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The Question of Sovereignty and the Weberian Monopoly of Legitimacy A Critical Reading of National Initiatives to Address the Arms Dilemma

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● Research Paper



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The monopoly of legitimate violence represents the fundamental pillar in political science literature and the sociology of the state for building a stable political entity capable of asserting its sovereignty. In the Iraqi case post-2003, the state-building process faced a structural challenge represented by the “arms dilemma” and the multiplicity of power centers outside official frameworks. This military and social proliferation of arms was not the product of a fleeting moment; rather, it came as a response to a massive security vacuum caused by the undermining of traditional military institutions after the fall of the former regime. This prompted political forces and social components to produce private defensive tools for self-protection in an environment lacking the rule of law.

This complex environment produced three main paradigms of armed legitimacies in Iraq, namely:

1. Legal-Constitutional Legitimacy: Represented by the official military and security establishment (the army and police) directly subordinated to the sovereign ministries.
2. Resistance (Ideological) Legitimacy: Emerged in the context of resisting the occupation or confronting the

terrorist onslaught of the “ISIS” organization, acquiring its existential legitimacy from religious fatwas and popular acceptance.

3. Hybrid Legitimacy: Forces that integrate into their identity both official status (government funding and legal cover) and ideological or partisan status (organic loyalty to sectarian or political leaderships).

Over the past two decades, the Iraqi state has suffered from this functional overlap. At many junctures, arms transformed from a tool for protecting national security into a pressure card to tip the scales in internal political competition, preventing the state from reaching the stage of the “Weberian monopoly” (referring to Max Weber) over legitimate violence.

In this context, calls to restrict and disarm weapons were not born of the moment; rather, they remained a continuous and renewed demand with the formation of every government, witnessing initiatives and interactions on three main levels:

- The Governmental Level: Through the efforts of successive governments (Al-Abadi, Al-Kadhimi, and Al-Sudani) to subjugate arms via executive decrees prohibiting factions from political action, even if implementation remained formalistic due to the political

influence of these forces within the parliament.

- The Religious Level (The Religious Authority): Represented by its firm stances calling for the imposition of state authority, practically embodied in the “Shrine Mobilization” step, when it separated administratively and operationally from the Popular Mobilization Commission to be more committed to official orders.
- The Level of Faction and Resistance Leaders: This level constitutes the axis of the current transformation. Tracing official documents and statements reveals the division of the scene into two distinct phases: the phase before the call of the “National Shiite Movement,” and the phase after it.

While the pre-initiative phase was characterized by the absence of any voluntary desire to disarm, focusing on establishing the rationale for its retention and manufacturing justifications for its continuation, the post-initiative phase created a clear sorting within the armed scene, dividing it into two currents:

- A Flexible Current: Announced its support for the steps of the Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces in enforcing the law and dismantling factional affiliations. This was

manifested in practical procedural steps by some factions (such as Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Kata'ib al-Imam Ali, and Harakat Ansar Allah al-Awfiya), through the formation of committees to inventory weapons and vehicles in preparation for their handover, ending partisan armed manifestations, and integrating under the state umbrella, in line with the religious authority's directives.

- A Hardline (Rejectionist) Current: Represented by the Coordinating Committee for the Islamic Resistance and elite factions. This current views disarmament as a relinquishment of the deterrence doctrine, relying on ideological slogans that consider arms a legitimate and regional necessity not subject to local political bargaining.

This analytical and critical study seeks to deconstruct the dimensions of this dilemma, read the contexts of the "National Shiite Movement's" initiative, and foresee the trajectories of the clash of armed legitimacies and its impact on the future of Iraqi state-building.

Methodological Note:

This study adopts a prospective approach, as it treats some of the variables related to the year 2026 (the completion of the cabinet formation, the scheduling of arms handovers, and the dismantling of faction affiliations) as explanatory scenarios based on available official documents, political statements, and declared understandings, rather than as settled facts. Accordingly, the detailed conclusions regarding the initiative's outcomes remain contingent upon empirical verification over time, and upon the non-emergence of geopolitical or internal variables that might redraw the map of actors.

First: The National Shiite Movement's Initiative to Restrict Arms and Strengthen the State

The National Shiite Movement's initiative to restrict arms to the state represents one of the most prominent political and strategic transformations in the Iraqi scene during the current stage. It reflects an endeavor to redefine the relationship between political power and legitimate authority, and to reposition the movement within the framework of the national state and its constitutional institutions.

This initiative proceeds from three main pillars: The first pillar

is to consolidate an independent national positioning by presenting the National Shiite Movement as a political force that adopts the logic of the state and national sovereignty, and seeks to entrench official institutions' monopoly over the instruments of armed force, in a manner consistent with the constitution and limiting the phenomenon of multiple power centers outside the framework of legitimate authority.

As for the second pillar, it pertains to precluding the instrumentalization of the arms dossier in political conflict by removing one of the most prominent pretexts used by political opponents to attack the movement's project or cast doubt on its commitment to the state-building principle. This orientation acquires special importance in light of growing popular demands to end armed manifestations and strengthen the rule of law.

Meanwhile, the third pillar consists of rationalizing political and security discourse in alignment with the requirements of building a modern state, keeping pace with domestic and international trends calling for the consolidation of strong institutions capable of enforcing the law and managing public affairs according to constitutional and institutional foundations.

The practical roots of this trajectory date back to the 2021 elections, in which the Sadrist Movement achieved advanced results by winning 73 parliamentary seats, raising the slogan “Neither Eastern nor Western,” and affirming that restricting arms to the state is a fundamental condition for forming a national majority government. However, this project faced widespread political opposition that stalled the government formation process, prompting the movement’s leader to adopt the option of withdrawing from parliament in 2022 to avoid slipping into an internal clash that could threaten the country’s political and security stability.

During the period spanning 2024 to 2026, the movement’s distancing from direct political participation was not a phase of stagnation or retreat; rather, it represented a stage of strategic review and re-evaluation of domestic, regional, and international transformations. These reviews led to a growing realization of the importance of building a political project centered on the concept of the national state as the framework most capable of responding to the aspirations of Iraqi society and the requirements of the international environment.

In this context came the transition from the “Sadrist Movement” to the “National Shiite Movement” as part of the process of

rebuilding the movement's political identity, aiming to transition from a traditional partisan framework to a broader political space grounded in the concept of sovereign nationalism, expressing broad social sectors demanding statehood, stability, and development. Consequently, controlling armed manifestations and fully subjugating them to state authority became a necessary condition to enhance the credibility of this transformation and entrench its political legitimacy.

This initiative also harmonizes with the transformations witnessed by Iraqi society following the defeat of the ISIS organization and the restoration of relative stability in Iraqi cities. The centrality of mobilized armed discourse receded in favor of escalating demands related to services, development, and institutional reform. Thus, the movement seeks to represent itself as a force supporting civil and constitutional stability, rather than as a party in balance-of-power equations based on armed force.

A set of important strategic repercussions for the future of the Iraqi state follow from this initiative. The first is contributing to the deconstruction of the security impasse suffered by Iraqi political forces, represented by the various parties' hesitation to relinquish instruments of armed force for fear of losing

balance with opponents. Presenting a practical model of commitment to arms restriction would place the remaining political actors before a historical responsibility to either adopt the same approach or bear the consequences of opposing the state-building project.

As for the second repercussion, it consists of enhancing the legitimacy of the official military and security establishment by enshrining the principle of subordinating all forms of armed force to the authority of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. This contributes to restoring state prestige and consolidating its legitimate monopoly over force, which is a fundamental prerequisite for transitioning from a state of institutional fragility to a stage of sustainable political and security stability.

The third repercussion lies in curbing the phenomenon of the politicization of arms and the militarization of politics, by reducing the ability of political actors to employ armed force to achieve political or electoral gains. As the effectiveness of weapons as a pressure tool in political competition declines, the importance of government programs, administrative competence, and the ability to persuade the public increases, thereby strengthening the rules of democratic practice

and establishing a more stable and competitive political environment.

Accordingly, the National Shiite Movement's initiative to restrict arms can be viewed as an attempt to reshape the relationship between the state and armed political forces, and as one of the important opportunities to launch a gradual trajectory towards entrenching state sovereignty and bolstering its legitimate monopoly over force, thereby serving the requirements of stability and institution-building in Iraq.

Second: Regional Balances and the Imperatives of Controlling Arms Outside the State

The dossier of arms outside the state framework in Iraq is no longer merely an internal issue tied to local political balances. Over recent years, it has transformed into a strategic nexus where the interests of international and regional powers intersect with the determinants of Iraqi internal stability. With mounting international attention on Iraq's security and the stability of its investment and financial environment, the future of armed factions has become part of a broader equation concerning the nature of the Iraqi state, its regional role, and its relationship with the international system.

The external pressures influencing this dossier were formed through two parallel and complementary tracks. The first was represented by the hard deterrence track led by the United States and its allies through direct military targeting of certain faction leaders, expanding the scope of financial sanctions, and pursuing their affiliated economic networks. The second track manifested in soft institutional pressures exerted by global international and financial institutions by conditioning investment opportunities, economic cooperation, and reintegration into the global economy on the Iraqi state's ability to monopolize the instruments of force, enforce the rule of law, and protect international interests within Iraq.

In light of this new international environment, a clear divergence emerged in the response of the main Shiite forces to these variables. The National Shiite Movement chose to adopt a proactive approach, whereas most armed factions leaned toward an adaptive approach dictated by considerations of political and economic survival. This is evident through:

1. The National Shiite Movement and the Strategy of Political Preemption

The National Shiite Movement's initiative to restrict arms can be viewed as an attempt at a proactive strategic repositioning

rather than a circumstantial response to external pressures. The movement recognized that the international and regional environment is increasingly trending toward supporting the model of a centralized state capable of monopolizing force, and that any future project to form a majority government or lead the Iraqi state will require a high degree of regional and international acceptance. From this standpoint, the movement sought to present itself as the Shiite actor most aligned with the requirements of a modern state, by adopting the discourse of national sovereignty and restricting arms to the state. This orientation provided the movement with multiple strategic gains. On one hand, it withdrew a significant portion of the justifications relied upon by international powers to legitimize their continued intervention in the Iraqi security dossier. On the other hand, it placed its political opponents before a difficult equation: choosing between joining the state project or appearing as clingers to a parallel power structure. Furthermore, this transformation gave the movement an opportunity to rebuild its image before the international community as a potential partner in managing the state, rather than merely a protest or populist force. Thus, the arms restriction initiative transformed into a tool for producing both internal and external political legitimacy simultaneously.

2. **Armed Factions and the Strategy of Adaptation to International Pressures**

Conversely, the armed factions found themselves facing a strategic environment radically different from the one in which they emerged after 2014. With the decline of the existential threats posed by the terrorist organization ISIS, and the growing international focus on controlling non-governmental arms, the political and economic costs of maintaining a parallel military structure became higher than the gains it achieved. Therefore, the factions underwent a gradual process of transition from a “revolutionary legitimacy” paradigm to an “institutional legitimacy” paradigm. Instead of relying on armed force as the primary source of influence, these forces began searching for more sustainable sources of power through controlling government institutions, economic influence, electoral participation, and expanding their presence within state apparatuses. Hence, one can understand the growing calls among some factions toward reorganizing their relationship with the state or integrating their elements into official security institutions. These calls do not necessarily reflect a complete relinquishment of influence, as much as they express an attempt to reproduce it within legal and institutional frameworks that

reduce the probabilities of exposure to sanctions or external targeting.

Third: From Military Pluralism to Institutional Competition

The most significant impact of the interaction between international pressures and the National Shiite Movement's initiative is propelling the Iraqi political system toward a new transitional phase, which can be described as a phase of transition from military pluralism to institutional competition.

Previously, competition among Shiite forces was conducted through a mix of political influence and armed force. Today, however, the domestic and external environments are gradually pushing toward shifting this competition to the arenas and institutions of the state. According to this trajectory, ministries, independent commissions, local authorities, and economic resources become the primary instruments of influence instead of armed formations.

This does not mean the complete end of the armed factions' influence. Rather, it indicates a gradual transformation in the nature of power itself: from direct military force to institutional, economic, and political power operating from within the state rather than alongside or outside it.

Consequently, the intersection between the National Shiite Movement's initiative and international pressures does not represent a mere circumstantial response to the arms dossier. Rather, it reflects the beginning of a profound reconfiguration of the rules of competition within the Shiite political house. The legitimacy of armed force is gradually receding in favor of the legitimacy of the state and institutions—a transformation that may constitute one of the most critical determinants of the Iraqi political system's future over the coming years.

Fourth: The Compliance of Armed Factions with Arms Restriction Policies and the Temporal Approach to Transformation

1. Strategic Determinants and the Factions' Conditions for Accepting Disarmament

The armed factions do not view the process of abandoning their military arsenals as a case of "submission" or capitulation to the will of the central authority. Instead, they formulate it within the framework of a "conditional negotiating process," through which these forces seek to trade the dismantling of their military wings for a package of political, legal, and existential security guarantees that ensure the preservation of their material and symbolic gains. These conditions are

summarized in four main determinants:

a) Institutionalization and Structural Integration

The factions stipulate that arms restriction operations must not lead to the dissolution of their formations and the displacement of their personnel. Instead, they demand mechanisms of “institutional integration” by transforming the military structures of the compliant factions into official political entities, or by integrating their elements as regular personnel and public servants with fixed, legally protected payrolls within traditional security apparatuses (the Ministries of Defense and Interior), or within a regular, administratively and operationally accountable structure within the Popular Mobilization Commission, ensuring the preservation of their job and financial security.

b) Legal and Financial Immunity (Guarantees of Non-Prosecution)

This clause represents a decisive condition for accepting any settlement. The factions’ leaderships demand binding, legally immunized government guarantees ensuring their elements or leaders will not be judicially prosecuted on charges related to their previous military activities. This condition extends

beyond the local scope to demanding political and diplomatic protection provided by the government to prevent them from being affected by international and U.S. decisions, particularly those related to “freezing financial assets” or inclusion on foreign terrorism lists.

c) The Principle of Security Symmetry (Reciprocity and Generalization of the Decision)

The resistance forces adopt the principle of symmetry as a condition for legitimacy, rejecting the limitation of eliminating armed manifestations to Shiite factions alone. They stipulate that the comprehensive national plan must include the disarmament of medium and heavy weapons from other paramilitary entities in the country (such as the Kurdish Peshmerga forces and tribal arms). This is to ensure the preservation of the “internal balance of power” and to prevent the emergence of security imbalances among the components.

d) The Readiness of the Sovereign Defensive Alternative (Safeguarding the Deterrence Doctrine):

The hardline factions (which have recently shown conditional flexibility) demand the presentation of realistic proofs indicating that the Iraqi Armed Forces now possess the full

capacity and technical expertise to protect the airspace and land borders from external threats (regional and international). This includes the state's ability to operate advanced defensive and offensive systems, such as drones and cruise missiles, as a national alternative that dispenses with the need to empty the arena of the factional deterrence apparatus.

2. The Temporal Engineering for Scheduling Arms Handovers and Dismantling Affiliations

To avoid direct clash scenarios, political understandings produced flexible, phased timeframes to ensure a smooth transition from an armed status to a civilian status:

- The Dynamic Starting Point (Late May 2026)

The completion of the cabinet formation and the assumption by Prime Minister Ali Falih Al-Zaidi of his executive and legal duties constituted the starting point for activating direct meetings and negotiations to formulate the executive mechanisms for restricting arms. Due to the factions' rejection of proposals calling for a sudden, immediate handover, an extended and phased timeline was adopted.

- The First Procedural Phase (The Inventory and Documentation Phase)

It began with the establishment of central committees within the armed organizations (like those formed by the Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq movement). These committees undertake exclusive tasks represented by: conducting a comprehensive and documented inventory of all personnel, weapons, and vehicles; officially registering heavy and tactical weapons under the supervision and guidance of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces; and storing them in government depots under state control.

- The Second Transitional Phase (Civilian Transformation and Administrative Dismantling)

In parallel with the arms inventory, the understandings set a timeline extending over the remaining months of 2026 to transform partisan armed headquarters into political and civilian offices, and to complete the administrative, financial, and operational dismantling from the Popular Mobilization Commission in a final and detailed manner, preventing a duality of identity (partisan/governmental).

The compliance of armed factions with the decision to restrict arms and dismantle their military wings does not merely represent a temporary security achievement or a fleeting

political settlement. Rather, it is a “historic structural turning point” that re-engineers the Iraqi political system and the rules of governance according to five strategic paths:

1) Reclaiming the “Weberian Monopoly” over Violence and Enshrining Hard Sovereignty

The state’s inability to monopolize the instruments of force is considered the most prominent obstacle to development and stability. In this context, sociological thinker Max Weber points out that the existence of armed groups possessing the right to use violence outside the constitutional framework automatically strips the political entity of the attribute of “statehood,” transforming it into something akin to an “open security market” in which sub-identities compete. The structural compliance of the factions and the surrender of their military arsenals transition Iraq from a state of “fluid and fragmented sovereignty” to a phase of “hard and centralized sovereignty.” This transformation restricts the making of peace, war, and strategic deterrence decisions exclusively to the official constitutional institution (the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces), thereby consolidating the system’s structural stability.

2) Unifying Military Doctrine and Dismantling “Parallel Ideological Armies”

Historian and strategic researcher Ibrahim Al-Marashi argues that the greatest threat to building national armies in transitional environments is the “plurality of military doctrines” and the conflict of loyalties between pre-state frameworks (religious and partisan) and constitutional state frameworks. Therefore, ending armed manifestations, integrating faction personnel, and subjugating their weapons to the authority of the Ministries of Defense and Interior leads directly to the abolition of “parallel ideological armies.” This measure allows for the reformulation of a “unified and professional military doctrine” grounded in classical military discipline and cohesion, ensuring that Arms are directed toward protecting national identity and sovereign borders without ideological or partisan considerations.

3) Rationalizing Political Conflict and Dismantling the “Armed Democracy” Model

The Iraqi political system has long suffered from the impact of “political arms,” which were used as a material pressure tool to settle electoral and negotiating disputes and pass coercive

consensus. In this framework, British thinker and professor Toby Dodge argues that consociational political systems based on quota-sharing turn into “fragile systems hollowed out of their democratic value” when partisan forces become emboldened by armed wings protecting their economic offices and political influence. Stripping political actors of their military arms compels faction leaders to shift entirely toward “pure pragmatic political action.” In this new rational environment, ballot boxes, political programs, and the capacity to provide services become the sole source for acquiring legitimacy and empowerment, thereby raising the level of public trust in the democratic process.

4) Liberating Oversight and Judicial Institutions from the Domination of the “Deep State”

In his studies on the dynamics of power in Iraq, academic researcher Renad Mansour observes that parallel arms functioned as a violent protection network for the “deep state” and patronage networks that obstruct the rule of law and oversight, preventing the accountability of ruling elites. Accordingly, the absence of parallel arms allows for the liberation of the state’s oversight and judicial institutions (such as the Supreme Judicial Council and the Commission of

Integrity) from threats of deterrence and material clash. This structural reflection grants the judiciary the ability to enforce the rule of law, pursue major corruption dossiers, and dismantle illicit influence networks without fear of repercussions or parallel military retaliation.

5) The Transition from a “Fragile Rentier State” to a “Developmental State”

The building and stability of a modern state are linked to its material capacity to finance development and provide a safe investment environment. In this regard, the Iraqi researcher points out that armed pluralism guaranteed factions the nourishment of their economic offices through unofficial control over land border crossings, customs, and coercive government projects and contracts. Restricting arms lifts the protective umbrella from these parallel economic networks, allowing the state to regain full control over customs, tax, and border revenues, and channel them directly into the central treasury of the Ministry of Finance to fund the investment and service budget. This structural transformation leads to the following economic outcomes:

Current Procedural Path	Targeted Structural Outcome	Strategic Impact
Ending the Parallel Economy	Regaining control over border crossings, customs, and borders	Drying up sources of illegal funding and unifying the financial economy
Maximizing Sovereign Resources	Directing revenues to the central Ministry of Finance treasury	Greater capacity to fund investment budgets and infrastructure projects
Rationalizing the Security Environment	Improving Iraq's credit rating and international security environment	Disappearance of the military threat directed at diplomatic missions and foreign companies

The factions' compliance sends strong positive signals to the global financial system (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) and major investment companies. This contributes to attracting foreign direct investments and accelerates Iraq's exit from the cycle of the "fragile rentier state" to enter the phase of a "developmental and stable state."

Fifth: The Executive Approach of Ali Al-Zaidi's Government and the Opportunities for Strategic Dismantling versus Structural Challenges

I. **The Government's Mechanisms for Procedural and Geopolitical Utility**

According to the projected scenario, Prime Minister Ali Falih Al-Zaidi's government gaining confidence coincides with a dramatic transformation in the Iraqi security environment, represented by the National Shiite Movement leader's announcement of the complete dismantling of the "Peace Brigades" (Saraya Al-Salam) and the initiation of their integration into state institutions. The new government is expected to seize this pivotal variable, transforming it into the third and most important pillar of its ministerial program concerned with "reforming the security system and restricting arms," relying on four executive paths:

1. **Procedural Utility via "Normative Pressure"**

It is probable that Ali Al-Zaidi's government will leverage the "National Shiite Movement's" initiative as a tool of normative and political pressure to embarrass the rest of the non-state armed actors, without needing to resort to the option of direct military confrontation. This utilization may push major factions (such as the Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq movement and Kata'ib al-Imam Ali) to show realistic flexibility and express a

desire to concede their “military exclusivity,” by forming self-committees to voluntarily dismantle their affiliation with the Popular Mobilization Commission, out of fear of appearing as rebels against the institutional national consensus.

2. **Replacing Shock with “Disciplined Bureaucratic Absorption”**

The government avoided the strategy of “shock immediate disarmament” due to the risks of violent backlash it carries, replacing it with a mechanism of bureaucratic absorption through two parallel tracks:

- The Operational Track: Integrating faction fighters (the executive/jihadist branch) as regular personnel with fixed and exclusive ranks and payrolls within the Ministries of Defense and Interior, while abolishing all factional titles and sub-banners.
- The Civilian Track: Transforming military offices and headquarters inside cities and urban centers into developmental and service centers. This allows the government to extend its control over civil geography and end the militarization of society without causing sudden unemployment for the fighters.

3. Monetary Management and Drying Up the Sources of the Parallel Economy

According to the projected scenario, the government is moving toward linking the work of the arms inventory committees with tightening electronic surveillance on border crossings and informal trade revenues, which constitute the financial artery for the factions' arsenals. By adopting a strict financial compliance system in coordination with international monetary institutions and the Federal Reserve, it is highly likely that the process of tracking cash liquidity will become tighter. This raises the financial cost of retaining arms outside the state framework, pushing pragmatic leaderships toward accepting the equation: "Arms in exchange for political legitimacy and government posts."

4. Geopolitical Utility and the Localization of Sovereignty

This discipline contributed to gaining the support of Washington and international financial institutions, reinforcing the confidence of major corporations to invest in national strategic projects.

II. **The Structural Challenges to the Dilemma of Restricting Arms**

Despite the favorable environment, the arms restriction process faces five structural obstacles inherent in the nature of the political system and the security environment:

1. Risks of Internal Division within the Armed Environment:

The divergence in stances between flexible and hardline currents leads to the possibility of factions fragmenting and spawning rogue “radical” wings that reject the settlement.

2. Shiite-Shiite Polarization: The connection of the arms dossier with dossiers of political competition for leadership of the component, which may turn any executive government measure into an internal political crisis.

3. Covert Occupational Infiltration (Ideologized Bureaucracy):

The agreement of major factions to dismantle their armed apparatus places the state before the dilemma of latent occupational infiltration. Integrating fighters as individuals into sovereign ministries may produce a generation of official civil servants with government salaries who nevertheless retain their ideological ties and previous partisan loyalties. This transformation shifts armed groups from a “parallel force

outside the state” into “obstructive pressure blocs from within the government bureaucracy.”

4. Geopolitics and Regional Interventions: The retention of arms remains linked to regional functions and cross-border deterrence doctrines, which are subject to balances and bargains broader than the local Iraqi scope.

5. Sovereign Vacuum and Trans-Regional Security (Sensitive Contact Points): Factional power is concentrated in sensitive strategic areas (such as the Syrian-Iraqi border, the Sinjar district, and Kirkuk governorate). A rushed government compliance to disarm factions in these areas—prior to achieving full readiness and intense deployment of the regular army—could create tactical security vacuums prone to rapid explosion. This would allow the reactivation of sleeper cells of the “ISIS” organization or ignite postponed national and ethnic conflicts, making the continued presence of factional arms in these hotspots currently appear as a “compelling security necessity.”

III. **Brakes on Armament and Opportunities for Strategic Realization**

In 2026, Iraq possesses four structural levers capable of overcoming obstacles and transforming arms restriction into

a sustainable reality:

1. Rationalization of Capital and the Bourgeois Transformation

of Elites: The elitist transformation of faction leaders over the years has contributed to generating a “vital self-interest” for them in the stability of the state and the renunciation of violent armed manifestations, because the continuation of security tensions now directly threatens their private interests.

2. The Federal Veto and Strict Monetary Oversight:

The U.S. Federal Reserve, through the constraints of the international “SWIFT” financial system, plays a decisive role in curbing the movement of unofficial funds in Iraq. Armed entities are no longer able to finance their parallel military activities without complying with the state’s official financial transparency standards, making the relinquishment of arms an obligatory choice to ensure the financial and political survival of those forces.

3. The “Development Road” Project as a Lever for Economic

Stability: Partnering and investing countries stipulate the provision of exclusive physical security overseen by the official armed forces without factional interference. This generates a shared developmental pressure that contributes

to accelerating the dismantling of parallel military formations to ensure the flow of sovereign economic revenues.

4. Demographic Transformation and the Decline of Ideological Recruitment: Social mobilization in Iraq is led by a massive young demographic bloc (the post-war generation) that lacks ideological memory linked to the events of 2003 or old sectarian polarizations. This new generation exhibits total aversion to the militarization of society and focuses its demands on the concepts of a “welfare state, services, and civility.” This deprives the armed factions of a reservoir for voluntary human recruitment, forcing them to lay down their arms to maintain their weight and acceptability on the street.

Sixth: A Critical Reading: The Limits of the Initiative and the Risks of Political Exploitation

Despite the transformational importance of the National Shiite Movement’s initiative, scientific treatment necessitates a critical examination of three structural problematics related to the initiative’s limits, the risks of its political exploitation, and the extent of its long-term sustainability.

I. The Problematic of Shiite Unilateralism in Addressing a National Dossier

According to its current formulation, the initiative is confined within the Shiite political space, meaning it treats the dossier of arms outside the state as an internal crisis of the Shiite house rather than an Iraqi national crisis. This framing, although responding to understandable tactical calculations (given that the most prominent armed factions possess a Shiite identity), involves analytical and programmatic risks. Most notable among these is reproducing the logic of component-based quota-sharing by cementing the idea that each component has its own arms (the factions in the center and south, the Peshmerga in the north, and tribal arms in the west)-the exact logic the initiative claims to transcend. Furthermore, the analysis lacks the voices of non-Shiite components (Sunni, Kurdish, and minorities) regarding the initiative, voices that will partially determine its chances of success or rejection.

II. The Risks of Utilizing the Initiative as a Repositioning Tool Rather than a Value Shift

Describing the initiative as a “political preemption” and “strategic repositioning”—a description the study explicitly adopts—opens the door to questioning its durability: Is it a fundamental ideological shift in the stance toward the state and its monopoly over violence? Or is it a circumstantial

negotiating tool that may be replaced or suspended if the conditions for the movement's ascent to the prime ministership or a parliamentary majority are secured? The study explicitly links the initiative to "any future project to form a majority government or lead the Iraqi state," which is a tacit admission that the initiative's motive is primarily positional. This does not detract from its objective function, but it obliges scientific analysis not to presume its sustainability outside its mobilized context.

III. **The Absence of Guarantees Against Regression**

The study treats the process of integrating faction elements within the Ministries of Defense and Interior as a solution, while simultaneously pointing to the risk of "covert occupational infiltration," which is an unresolved analytical tension. If integration does not erase prior loyalties-as the study acknowledges-then what is practically occurring is not a dismantling of the factional structure, but rather its recycling within the official apparatus. The analysis lacks a serious treatment of the regression scenario: What prevents the reactivation of the disarmed arsenals once again upon a security shock or the outbreak of a new regional conflict? And what are the state's tools to compel unresponsive

factions (the Coordinating Committee and elite factions) without igniting a Shiite-Shiite clash? The absence of clear enforcement mechanisms makes the initiative vulnerable to gradual hollowing out if the calculations of key actors change.

Conclusion

The analytical data of this study indicates that the “National Shiite Movement’s” initiative holds the potential to constitute a catalytic variable that creates a normative rift in the ideological scope of non-state armed actors. This afforded the government of Ali Falih Al-Zaidi a strategic opportunity to leverage this national and international momentum to establish the first pillar of modern state-building, represented by Max Weber’s concept of the “exclusive and legitimate monopoly over the means of physical violence.” The parallel arms dilemma constituted the most prominent structural obstacle that prevented Iraq, over two decades, from transitioning from the phase of a “fragile state” to the phase of a “stable institutional state.”

However, estimating the outcomes of the initiative remains contingent upon a set of unresolved variables, most notably: that the initiative originates from within the Shiite political space without a clear accommodation of the stances of the other components; that its positional motives remain susceptible to replacement if the actors’ calculations change; and that the integration of faction elements within official apparatuses does not necessarily erase their prior loyalties,

nor does it provide decisive guarantees against regression. Accordingly, the current transformation must be read as a foundational opportunity open to multiple possibilities, not as a final resolution to a two-decade-long dilemma.

Based on that, the factions' compliance and the inventory of their arsenals for the year 2026 does not represent a mere circumstantial security settlement; rather, it is-if realized according to the drawn path-a process of sovereign engineering that reformulates the "contract of power" within the political system. It permits the rationalization of conflict by transferring it from the armed arena to purely bureaucratic and democratic competition within the corridors of the state. Based on this structural dialectic between dismantling parallel arms and completing the pillars of sovereignty, the study reached a set of conclusions and recommendations.

I. **Strategic Conclusions**

1. The Effectiveness of Normative Pressure: The National Shiite Movement's initiative constituted a normative and political embarrassment factor that stripped flexible factions of justifications for retaining arms, and provided a national cover for the government's procedural movement without a material collision.

2. The (Arms for Institutionalization) Equation: The factions' acceptance of the inventory and dismantling schedule rests on utilitarian pragmatism, as these forces traded their military arsenals in exchange for preserving their influence within the government bureaucracy, and obtaining political and legal immunity and sovereign positions. This signifies the transfer of the conflict of wills from the armed field to the corridors and joints of the official state.

3. International Financial Compliance as a Structural Brake: The measures of the Federal Reserve and the monetary compliance system represented a pressure factor that dried up the financial ecosystem of the factions' parallel economy, making the relinquishment of arms an inevitable choice to protect the wealth of leaderships that have transformed over time into an investment and political bourgeoisie.

4. The Dilemma of Security Symmetry with the North: The continued presence of partisan forces (Units 70 and 80) in the Kurdistan Region outside the control of the Federal General Staff represents a structural loophole that may grant the solid core of abstaining factions a justification to regress and rearm under the pretext of maintaining the component balance.

II. **Strategic Recommendations for the Decision-Maker**

1. Securing Military Doctrine and Bureaucratic Vetting:

Subjecting all integrated faction personnel in the Ministries of Defense and Interior to standards of “strict classical military vetting and scrutiny” and continuous job rotation, to ensure the dismantling of old partisan and organizational networks, and to guarantee the dissolution of individual loyalties into the unified national military doctrine.

2. Containing Cognitive and Technological Arms: Forming specialized intelligence technical committees to pursue and institutionalize “cognitive and technological arms,” and establishing maintenance and development workshops for drones and missile software affiliated with official military industrialization. This is because stripping traditional material arms does not eliminate the capacity to re-manufacture and engage in asymmetric regression in the event of renewed crises.

3. Activating the Schedule of Federal Security Symmetry:

Joint coordination with the Kurdistan Region Presidency and the International Coalition to activate the memorandum on reforming the Peshmerga forces through a unified timeline

that transfers the logistical and operational subordination of the northern forces to the Federal Ministry of Defense, concurrently with the integration of Baghdad's factions, to end the culture of component-based armament.

4. Institutionalizing Geographical Control over Contact Areas:

Filling geographical vacuums in contact lines and disputed areas (Sinjar, Kirkuk, Western Borders) with joint regular forces (Army and Federal Peshmerga) immediately upon the factions' withdrawal, to prevent the emergence of hybrid security hotbeds exploited by terrorist organizations.

5. Governance of the Financial System and Border Crossings:

Developing the financial compliance system and automated electronic surveillance over customs and border crossings to prevent the formation of any cross-border financial flows that feed the parallel economic networks protecting rogue arms.

6. Localizing Development and Protecting the Development

Road: Utilizing the security stability resulting from dissolving the factions to reassure transnational global corporations and prompt them to invest in infrastructure and the "Development Road" project. This serves as a tool to create developmental economic interests that make society and elites reject any attempt to remilitarize the state.

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