagging, failing or choosing the path of internal conflict and frustration will be unacceptable choices for citizens in these provinces. And must start implementing the programs of its blocs and parties, which are no longer clearly defined, The economic profile will be at the top of the list of priorities for these councils, since most Iraqi provinces suffer from high rates of unemployment along with high levels of poverty and the prevalence of irregular market images.

One of the most important of these is local economic development, which must bring together all agricultural, industrial, and population sectors in order to achieve a result through which they can change the current reality if only a little, and on this basis, we can divide our subject into the following themes:

I. Local economic development and its relationship to local councils:

Increased government responsibilities have led to the concentration of developmental decision-making power in the hands of central governments. This situation has resulted in many gaps and development problems, the most important of which is the exacerbation of economic and social spatial disparities. At the regional, regional, or regional levels, or provinces, or smaller cities, regions, and populations, which often rendered bodies and segments of the population dissatisfied with the development decisions of central governments.¹

It is on this basis that the idea of dividing or dividing functions and giving more attention to local or regional councils has emerged, giving them many tasks in this area and making their role more effective, as well as giving them the necessary powers in their regions to identify needs on the one hand and to devise an appropriate strategy for the successful resolution of these problems resulting from the lack of attention to them.

1. The concept of local economic development.

The practice of local economic development means promoting equitable and sustainable economic growth in a local area (prefecture, city, or village) to improve the economic future and quality of life of the

1. Kifah Abbas muhaimid, activating the local development strategy within the framework of governance (strategic vision), Al-Ghari Journal of economic and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of management and Economics / University of Kufa, Vol. (17), No. (1), 2021, P. 245.

inhabitants of that region. The process of local economic development and prioritization of the local economy, to optimize the utilization of the region's resources, also requires adjustment to the changing environment so that a range of external contributions is effectively attracted to achieve its objectives. The concept of local development is based on two basic elements²:

1. Popular participation in local development efforts leading to the participation of the population in all efforts to improve their standard of living and quality of life, building on their initiatives.
2. Provide various services and local development projects in a manner that promotes self-reliance and participation.

The objectives of this local economic development are³:

1. The development of infrastructure, such as transport, water, and electricity, is a basis for the development of these sectors and for community development.
2. Increased cooperation and participation among the population, helping to move citizens from indifference to active participation.
3. Increasing the concern of citizens to maintain the projects they contribute to the planning and implementation of;

The local development process is multilateral, sectoral, and caste-based, as its relationships with the economic development agenda and objectives at the local and national levels must be taken into account, Given their multidimensional nature, they must be implemented through an integrated national framework that plays a key role in coordinating and consolidating the various actions underway at the

2. The same source, P. 246.

3. The same source, P. 246.

national, national and local levels, Each society is characterized by a unique set of local conditions and conditions, which may increase or reduce the chances of achieving local economic development, These conditions determine the comparative advantage of a given region in its ability to attract, generate and sustain investments s economic, social and financial situation.⁴

2. Relationship between local administrations and economic development:

The relationship between local administrations and local economic development could be as follows⁵:

1. Local economic development: expresses the work of building the economic strength of a region locally, to improve its economic future and the quality of life of the population of the region and increase reliance on local potential as a source of investment.

2. Local economic development: This is the process by which local councils create the best conditions for economic growth and improve the standard of life for all. It aims to develop schemes designed to develop the economic conditions of local groups, whether industrial or agricultural because the industrial aspect is reflected in all aspects of life.

3. Local administration strives to achieve economic development at the local level by contributing to the preparation of development plans making use of economic potential and directing them towards

4. Hussein al-Araj, local economic development policies, Ministry of local government / occupied Palestine, International Information Network (Internet) on the link (last visit: 3/1/2024): <https://www.molg.pna.ps/uploads/userfiles/file/pdfs/%D9%88%9%4%D9%D8%A9.pdf>

5. Ahmed Ibrahim Abdel Aal, the role of local administration in achieving sustainable local economic development in light of current political and economic transformations, Arab Journal of management, Arab Organization for Administrative Development / League of Arab states, Vol.41, No. 2, June 2021, P. 195.

electoral and service projects, creating jobs for citizens of local units, and encouraging the pooling of local capital and direct it towards beneficial investment projects.

It can be concluded that local development can take place only through distinct management of both its business and its strategy, based on the utilization of its potential, the development of strategic plans that develop, and the development of work in its local environment, but that this role must be accompanied by the financial and economic capacity to sustain its work. (Iraq provincial councils) We will examine the financial capacity, potential, and financial returns that they will receive, which will be our next theme.

Secondly: The provincial councils in Iraq (law and powers).

The promulgation of the Irregular Governors Act (No. 21 of 2008), as amended, represents one of the most important stages in the process of democratization in Iraq after 2003. The ordinary legislature bears full responsibility for paving its tracks in the light of the provisions of the Constitution in order to ensure a smooth and secure transition from the central administration system to the decentralized administration system. As a result of the constitutional legislature's desire to promote a spirit of participation in the administration of the State, such as an application of the democratic system adopted by the article, (1) The system of administrative decentralization was adopted through the formation of local bodies at the governorate level to be administered in coordination with the Federal Government, and the ordinary legislature translated that philosophy under the Law on Irregular Governors in a Territory, which regulated their composition, relationship, and competence⁶.

Following this development and the enactment of the Law on

6. Mustafa Rashid Abdul Hamza and others, an analytical reading on the legal system for the formation of the Governorate Council and local councils in accordance with the law of irregular governorates in the region No. 21 of 2008 as amended, Journal of the Faculty of Education/ Wasit University, Kut, issue (37) / Part One, November 2019, P.681.

Provincial Councils, referred to in the three amendments thereto (2010, 2013, 2018) gave these councils a range of powers that would entrench the principles of administrative decentralization and how it exercised its role varied, as it was dominated by improvisation and diligence without a specific plan on the one hand and the political conflicts to which it has moved from both Parliament and the street, on the other. Another, as many observers considered it, was an excess circle and a huge waste of public money for not achieving the desired goals of its founding. This is what prompted the Almighty to call for their dissolution and annulment, but this is far from true. Because these administrative organizations have been approved by the Constitution and can only be abolished by amending the Iraqi Constitution of 2005 in force, In principle and idea, councils are the most important modalities for the development of local areas, as the central government cannot have direct control over all regions of the State. The people of the regions are also aware of their needs, the conditions for their fulfillment, and the purpose of implementing projects that serve their regions.

The most important powers granted to the provincial councils were contained in Article 7 of the Governorate Act, which is irregular in Territory No. 21 of 2008, as amended.

Article 7 (IV) stipulates that the provincial council shall “formulate the general policy of the governorate and determine its priorities in all fields and mutual coordination with the ministries and authorities concerned. In the event of disagreement, the decision of the governorate council shall be a priority.” Article 15 of the same article stipulates that the governorate council shall define the priorities of the governorate in all areas, formulate its policies, and formulate strategic plans for its development in a manner not inconsistent with national development. The Iraqi legislature is required by the governors law to adhere to the general policy established by the Council of Ministers and the relevant

ministries⁷.

It should be noted that this coordination means that there is a system or program for exchanging information and proposals between the governorate and Iraqi ministries to ensure that there is no intersection of work and complementarity in the accomplishment of tasks between the central Government and local administrations. The concept of coordination has taken on a practical dimension through the existence of the High Coordinating Body between the Government and the provinces headed by the Prime Minister and the membership of the Ministers (Municipalities and Public Works, Housing and Reconstruction, Labor and Social Affairs, Education, Health, Planning, Agriculture, Finance, Youth and Sports), Minister of State for Provincial Affairs, Governors and Heads of Provincial Councils⁸.

Article 7 of the aforementioned Governorate Act provides, inter alia, that:

1. The Council prepares the budget of the Governorate and approves the general budget of the Governorate. The Provincial Council prepares its budget for its inclusion in the general budget of the Governorate. The Council plays an important role in drawing up the budget of the Governorate referred to it by the Governor⁹.

A. To announce the draft budget to the public in the print, and audio-visual media and to hold seminars and conferences for the participation of the citizens of the province and to examine their views;

B. The draft budget reads first and second readings in separate sessions.

7. Raed Hamdan Al-Maliki, the status of Regions and governorates that are not organized in a region in the Iraqi constitutional system, Dar Al-Sanhouri, Beirut, 2022, P.334.

8. The same source, P. 335.

9. The same source, p 338

J. Approve the draft general budget of the governorate and make the transfer between its doors with the approval of an absolute majority of the number of members.

D. Constitutional standards must be observed in the distribution of governorate, district, and district status and submitted to be consolidated with the Federal General Budget by the Federal Ministry of Finance.

The provincial council shall be given the power to transfer within the sections of balancing the projects of the administrative unit in the stalled projects and to inform the Federal Ministry of Planning thereof.

2. Promulgation of legislation on financial matters: The provincial council has the power to issue financial legislation to regulate financial matters for the administration of governorate affairs¹⁰.

Regarding financial revenues, in addition to the funding on which councils rely almost entirely from the federal budget, which covers most of its annual expenditures according to Act No. 21, several things provide funding for the provincial budget, as follows¹¹:

1. The basis for local administrative units to provide services to their public beneficiaries for certain fees. Today, the Department is establishing and managing various economic facilities and investment projects through which it seeks to generate certain imports to the public treasury, all within the resources of the local administrative unit.

2. Taxes, fees, and fines imposed in accordance with the federal and local laws in force within the governors: significant financial resources,

10. Article (7 / XVI) of the law on irregular governorates in the region No. 21 of 2008 as amended.

11. Suha Zaki Nouri and Wahj Khudair Abbas, the financial powers of Provincial Councils under the Second Amendment law to the law of irregular provinces in the region No. 21 of 2008, Journal of law for legal research, faculty of law/ Dhi Qar University, Issue (21), 2016, pp. 460-461.

that contribute to the financing of local activities, include the amounts of local fees and fines, whether imposed by federal laws or constitutions, the burden of which lies with the local administrative unit.

3. Allowances for the sale and rental of movable and immovable State funds.

4. Land lease allowances exploited by companies.

5. Taxes levied by the council on companies operating in them for environmental pollution and damage to infrastructure.

6. Donations and donations made to the governorate by the Constitution and federal laws: the law does not specify here whether such donations and donations are internal or external, some are not prohibited, others are permitted, and others are left to the controls prescribed by federal laws.

7. Half of border zone revenue.

8. Five dollars per barrel of crude oil produced or refined in the province's refineries is five dollars per 150 cubic meters produced from natural gas in the oil-producing provinces.

In the light of the foregoing, it appears that the Provincial Act referred to the financial powers of the Provincial Council independently, that is, it has broad financial powers, together with the delegation of competence under the Constitution. As well as new powers, that could be added to them under the Constitution and the new laws.

Moreover, the second amendment to the Provincial Councils Act, which is irregular in a region, has strengthened the financial aspect of the provincial council, increasing the financial capacity of the Council and giving it sufficient flexibility in transferring allocations, thus enabling it

to achieve its objectives in the event of optimal use of resources.

The challenges facing the provincial councils and a vision of their role in local economic development.

The most important conditions for achieving local economic development in the Iraqi provinces consist of two essential elements. The first is a successful local administration and realistic strategic plans that are commensurate with the nature of the potential of the Department, no greater, no less than those available, and this must be part of a strategic vision and a local government program capable of turning demands and aspirations into reality on the ground.

But are the realities or circumstances on the ground conditions that allow these councils to do their part properly? So before we show the vision to be followed by the councils in question, It is fair to show that these councils face a range of challenges that we can demonstrate in general terms. role in local development.

1. Challenges faced by provincial councils in achieving economic development.

There are a series of challenges facing the experience of the provincial councils in Iraq in general that can be illustrated by a coherent set as follows:

A. Financial challenges:

The Iraqi legislator has mentioned the central resources obtained as one of the most important and first sources of financial imports for local governments in Article (44/I) of the law of the irregular governorates in the amended Region No. 21, considering that what the federal budget allocates the federal budget to the governorate should be enough for the local administration to carry out its responsibilities and burdens,

according to the proportion of the population and the degree of deprivation, and to ensure the balanced development of various regions in the country¹².

A follower of the size of allocations approved by the central authority in the general budget annually finds that they are not consistent with achieving this goal, and even in cases where they are suitable to carry out part of their burdens and responsibilities, there are circumstances and reasons that prevent the disbursement of those allocations for late approval of the budget or delayed disbursement, or even lack of liquidity at times (the government from time to time is unable to provide liquidity to pay the salaries of its employees, and therefore it is difficult to finance important projects. As well as the security conditions that may worsen at any moment or the lack of adequate security control in some areas from the exposures of terrorist groups or the control of armed groups over important areas, which leads to the reluctance of local and foreign investment companies to work in these areas¹³.

Despite the fact that the Iraqi legislator has put in place good mechanisms for allocating financial resources, such as the number of the population, the degree of deprivation and the damage that occurred as a result of negligence from the previous regime (which lost the purpose of its legislation more than 20 years after the fall of the regime) or as a result of military security operations or terrorist putting these provincial councils in front of a big challenge in a few There are provinces that get petrodollars and a share in their outlets, as opposed to provinces that get nothing from all this.

That this disparity will make the governorate council constrained by a basic constraint, which is the limitation of financing plans and projects and the impossibility of achieving them, or that it will resort to

12. Raed Hamdan Al-Maliki, a source already mentioned, P. 376.

13. The same source, P. 377.

routine non-ambitious operational plans that do not give the hoped-for feasibility.

B. Strategic administrative obstacles.

The competing electoral lists in the last governorate councils have not produced any electoral program that has a clear strategic vision or a mature vision on how to manage the general situation in the governorate councils or the governorate alike. What is noticeable on these programs is the absence of a practical vision to manage the social, economic and service files clearly and correctly. The lists have been limited to announcing a set of achievements that are hoped to be achieved without showing how to achieve this, or even showing their strategic economic and administrative plan to harness the resources that will be available to them in the future, categorize them into strategic projects, and put them into practical application. We can even describe it as a set of (daydreams) they want to impress the eyes of voters with it in order to attract their votes to her and inspire them with the possibility of achieving it.

Besides the above, if there is a valid program (a controversial assumption), these elections, as we mentioned, did not produce a dominant and dominant political force, and this would disrupt (the phenomenon of consensus) with its head again, and it will withdraw to positions (the speaker of the council, his deputies, the governor and the heads of committees in the council).

This means that the programs will also be compatible, and this leads to another failure that will be added to the long list of failures of such boards since their introduction after 2003.

C. Community handicaps.

This means that these councils will perform their work in an environment where they have to start from zero, if not below zero, because there is nothing to base their actions on, and they start building on it, unemployment is widespread significantly, which leads to a decline in economic indicators associated with individuals per capita income rates, per capita contribution rate to the GDP and other indicators, and this means that the councils will perform their work in an environment where they have to start from scratch, if not below zero, because there is nothing to base their work on, and they will start building on it, because unemployment is widespread, which leads to a decline in economic indicators associated with individuals per capita income rates, per capita contribution rate to the GDP and other indicators, and high illiteracy rates due to irregular It is true that most of these things are the tasks of the central government, but local councils will suffer from them, because they are the closest to the citizen and the first issues on them, and they have part of the powers to deal with them, which makes them face the citizen in the provinces before the central government and below are some of these statistics that we talked about.

Table (1) Main Economic and Educational Indicators in Iraq

| number | Subject | Year of writing of indicator | % Percentage |
|--------|--|------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita | 2020 | -17.8 |
| 2 | Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities | 2018 | male (10.9) female (31.0) total (13.8) |

| number | Subject | Year of writing of indicator | % Percentage |
|--------|--|------------------------------|--|
| 3 | Percentage of youth (aged 15–24) outsidez education, employment and training | 2019 | Outside the (4.8) Department of Education Outside (8.6) the employment circle Out of the (95.7) training circuit |
| 4 | Proportion of children aged (5–17) years engaged in the child labor market, by sex and age | 2018 | boys (10.2) girls(4.3) total (7.3) |

Source: Table prepared by the researcher based on the statistics of the Iraqi Ministry of Planning, International Information Network (Internet) at the link: <https://mop.gov.iq/>

2. A vision of the work of the provincial councils to achieve the required economic development.

We can demonstrate a vision that can be adopted by the next provincial councils to achieve the required development in the governorates of Iraq, which will bring about a qualitative breakthrough in the living situation within their areas of work. This vision can be adopted by their terms of reference.

Sure, here is the translation of the provided text into English:

1. Prepare and evaluate investment projects and medium- and long-term national development plans in coordination with relevant entities, including local governments in the provinces.

2. Evaluate the progress of comprehensive, sectoral, and spatial development.

3. Support rural development to ensure the integration of the Iraqi countryside into the overall national development process and elevate the standard of living.

4. Support local development and the efforts of provinces in the field of development, enabling them to take responsibility for planning and efficiently implementing their local projects.

5. Collaborate with a group of university professors from various Iraqi provinces to strengthen work in planning units in the provinces, ensuring the transfer of aspirations and desires of local authorities and populations to the Ministry of Planning in the form of national development projects.

6. Transfer the central development orientation of each province to local authorities to properly guide the provinces and integrate regional and local planning levels.

7. Build an information base at the provincial level, diagnosing the determinants, developmental potential, available resources, and comparative advantages of the province, and everything related to local development at the provincial level and its administrative units.

8. Propose directions for development at the provincial level and its administrative units, taking into account the relative potential and advantages of the province.

9. Reduce the phenomenon of dual spatial development at the level of Iraq and within the same province.

10. Stimulate rural growth and reduce development disparities

between rural and urban areas through sectoral development policies, especially agricultural and rural development policies.

11. Work to reduce unplanned urban and random encroachment on agricultural land, particularly reclaimed or falling within future reclamation programs.

12. Adopt the principle of basic land use schemes in rural settlements with the aim of rational use of land and conservation of agricultural land.

13. Strengthen the transport network in the provinces by creating spin-offs to connect cities, especially medium and small ones.

14. Develop capacity-building in the design and development of long-term spatial development strategies based on knowledge partnership, coordination, poverty reduction, and slum reduction on the edge of cities, improvement of rural economies, and overall quality of life.

This vision is just an assumption that we make before the provincial councils that can benefit from them in achieving economic development that will lead to the prosperity of these provinces or at least make a qualitative leap in the Iraqi provinces.

The Conclusion:

The democratic process in Iraq, supported by administrative decentralization, places significant responsibility on provincial councils for local development. These councils must fulfill their intended roles effectively, developing strategic plans to drive economic, social, and service progress in their respective provinces. Quick and efficient solutions are needed to address the challenges faced by citizens, making these councils a strong support for the government's efforts. Achieving

economic development is crucial for improving various indicators and contributing to the overall recovery of Iraq's economy. This vision can only be realized through proper planning, effective implementation, and substantial cooperation with federal ministries, ensuring that these councils become agents of positive change in the Iraqi provinces.