

The Popular Demonstrations in Iraq
A Study of the Causes and Repercussions of the Protests of October
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Abstract :

The political process in Iraq witnessed different demonstrations , protests and sits-in

amounted almost to six main demonstrations as a political result of the regime's different crises and conflicts . It varied between political opposition to political parties and to political alliances participating in the political process as an expression of its rejection to a certain policy , and/ or decisions issued as it is the case in the demonstrations of (2013/ 2016 /2017 /2018) which was able to serve its interest in the direction for more political participation in the political power , and other demonstrations stemmed from the awareness of the mass of their stolen rights and as an uprising against the status quo due to (poverty , unemployment , corruption and bad services)and that was represented by the demonstrations o (2011/2015/ 2019) .

The recent demonstrations were the focus of the study and the research ,due to the fact. that they weren't led by political parties and alliances , yet, were away from

nationalism and factionalism .However, its key objective is reforming and correcting the political system .Given that the political power could curb the demonstrations of (2011) within the period of one hundred days designated for the government after having the Al-Sadri Current intervening in it ,and that the demonstrations of 2015 were quenched by giving job opportunities to the newly established institutions in the " Popular mobilization" and that they shall also pave the way for the youth to migrate to the European Union , nevertheless, the government couldn't overcome the demonstrations of 2019 for numerous reasons among which some are latent in the state's institutions represented by the chronic crises (corruption/ unemployment / poverty)and some others represent instantaneous driving force for demonstrations projected in the high awareness of the masses protesting for their rights , and also the dossier of appointments in the state's institutions after being suspended for three years of the period (2017- 2019) , also benefiting from the experiences of previous demonstrations which were quenched by the government and the interference of the political parties which worked on procrastinating it .

However, we could say that the strength of these demonstrations , its independency , and the participation of the trade unions and religious groups in supporting it , and also the sacrifices made by the protesting youth , collectively succeeded in overthrowing the government and conducting key reforms in the mechanisms of the political system's function laid out by amending the previous elections law (proportionate representation) which was the key factor behind the hegemony of a certain traditional elite and the absence of the establishing political opposition , weakness of the oversight apparatuses followed by chronic crises , the approval of the new elections law of 2019 represented by the individual election which gives strength to the elected deputy before his party and makes him / her more responsible before his constituency . Also, the amendment of the Independent High Electoral Commission Law , and forming interim government in order to pave the way for conducting early elections which will represent the volition and aspiration of the people .

Introduction .:

The demonstrations and sits -in that the political system witnessed were of different kinds and forms, some of which expressed the wishes of some parties to increase the level of participation in the political process or to suspend some important and sensitive decisions . Nonetheless, some other demonstrations and sits in expressed the real will of the protesting masses that occurred post 2003 in order to know the different types of developments happened in the political process and analyzing that for the purpose of obtaining conclusions with its regard.

Research Problem : The problem stems from a major question about the types of demonstrations and the different causes of these demonstrations and its repercussions on the system and the political process .

Research Hypothesis : The demonstrations represent one of the outputs of the political system with all its numerous crises and problems post 2003 .

Research methodology :The research has relied on the systematic analysis method in studying the crises that pushed to fuel the demonstrations that the political system witnessed for the purpose of having the recent ones as outputs and feedback for the regime that undergoes various economic and political reforms .

First :Predisposing Factors for the Popular Demonstrations :

The Iraqi political system after 2003 suffered from numerous organizational and structural crises at the level of the political economy that directly affected the repetition of the phenomenon of protests and the popular demonstrations that can be summed up in the following :

1. One - Sided Rentier Economy : Iraq is one of the countries of rentier economy depending only on oil , and among the characteristics of such a kind of economy is that it solely leads to enrichment of the ruling elites and the groups allying with at the expense of the rest of the society . It also helps them consolidate their power over resources distribution and gaining sufficient funds in order to prevent forming any independent groups that may demand their political rights or

exercise the role political opposition . This matter makes the power of rentier economy as a plighted political power , because it helps the domination of a certain group over the power and expelling the elites and other groups that endeavor to participate in the political power then consequently resorting to political violence . (1) . As it is the case in Iraq when political groups took the power after 2003 who represented political parties suffered under the ex-regime such as; (AlDaawa Party / High Islamic Council / AlSadri Current / The Islamic Party / Kurdistan Democratic Party / Kurdistan Patriotic Union) and their struggle with the traditional elites harmed by the current regime (remaining members of Baath Party , extremist religious groups) triggering political violence " Terrorism" for the period of (2003-2017) (2).

Among the negative aspects of the state of rentier economy is that it is governed by the surging and dropping of oil prices under the global oil market that may expose it to crises as happened in Iraq in the period of (2014- 2020) of which (90%) of its public budget depends on oil revenues .However, when oil price dropped to the half and in some years to less than the half which resulted in deficit in the state's public budget due to the open war launched against terrorism (2014-2017)³, as shown in table (1) , and the financial corruption, poverty , and austerity policy approved by the government of Al-Abaddi .All these shall be considered as predisposing factors for the demonstrations and protests which Iraq witnessed in (2018 - 2019) as shown in table (1) .

Table (1) shows Annual Budgets of Iraq for the period of (2009 - 2019) and the rate of deficit in each budget

Year	Revenues	Oil Barrel Price in US\$	Deficit	Oil Revenues
2009 4	50408215839	----- -----	18757307996	-----
2010 5	61735312500	-----	2292215556	597941800330.000
2011 6	80.934.790.500	76.5	15727.976.200	76184137500.000

2013 7	119.296.6630.96	90 \$	19.127.944.904	
2014 8	Budget of 2014 wasn't approved due to war against Daesh			
2015 9	94.48.364.139	56 \$	25.414.065410	78.649032000
2016 10	81.700.803.138	45\$	24.194.919.481	69.773.400.000
2017 11	79.11.421000	42\$	21.659.739.790	6795022500
2018 12	91.643.667.236	46 \$	12.514.516	77.160.392.640
2019 13	105.569.686.870	56 \$	27.537.929.542	93.741.110.400

2. Corruption , Poverty and Unemployment :

Transparency International Organization defines corruption briefly as" the exploitation of the political power for the purpose of personal gains "(14) . This exploitation is achieved in Iraq post 2003 at its highest levels based on the reports of Transparency International according to table No.(2) (15), Which shows the rank of Iraq among the most corrupt states (2003 – 2020).

Year	Rank	Year	Rank
2003 -2004	16	2013	3
2005	6	2014	4
2006	2	2015	6
2007	3	2016	4
2008	2	2017	11
2009	2	2018	6
2010	3	2019	9
2011-2020	5	2020	18

The highest ranks that Iraq recorded resulted from the weakness of the political power and its different types of conflicts after 2003 , due to the political partnership and consensus among the main three components plus the sectarian and

nationalist immunity of its political elites which led to the absence of organized political opposition within the parliament hindering the function of all oversight institutions in the state . It was a driving force to create a plighted environment characterized by political violence , poverty , unemployment and bad service provision (16). As in table (3) (17) below that shows the rate of poverty and unemployment in Iraq of (2009- 2018) .

Year	Unemployment rate	Provinces registered highest level of unemployment 2014		Provinces registered highest level of unemployment 2016		Provinces registered highest level of poverty 2018		Provinces registered highest level of poverty 2018	
2009	17.8	Anbar	33.3%	ThiQar	34.8%	Al-Muthana	52%	AlBasara	16%
2010	18.3	ThiQar	31.0%	Misan	29.2%	AlDiwanya	48%	AlNajaf	12.5%
2011	18.8	Misan	28.7%	Kirkuk	28.7%	Misan	45%	karbalaa	12%
2012	19	Basra	22.7%	Dihok	28.1%	ThiQar	44%	Babil	11%
2013	19.4	Babil	21.3%	AlMuthana	26.0%	Ninava	37.7%	Baghdad	10%
2014	19.5	AlQadisya	21.3%	ALBasra	25.5%	Diyala	22.5%	Dihok	8.5%
2015	19.2	Baghdad	19.0%	Erbil	22.2%	Wasit	19%	Krkuk	7.6%
2016	18.8	Diyala	21.0%	AlQadisya	21.0%	Salahdeen	18%	Erbil	6.7%
2017	19.1	Salahdeen	15.3%	Wasit	20.2%	AlAnbar	17%	Sulaimania	4.5%
2018	19.1	Dihok	15.0%	Baghdad	18.6%				

Here, we can say that the intersection of the factors of poverty and unemployment established a proper ground for the demonstrations and protests that Iraq witnessed in 2011 and 2018 particularly in the southern and central governorates which suffered the phenomenon of " compound poverty" before and after 2003 .*

Second : Popular Demonstrations and Protests: The regime and the political process being limited to certain political elite ,who didn't allow the participation of new political elites ,and the absence of organized influential political opposition from within the regime's institutions were both among the key reasons that resulted in having the regime's main tools represented in (elections , referendums, and public opinion polls, mass media, lobbying groups) miss out its oversight competence and opposition for the purpose of making a change or political influence . This led actually to having the political opposition act from outside the regime through

different forms of political violence, meantime , pushed the popular demonstrations and protests to be more violent and more threatening to the stability of the political system .19

The popular demonstrations , sits in and protests represent one of the key forms of political violence that occur spontaneously supported by a very wide popular advocacy due to the sever deprivations that the people of Iraq suffer from , who really lack solid political parties that represent and express the demands and aspiration of the nation . For example ,the unrest , riots and local rebellion which can be divided into two periods :

1. Popular Demonstrations of (2011- 2018): The political process witnessed numerous demonstrations and protests , some of which were driven by political parties already participating in both the regime and the political process, meantime, exercising political opposition from outside the political system as it was the case in the demonstrations of (2013) in the Sunnite areas and also the demonstrations organized by Al -Sadri Current (2016 / 2017) . while others stemmed from the true volition of the people and their awareness of their stolen rights . This can clearly be seen in the three demonstrations (2011/ 2015/ 2018) , when the government could end the demonstration of (2011) in a term of one hundred days after the mediation of Al-Sadri current 21. Nonetheless, it planned to end the demonstration of (2015) by paving the way for the youths to migrate abroad , particularly, to the European countries for the period of (2016 - 2017)22 , as the case in table (4)showing the map of the main demonstrations , protests and sits -in that Iraq witnessed .

Table (4) shows the map of the key demonstrations, protests and sits -in that Iraq witnessed

year	Its nature	Its place	Its demands	Results & government position
2011 23	Part of Arab Spring	All governorates except for Erbil &	Services/ labor/fight	Ended by giving (100) days to the

	Revolutions	Dohuk	corruption/ gaining democracy/end occupation/ dropping regime	PM to achieve some of the demands by distributing (280) lots of lands , and lowering pension age , reviewing successes & failure of the ministers.
2013 24	A security force besieged the house of the Iraqi Minister of Finance affiliated to Iraqia List Mr.Rafiaa AlEssawi arresting number of his guards	Appeared in the Sunnite areas e.g. Rumadi , Salahdeen , Krkuk, then some neighborhoods in Baghdad e.g. Aathamia, Dawra.Also in Diyala ,all these demonstrations transferred to sits-in in most areas	Release detainees from prisons	Ended up with breaking sit- in tents, after that areas of Sunnite majority fell under Daesh in 9/6/2014.
2015	Due to oil price drop , the government levied taxes which resulted in protests of July because of bad services e.g. electricity	Baghdad-Basra- Najaf-Karbalaa- ThiQar- Muthana— Qadisya—Babil- Wasit	Enhancement in services provision& holding the corrupts into accountable	Nullifying the positions of the president 's and PM's deputies , integrating some independent commissions and releasing pledges to hold the corrupts into account . It was followed by a wave of mass migration of the

				Iraqi youths to the European countries.
2016 25	Demonstrations of the supporters of AlSadri Current demanding fighting corruption & forming a government of technocrats	Demonstrations occurred largely in Baghdad , storming into the Green Zone and the Parliament's Headquarters	Fighting the corrupt and forming the government of technocrats	Collective resignations of the ministers and forming a new government of technocrats
2017	Due to the deterioration of the security situation	Baghdad / Al-Tahrir Sq.	Demand changing the Commission of Elections & its law	The House of Representatives voted on selecting new members for the High Independent Elections Commission (26)

2. Protests of 25th October 2019 :

It is worth mentioning that the political process witnessed popular political violence stemmed from people's will and awareness for their rights and demands in the three key demonstrations ; the demonstrations of (2011 / 2015 / 2019) , yet, there are some common factors among these demonstrations 27 .

A. Represent the community of the conscious Iraqi youths who suffered from corruption of the government , poverty and unemployment .

B. It posed real challenge for the regime , the political system , and the ruling parties.

C. The young groups of the Iraqi community participated in these demonstrations because of bad services , corruption and poverty .

D. The demonstrations started with slogans and objectives to reform the system and to provide good services which consequently ended up with the demand of overthrowing the political system .

These are the common factors which don't hide the differences among the above mentioned demonstrations. For example, the demonstrations of (2019) refused the participation of all political parties and benefited from the demonstration of (2011) when Al-Sadri Current members participated in it and could redirect it for their own interest by giving a time limit of (100) days to the government of Nuri Al-Maliki which at the end of the day managed to procrastinate the demands of the demonstrators , and the demonstration of (1/7/2015) which ended up with having the Iraqi youths migrating to the European countries , and what is different here, is that they could create hundreds of job grades in the budget of 2015 * .

As long as the demonstration of (2011) could achieve formal reform represented by ministerial slimming down from (47) ministries to (33) ministry, nullifying (15) State's ministries .However, the demonstration of (2015) could reduce some posts in the executive power²⁸ , then the demonstration of (2019) could overthrow the government of Adil-Abdul Mahdi (2018 - 2019) and forming a new government presided by Mustafa Al-Kadhimi (2020) who repealed election law No.(45) of 2013 and its amendments, meantime , approving a new elections law of 2019 that adopted the individual system ²⁹ ,as an attempt to alleviate the sway of the political parties and their leaders .Also, annulling the law of Independent High Election Commission No.(11) of 2007 and its amendments , approving new law for the Election Commission in order to maintain its independency and to conduct fair elections ³⁰.

However, in addition to some of the predisposing factors represented by (corruption, poverty , unemployment) ,there were some factors that ignited the fires of the demonstrations with regard to the youth in general and universities' students in particular among which the key one is the dossier of appointments , due to the fact that the economy in the state of Iraq is a rentier one ,and also absence of

investment in the field of industry and agriculture and in the private sector in general .These factors pushed people to resort to the public sector due to the fact that it has become the only opportunity for the Iraqi young graduates to find a job vacancy which has become the key challenge that the state faces particularly for the youth category . Another interpretation of such a situation is that the state's institutions are heavily – loaded with the employees whose numbers amount to (6.5 millions employee and retiree 31), also suspending appointments (either for the permanent personnel or under the title of contract) in the budgets of the federal state * of the years (2016 / 2017 / 2018 / 2019) and to have appointments limited only in the budget of 2016 for the politicians and provincial , municipal members and also members of House of Representatives who left their original jobs because they have been elected as members of the House of Representatives , also for those who were isolated in the ex- regime for political reasons 32 .

The accumulation of huge numbers of graduates of the years (2017 / 2018 / 2019) led to surge in the indicator of unemployment among these important groups who were the fuels of 2019 demonstrations which started by repressing high certificates holders among whom there were also women (the number of the unemployed among the high certificates holders (Masters and Ph. Ds) was approximately (15000). They were repressed and dispersed before the PM's Office by the use of excessive force on 25 Sep2019 33 , . This incident actually shook the Iraqi public opinion and drove the youth to mobilize for a major demonstration on 1st October 2019 which was renewed on 25th October 2019 to continue for seven months during which happened a lot of protest , acts of riot , sit- in in Baghdad and in the central and southern governorates when all the Iraqi Trade Unions , University students and other social groups participated heavily 34 , ended up with toppling the government of Adil Abdul Mahdi 35 .

Conclusion :

It can be said that the demonstrations the political system witnessed after 2011 ,in general, and demonstrations of 2019 ,in particular , resemble if we could

metaphorically say, fever and high temperature in the body of the sick person who urgently needs a medical care . This is the plighted political process which is in a dire need for an effective rapid treatment illustrated by the following recommendations that the research has come out with :

1. To reform the political process starting with the mechanisms of the political system represented by the electoral system approved in Iraq which is the proportionate representation (Sainte-Lague method) , and endeavoring to find a new electoral system encourages the alliances that are away from nationalism and sectarianism ,or this new system may help alleviate the level of their conflicts . This new system shall be represented by the individual electoral system of numerous constituencies on the basis of (district or sub-district) . This is one of the key outcomes of 2019 elections that could pressure the parliament to approve ,which is represented by the law of 2019 elections .

2. To activate the important oversight institutions in the political system meantime maintaining the independency of the institutions relevant to economy and appointments or job opportunities.

3. To activate article (25) of the Iraqi permanent constitution of 2005 related to (reforming the Iraqi economy under modern economic principles to ensure investing all its resources and to diversify it sources meantime encouraging the private sector and developing it) .

4. To activate the Federal Service Council and to limit the dossier of appointments under the responsibility of this council based on a future vision which determines the scientific specializations that the State needs in the future to improve the reality of the economy of all its different aspects (industrial , agricultural and commercial) .

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التظاهرات الشعبية في العراق

دراسة في اسباب وتداعيات احتجاجات 25 /أكتوبر 2019

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الكلمات الافتتاحية: التظاهرات الشعبية. الاقتصاد الريعي. الموازنات الاتحادية. الفساد. الفقر. البطالة. ملف التعيينات.
الملخص:

شهدت العملية السياسية في العراق تظاهرات واحتجاجات واعتصامات مختلفة بلغت (6) تظاهرات رئيسية، كانت احدى مخرجات النظام السياسية بأزماته وصراعاته المختلفة ، وتنوعت بين معارضة سياسية لأحزاب وتحالفات سياسية مشاركة في العملية السياسية للتعبير عن رفضها لسياسة معينة او قرارات صادرة كما هو الحال في تظاهرات (2013 /2016/2017/2018) التي استطاعت ان تصب في مصالحها باتجاه المزيد من المشاركة السياسية في السلطة السياسية، وتظاهرات اخرى نابعة من وعي الجماهير لحقوقهم المسلوقة وانتفاضا على الوضع القائم من (سوء خدمات وفساد وبطالة وفقر) وتمثلت في تظاهرات (2011/2015/2019) .

ان التظاهرات الاخيرة كانت هي المعنية في الدراسة والبحث؛ لأنها تظاهرات لم تقودها الاحزاب والتحالفات السياسية وكانت عابرة للطائفة والقومية وهدفها اصلاح النظام السياسي وتقويمه. وإذا استطاعت السلطة السياسية ان تغلب على تظاهرات (2011) بمهلة

المائة يوم للحكومة بعد تدخل التيار الصدري فيها، وان تخمد تظاهرات 2015 من خلال الدرجات الوظيفية في المؤسسات المستحدثة في "الحشد الشعبي" وان تفتح الحدود امام هجرة الشباب الى دول الاتحاد الاوربي، فان الحكومة لم تستطيع التغلب على تظاهرات 2019 لأسباب عديدة بعضها كامن في هياكل الدولة متمثل بالأزمات المزمنة(فساد/بطالة/فقر) وبعضها الاخر يمثل محركات انية للتظاهر متمثلة بالوعي العالي لدى الجماهير المنتفضة لحقوقها ، وملف التعيينات في مؤسسات الدولة بعد ايقافه لمدة ثلاثة سنوات للفترة (2017-2019) وكذلك الاستفادة من تجارب التظاهرات السابقة التي اخمدتها الحكومة بسبب تدخل الاحزاب السياسية وتسويقها.

ويمكن القول انه بقوة هذه التظاهرات واستقلاليتها ومشاركة جميع النقابات والمرجعات الدينية في مسانبتها والتضحيات التي قدمتها في صفوف الشباب المتظاهرين، استطاعت ان تسقط الحكومة وان تجري اهم اصلاحات في اليات عمل النظام السياسي متمثلة بتعديل قانون الانتخابات السابق (التمثيل النسبي) الذي كان وراء هيمنة نخب تقليدية معينة وغياب المعارضة السياسية المؤسسة وضعف الاجهزة الرقابية وما تبعها من ازمات مزمنة، وإقرار القانون الانتخابي الجديد لعام 2019 والمتمثل بالانتخاب الفردي الذي يعطي قوة للنائب المنتخب امام حزبه ويجعله اكثر مسؤولية امام ناخبيه، وكذلك تعديل قانون المفوضية العليا المستقلة للانتخاب، وتشكيل حكومة مؤقتة تمهيدا لإجراء انتخابات مبكرة تعبر عن ارادة الجماهير وتطلعاتهم.