



The impact of terrorist groups and militias on the development of Iraq

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Introduction

For more than two decades, Iraq has been experiencing a severe security and political crisis that has impacted the country's economic and social situation negatively. The rise of terrorist groups in Iraq occur simultaneously with declining rates of development and the fragility of the economy, which has had repercussions on all fields and sectors. In this context, this paper aims to highlight the impact of terrorist groups and militias on the reality of development in Iraq. Also, review and analysis the development of terrorist groups in the country since the American invasion 2003 and its implications for the security and economic situation by answering the following research problem: **How does terrorist groups and militias affect the development of Iraq?**

The study assumes an inverse relationship between the activity of terrorist groups and the development process. To verify their validity, the study will adopt a descriptive analytical approach to describe growth and impact of terrorist groups on security and development. as well as adopt the statistical approach that seeks to describe the implications of terrorism from a quantitative perspective.

The study is divided into three axes, from monitoring the development of terrorist groups in Iraq, through the impact of terrorism on security and stability, to the implications of terrorism on the reality of development in Iraq.

First: A historical geopolitical approach to the development of terrorist organizations in Iraq

Understanding the current structure of terrorist organizations and their impact on development in Iraq requires tracking their growth within historical, sociological, and geopolitical contexts. It can generally be said that the development of terrorism in Iraq has gone through three basic stages:

1-1 Formation phase:

Iraq's violent course in the last four decades has led the country to enter a spiral of conflicts and struggles that has collapsed state institutions and destroyed its economy, paving the way for the rise of terrorist groups and their control over several areas of the country. Iraq has been in a wave of unrest and insecurity since the first Gulf wars (1980-1988) and the second (1990-1991). The latter, which had serious repercussions on Baghdad because of the international sanctions imposed on it between 1991 and 2003¹.

In the midst of these situations, jihadist ideas began to spread in Iraq and have been widely accepted since 1986², followed by the publication of letters, pamphlets and pamphlets during the Iran-Iraq war, ending the recruitment phase that began attracting the first batch of recruits in 2000³.

¹ Didier Billon, *Géopolitique des mondes arabes : 40 fiches illustrées pour comprendre le monde* (Paris : Eyrolles, 2018), p. 73

² *Speeches, lectures and audio-recorded lessons urging those who use jihad.*

³ Hisham al-Hashimi, *ISIS world : ISIS* (London: Dar al-Hikma, 2015), p. 25

2-1 Activity phase:

for a number of security and strategic reasons and interests, on 20 March 2003, the United States, together with British forces, began the campaign to invade Iraq, then entering the country into a dark tunnel and a new, more violent and bloody phase, with 650,000 dead and a sectarian conflict that subsequently contributed to the serious fragmentation of Iraqi society that has ravaged social security for nearly two decades⁴.

After the U.S. invasion, the Iraqi political system experienced structural transformations, beginning with the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime and bringing about fundamental changes in the Iraqi political scene, highlighting its success through the redistribution of power according to the al-MoHasassah regime, in which Shiite parties allied themselves with the Kurds shared power in the country at the expense of marginalizing the Sunni component. At the institutional level, the Administration has restructured security and other sector institutions according to the same sectarian logic, contributing to the strengthening of sectarianism and fueling conflict among Iraqis in exchange for weakening state institutions. This has delayed the project of building a national State in which all sub-identities are fused in favors of an inclusive national identity.

The previous factors contributed to the lack of the state from its functions, and the foundations of a state of political isolation, particularly in Sunni geography, providing an environment conducive to terrorist groups that took advantage of the crisis of the political system and the failure of its distributional and responsive capabilities in its favors⁵. Al-Qaeda's sleeper cells have begun their operational

⁴ Billon, p. 73.

⁵ Maurizio Melani, "Les fragilités de l'Etat irakien et les conditions pour sa reconstruction dans les équilibres régionaux," in: Anna Bozzo, Pierre Jean Luizard (eds.), *Vers un nouveau moyen orient ? Etats arabes en crise : Entre logique de division et sociétés civiles* (Roma : Roma Tre-Press, 2016), p. 56

activities by expanding the recruitment process, which has targeted new groups such as veterans of the security services and village and rural youth. The "Tawhid and Jihad Brigades" were then established by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi⁶, followed by the emergence of the al-Qaeda al-Jihad group in Mesopotamia and the sale of Zarqawi to Osama bin Laden, which benefited the organization militarily, financially and media⁷.

Abu Ayoub al-Masri was declared the new leader of the organization, and the Islamic State in Iraq, formed from several armed factions⁸; was proclaimed before Abu Omar al-Baghdadi founded the Islamic State in Iraq, which was then led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi⁹.

In 2013, the crisis of the structural political system and the protests that Iraq has experienced in many provinces such as Mosul, Anbar and Salah al-Din created a great opportunity for terrorist groups that have exploited the crisis internal and regional situation to revitalize the group¹⁰. Terrorist militias have been able to overcome regular Iraqi forces and penetrate sunni geography against the regime¹¹. After convincing its inhabitants that it is the savior and savior of the marginalization that has affected them. This popular incubator

6 Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, real Name is Ahmed Fadhil Nazzal al-Khalila, born on Octobre 30, 1966, is a Jordanien leader of Al-Qaeda, from whom Jordanien citizenship was later withdrawn. Zarqawi led training camps for militants in Afghanistan, before becoming a member of al-Qaeda in Iraq. He was blamed for a series of attacks and bombings during the Iraq war, which was announced on June 7, 2006, after a U.S. raid on al-Qaeda, classified as a terrorist organization.

7 Al-Hashimi, p. 27-28.

8 Zana Khasraw Gulmohamad, "The rise and fall of the islamic state of Iraq and Al-Sham (Levant) ISIS", *Global Security Studies*, vol. 05, no. 02 (Spring 2014), pp. 01-02

9 Al-Hashimi.P.132

10 Ibid. p.57

11 .Al-Hashimi p.132

allowed it to impose public order and control most public utilities and services on a territory of 58,372 km² in the fall of 2014¹².

3-1 The weakness and decline stage

As ISIS increased and the number of deaths and casualties intensified, the international community found itself facing the need to intensify efforts and cooperation to fight the group in the region. This culminated in the establishment of an international coalition in which Iraq was involved¹³, and irregular forces were called upon locally to fight the group, like the Popular Mobilization Forces or (Hashid Al-Shaabi).¹⁴

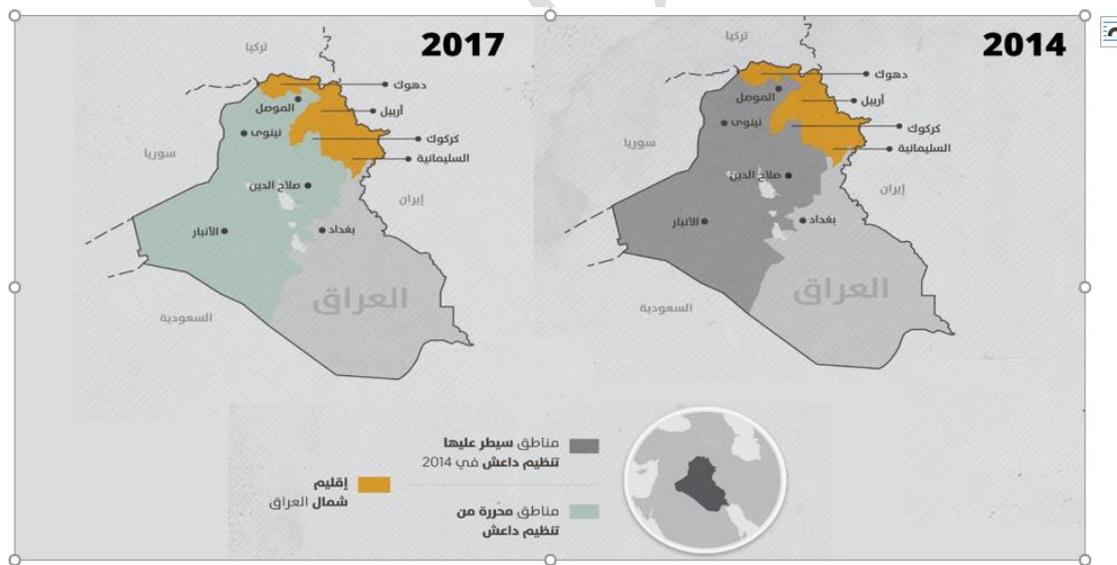


Figure 1: The Evolution of ISIS in Iraq¹⁵

¹² Seth Jones et al., Rolling Back the Islamic State (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2017). P. 84.

¹³ In 2014, the Iraqi government allowed several foreign countries to launch military interventions against the so-called Islamic State on their territory, for further consideration:

Karine BANNELIER-CHRISTAKIS, "Military Interventions against ISIL in Iraq, Syria and Libya, and the Legal Basis of Consent", Leiden Journal of International Law, vol. 09, no. 03, (2016), p. 750

¹⁴ Abdul Wahab al-Kasabi, former reference, p. 10-11.

¹⁵ تنظيم "داعش" الذي غيّر خريطة العراق، وكالة الأناضول، 23/11/2017، شوهد في: 07/08/2020، في: <https://bit.ly/3lrQAFz>

These military efforts coincided with the decline of ISIS and the loss of most of its territory, the Iraqi government declaring It has succeeded in eliminating terrorism in December 2017¹⁶ (Fig. 01), and the death of its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in November 2019¹⁷. Despite the end of the organization, many researchers do not rule out his return, especially since its sleeper cells are still active in Iraq to this day¹⁸.

Second:

The implications of terrorism on security and stability in Iraq

The phenomenon of terrorism is a threat to international security, but its repercussions undoubtedly vary from region to region and from state to state. There is no doubt that Iraq is one of the countries most affected by terrorism, as confirmed in the recent report of the Global Terrorism Index, which ranked Iraq as the second most affected by terrorism¹⁹. This is in line with other indicators, with Iraq currently ranked 17th in the Fragile State Index²⁰ and 161st in the World Peace Index²¹. This demonstrates the magnitude of the repercussions of terrorism.

¹⁶ IS 'caliphate' defeated but jihadist group remains a threat, BBC, 23 March 2019, accessed on 17/08/2020 at <https://bbc.in/31BMREr>

¹⁷ Pascal Boniface, op.cit., 82

¹⁸ هشام الهاشمي، تنظيم داعش في الربع الأول من عام 2020، منتدى صنع السياسات، 2020 /03/25، شوهد في 12/08/2020، في : <https://bit.ly/32DvUsl>

¹⁹ Global terrorism index report, Institute for Economics, and peace, (Sydney: November 2019), p. 08

²⁰ Global Data, fragile state index, accessed on 18/08/2020 at : <https://bit.ly/3gIFH5s>

²¹ Global peace index 2020, Institute for Economics and peace, (Sydney: June 2020), p. 09

Moreover, the increase in the number of clashes and terrorist operations after 2014 has caused a significant increase in the number of deaths and injuries, as illustrated in (figure 02), which has contributed to the destabilization of security and stability within Iraq, and has strained the security institutions that have engaged in a costly confrontation with Al-Qaida and then ISIS, which has had a negative impact on the security of the state, society and the individual.

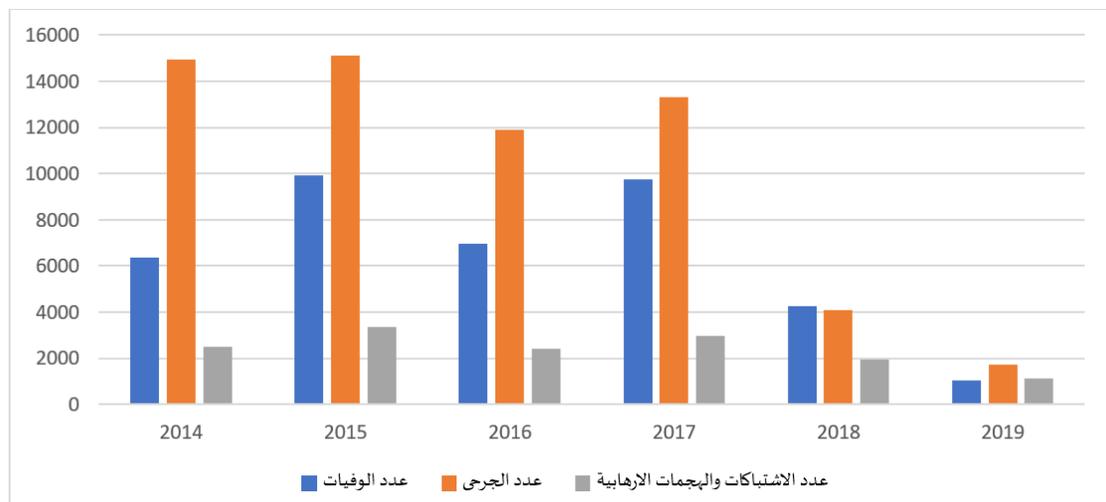


Figure 2: Implications of Terrorism in Iraq between 2014-2019(22)

The fall of Mosul, Tikrit, and the rest of the provinces in 2014 was the biggest security collapse Iraq has seen since 2003²³. About 34.6% of the country's total area is controlled by the terrorist organization ISIS, where the group has extended its influence over most service

²² Data collected by the researcher from Global terrorism index reports for 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019.

²³Rafid Jabouri, Features of Shiite Discourse and Politics in Iraq After the Fall of Mosul, Arab Politics, No. 25, March 25, 2017, p. 56.

departments and institutions, as well as being able to penetrate the security and intelligence services²⁴.

Third:

The implications of terrorism for development in Iraq

Most of the literature in the fields of security studies and development studies combines the existence of a direct relationship between security and development, which finds an imperial ground in the current situation in Iraq, where insecurity and the rise of terrorist groups have negatively affected the reality of development.

1. implications of terrorism on economic development:

ISIS has been able to dominate all fields of economic life in the areas it has captured. After occupying Mosul, he was able to acquire \$450 million from the Central Bank of Iraq, as well as several oil fields that enabled it to strengthen its financial interventions and strengthen its human and logistical system²⁵.

Available statistics and indicators on Iraq reflect the fragility of the country's economic and development situation since the broke out of the Gulf War. This can be drawn from World Bank estimates showing the continuing turmoil in GDP from 1990 to the present day as described in Figure 03 below.

²⁴ Hisham al-Hashimi, ISIS scientist: ISIS, previous reference, p.140

²⁵ Pascal Boniface, p.81

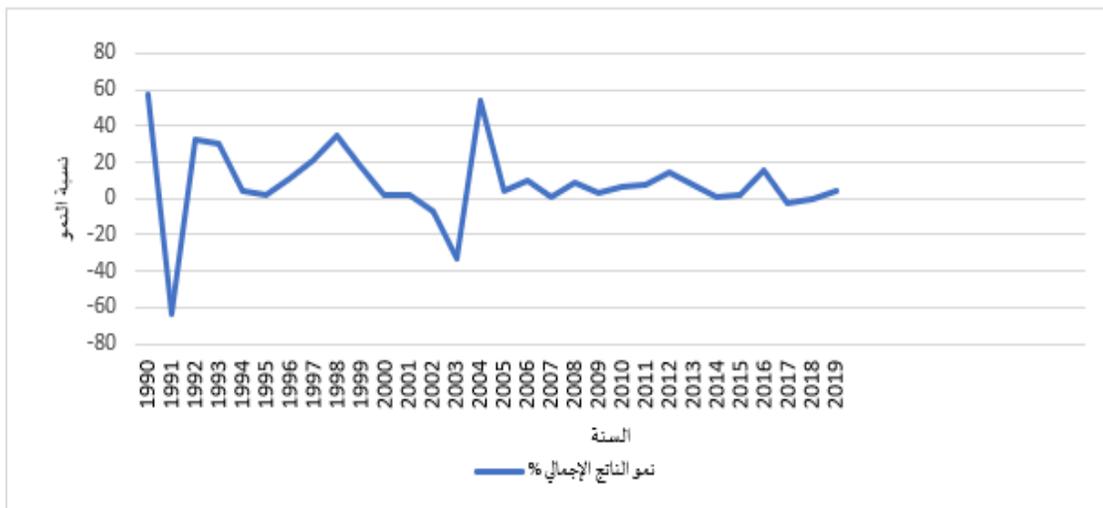


Figure 3: GDP growth²⁶

From another hand, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute database on the volume of military spending in the world²⁷ indicates that Iraq's military expenditure budget in 2019 was about \$7.6 billion, an estimated 3.5 percent of GDP and 7.8% of government spending.

²⁶ GDP growth annual % - Iraq, The World bank, accessed on 12/08/2020 at : <https://bit.ly/2G7dKaV>

²⁷ The Stockholm Institute defines the military budget as comprising all current capital expenditures on armed forces, including peacekeeping forces; ministries of defense and other government bodies involved in defense projects; paramilitary forces trained and equipped to participate in military operations; and military space activities. Such expenses also include the remuneration of military and civilian personnel, including military personnel' pensions and social services for staff; operation and maintenance; procurement; military research and development; and military assistance (in the military expenditures of the donor State). The exception of civil defense expenditures and current expenditures for past military activities, such as veterans' benefits, demobilization, replacement, and weapons construction. For more to look:

Frequently asked questions, SIPRI, accessed on 14/08/2020 at: <https://bit.ly/31CeBsq>

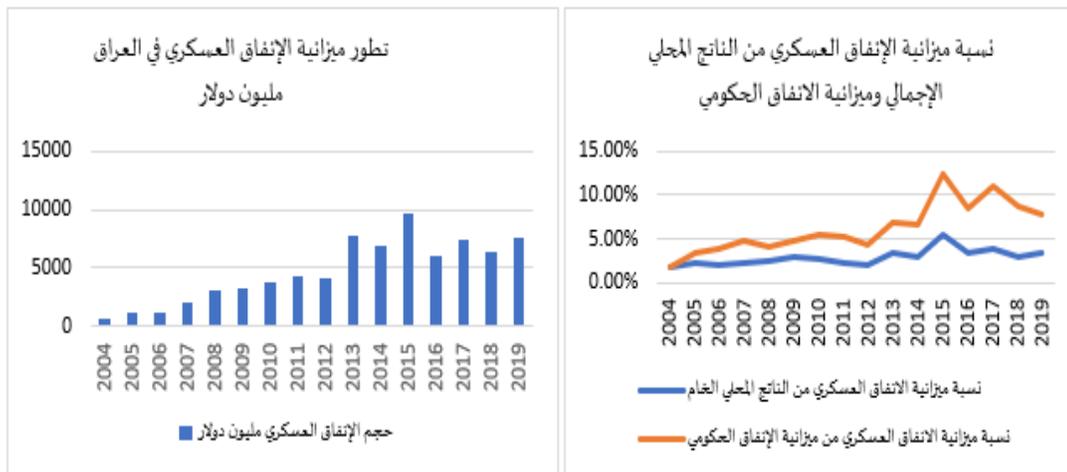


Figure 04: Iraq's military spending budget statistics²⁸

The charts in (figure 04) showed the dramatic rise in Iraq's defense budget between 2010 and 2019²⁹, especially after 2014, when the international military coalition against ISIS was declared to be at the peak of its activity. Iraq was a member of the coalition and a battleground by virtue of the group's presence on its territory. The declining security situation in Iraq and the rise of terrorist groups have drained the public budget, with the defense and security sector accounting for a large proportion of GDP of more than 5% in 2014 and 3.5% in 2019. The war against ISIS has prompted the Iraqi government to increase its defence budget at the expense of the budget for the essential public's services sector³⁰ and investment in the oil and minerals sector, the country's most important economic sector³¹.

²⁸ SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, SIPRI, accessed on 16/08/2020, at: <https://bit.ly/31CXAlq>

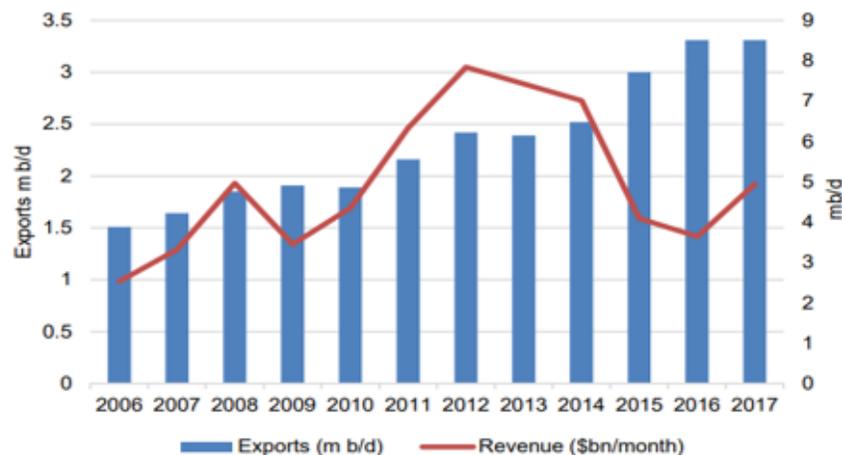
²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Ahmed Tabaqchali, Iraq's Economy after ISIS: An Investor's Perspective, Institute of regional and international studies IRIS (November 2017), p. 05, available at : <https://bit.ly/3j2hSHi>

³¹ Ahmed Mehdi, Iraqi Oil : industry evolution and short and medium-term prospects, OIES PAPER : WPM 79, The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies (October 2018), p. 10 , available at : <https://bit.ly/34qH4n2>

Regardless of its size, this budget does not include the national defence council, the office of the commander of the armed forces, the Directorate of Disarmament and Militia Integration, whose combined budget was 314 billion Iraqi dinars in 2012³². In addition to the paramilitary budget, which was appealed in 2014 along the lines of the Popular Mobilization Forces or (Hashid Al-Shaabi) ³³. The military sector's dominance on the balance sheet comes against the backdrop of a severe economic crisis and declining oil revenues, which have been severely reduced by falling oil prices and increased terrorist attacks. Media reports said that the increase in terrorist attacks on oil fields and wells contributed to the decline in oil production in Iraq by about 320,000 barrels per day in 2016, the same year that saw a collapse in oil revenues such as figure 05 below.

Figure 05: Oil exports and revenues in Iraq³⁴



32. the Directorate of Disarmament and Militia Integration was dissolved by a decision of the Iraqi Council of Ministers in 2016 and its financial allocations were transferred to the Popular Mobilization Authority or (Hashid Al-Shaabi). (IFPMC interpreter)

33 SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, op.cit.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.09.

Despite Iraq's urgent need for reconstruction and re-development, after 2014, policymakers found themselves facing the imperative of borrowing to meet the growing needs of the war against terrorism, causing the debt to rise to \$122.9 billion in 2017 and expected to reach \$133 billion in 2022³⁵. The government has also made significant cuts in investment spending and used borrowing to finance bloated spending, which includes vulnerable sectors causally related to citizens, the most important of which are wages, financial support, and the social protection system³⁶.

In another hand, the security situation resulting from the war has led to low investment rates, with Iraq occupying low business and investment positions for more than a decade. This was confirmed by the world bank's latest business performance report for 2020, where Iraq ranked 172nd out of 190 in the Business Performance Index³⁷.

According to researcher Mohammed Jassim Mohammed, terrorism has destroyed at least 90% of the infrastructure and vital industrial facilities in the areas it has occupied, as terrorist militias have vandalized archaeological areas, museums³⁸, official districts, monuments and religious and historical monuments, and destroyed water and electricity plants. In addition, it has acquired agricultural

³⁵ Ahmed Maan Al-Sa'ajali, Iraq's debt... Joule Overview of the state, origin and future of debt (Baghdad: Bayan Center for Studies and Planning, 2018),p6.

³⁶Ibid, p. 04.

³⁷A summary of the state of Iraq in the World Bank's Business Performance Report, PolicyMaking Forum, seen on: 17/08/2020, at:

<https://bit.ly/3bdGlqI>:

³⁸ Pascal Boniface, op.cit., p. 81

land and water resources after controlling several dams, including the Mosul dam³⁹.

In parallel with all these serious repercussions, corruption has dominated all the buildings and institutions of the central state and decentralization. This ranked Iraq 162nd out of 198th in the Transparency Index⁴⁰, one of the criteria for good governance.

2- Implications of terrorism for human development

Human resource is the most important element in any development process, which explains the attention of advanced countries in the development of human capital as an essential as a requirement for development.

During the war against terrorism, Iraq has suffered from the lessening of the human treasury through terrorist attacks and the resulting security disturbances that have caused an increase in the number of deaths and injuries, and the loss of many young people and talented people who have either died or migrated to war.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated that the number of Displaced Iraqis has reached 6 million since 2014, and that some 2.6 million Iraqis are still displaced, while 8.7 million are in dire need of humanitarian assistance⁴¹. After 2003, Iraq also experienced an outbreak of unemployment, which is currently estimated at 12.8%⁴² against a clear decrease in the average

³⁹Hamad Jassim Mohammed, terrorists destroy infrastructure in Iraq and Syria... Causes and Treatments, Euphrates Center for Development and Strategic Studies, 04/05/2020, Accessed at: August 1, 2020, in <https://bit.ly/34JCNv0>

⁴⁰ CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX, Transparency International, accessed on 24/08/2020 at: <https://bit.ly/3gGx2R1>

⁴¹ Jacob Eriksson and Ahmed Khaleel, Iraq After ISIS: The challenges of Post-War Recovery, (Switzerland: Palgrave Pivot), p. 04.

⁴² Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate) - Iraq, The World Bank, accessed on 16/08/2020, at : <https://bit.ly/3gFN4uB>

age and health index of the population, as a result of the violence caused by terrorism, in addition to the deterioration of the education system, which was considered one of the best educational systems in the region⁴³.

Conclusion:



The rise of terrorist groups and militias in Iraq has been a fundamental and direct impediment to the development process, which proves the validity of the research hypothesis. The low rates of development are mainly due to the security and political crisis left by terrorist activities and attacks and the subsequent depletion of the country's various resources. On the other hand, there is now an opportunity for Iraqis to rebuild and to make up for what they have missed over the past decades. There must be comprehensive national reconciliation and political reforms that will overcome past mistakes and are based on the standards of good governance, institutional democratisation, and security sector reform.

Finally, Iraq need for deep economic and social reforms, including the structuring of the economy, the promotion of investment and individual initiative, will allow all Iraqis to participate in the desired development.

43 Hassan Latif Al Zubaidi, Sadiq Jabr Fakhri, Terrorism and Its Effects on Human Development in Iraq, Al-Ghrei Journal of Economic and Administrative Sciences, Volume 09, Issue 29, (2013), p. 241.

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