

Strategic Planning for the Development Road and Its Impact on the Public Budget to Support the Iraqi Economy A Field Study in the General Company for Iraqi Ports

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Abstract: This study attempts to analyze the relationship between the strategic planning of the Development Road and its impact on the public budget to support the Iraqi economy, through a field study in the General Company for Iraqi Ports. It aims to assess the effectiveness of this planning and analyze its expected economic and financial impacts, based on the perceptions of the company's employees, who constitute the cornerstone of the project's implementation.

The significance of the study lies in addressing a research gap regarding the evaluation of giant strategic projects in Arabic literature, as it presents an analytical model linking strategic planning, the public budget, and the macroeconomy. It also provides a practical diagnosis that contributes to addressing planning and financing gaps and supports enhancing confidence in this national investment.

The study adopted the analytical descriptive approach, using a questionnaire as the main tool for data collection from a random stratified sample of (385) individuals from the study population represented by the employees of the General Company for Iraqi Ports. Data were analyzed using the (SPSS) statistical package, relying on descriptive and inferential statistical methods.

The results revealed a gap between the clarity of the project's strategic vision and its integration with Iraq Vision 2030, on one hand, and the weakness of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and the lack of transparency in financial resource management, on the other. They also showed significant optimism regarding positive economic impacts, especially in diversifying the economy and creating job opportunities, countered by concerns about the inefficiency of current financing. Statistical analysis confirmed a statistically significant impact of the dimensions of strategic planning on supporting the economy, with differences in assessments attributed to job title and years of experience.

Keywords: Strategic Planning, Development Road, Public Budget, Iraqi Economy, Economic Development, General Company for Iraqi Ports.

I. Introduction

The Iraqi economy is witnessing a historic strategic shift aimed at addressing one of the most prominent structural challenges the country has faced for decades: near-total reliance on the oil sector. This has made the public budget hostage to unexpected fluctuations in global markets and vulnerable to price shocks that hinder sustainable development. In the pursuit of economic resilience and revenue base diversification, the ambitious Iraq Vision 2030 emerges as a roadmap targeting the building of a productive and diversified economy.

At the heart of this vision lies the "Development Road" project, representing one of the largest infrastructure projects not only locally but across the entire region. This giant project is not limited to being a land artery connecting southern and northern Iraq; it aspires to redefine the country's geostrategic position by transforming it into a vital international logistics

corridor linking Asia and Europe, leveraging Iraq's unique geographical location. This vital project extends from the Grand Faw Port – one of the most important logistical pillars of the project on the Arabian Gulf – to the Turkish border in the north, seeking to create an economic corridor that activates trade and transport movement and generates unprecedented job opportunities.

However, the magnitude of this ambition makes its success contingent upon the effectiveness and efficiency of the strategic planning that charts its course and the realism of the associated financial estimates. Complex elements intertwine in assessing its feasibility, ranging from direct financing costs and massive initial investments to expected financial returns in the medium and long term, whether through increasing non-oil revenues or reducing import/export costs. Its impact on the public budget remains questionable, between optimists about its ability to reduce the deficit and pessimists about the conditions for turning these expectations into actual revenues.

Therefore, this study comes as an analytical contribution to assess this complex relationship between ambitious strategic planning and the desired financial impact, through the perspective of a highly important group: the employees of the General Company for Iraqi Ports. They are not only witnesses to daily operational challenges but also the beating heart and fundamental pillar in implementing this giant project. By evaluating their perceptions and realistic reading, this study seeks to provide an accurate picture of the alignment between the strategic framework and practical capabilities, aiming to produce practical recommendations that enhance the project's chances of success in achieving its developmental and financial goals, thus contributing to supporting the desired economic transformation of Iraq.

II. Problem of the Study

The core problem lies in the gap between the major strategic ambitions of the Development Road project and the current planning and financing challenges. Despite official emphasis on the project's economic importance, there is ambiguity regarding the efficiency of its strategic planning, the reality of its financing from the public budget, and how to measure its future impact on supporting the Iraqi economy. This ambiguity creates uncertainty about the feasibility of the massive investment in the project and its ability to achieve the desired goals.

Accordingly, the problem is represented in the following main question: What is the effectiveness of the strategic planning for the Development Road project and what is its expected impact on the state's public budget to support the Iraqi economy from the viewpoint of the employees of the General Company for Iraqi Ports?

Study Questions

The study questions represent the compass guiding the scientific research path, as the main questions define the areas the researcher focuses on for data collection and analysis. These questions are:

1. What is the level of clarity and effectiveness of the strategic planning for the Development Road project from the employees' viewpoint?
2. What is the expected impact of the project on the revenues and expenditures of the state's public budget?
3. What are the expected macroeconomic impacts of the project on the Iraqi economy?
4. Are there statistically significant differences in the respondents' opinions attributable to their demographic variables (job title, experience)?

Objectives of the Study

The study generally aims to assess the effectiveness of the strategic planning for the Development Road project and measure the expected financial and economic impact of the project on the Iraqi economy. The following sub-objectives branch from the general objective:

1. Diagnose the reality of the strategic planning process for the project (clarity, participation, monitoring).
2. Analyze the expected impact of the project on the structure of revenues and expenditures in the public budget.
3. Identify the expected macroeconomic impacts, such as economic diversification and job creation.
4. Provide practical recommendations to enhance positive aspects and address shortcomings in planning and financing.

Study Hypotheses

The study hypotheses represent the applied theoretical framework linking the research problem to statistical analysis, formulated as measurable expectations based on the theoretical framework and previous studies. The hypotheses act as a roadmap defining the direction of statistical analysis and help in systematically testing relationships between variables. In this study, a main hypothesis and several sub-hypotheses were formulated to measure the impact of the strategic planning of the Development Road project on the public budget and the Iraqi economy. These hypotheses are:

Main Hypothesis:

- There is a statistically significant impact of the dimensions of the strategic planning of the Development Road project on the public budget to support the Iraqi economy.

Sub-Hypotheses:

1. There is a medium level of clarity in the project's strategic planning, while there is weakness in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
2. The sample individuals expect a significant increase in non-oil revenues, but they perceive the currently allocated financial appropriations as insufficient and their distribution as non-transparent.
3. The sample individuals expect significant positive economic impacts, especially in the field of economic diversification and job creation.
4. There are statistically significant differences in the respondents' responses attributable to job title and years of experience.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is evident in:

Theoretical Significance:

1. The study addresses a gap in Arabic literature related to measuring the impact of giant strategic projects on the public budget, through an integrated model linking planning, public finance, and macroeconomics.
2. It presents an applied study whose methodology can be generalized to evaluate similar strategic projects in countries of the region.
3. It provides accurate primary and field data that can be a reference for future researchers in the fields of strategic planning and the Iraqi economy.

Practical Significance:

1. Providing an accurate diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses in planning and financing, thus helping in making more effective decisions.
2. Highlighting the perceptions of the key human resources implementing the project, enabling management to address administrative and financial gaps.
3. Increasing clarity regarding the project's feasibility and opportunities, which enhances confidence and encourages investment in related projects.
4. Clarifying the expected economic and social benefits of the project, promoting community partnership and public support for this major national investment.

Study Methodology

1. **Method Used:** The study relied on the analytical descriptive approach, as it is the most suitable for describing the phenomenon (strategic planning and its impact) and analyzing the collected data to reach conclusions and generalizations.
2. **Study Population:** All employees of the General Company for Iraqi Ports, totaling (5000) employees.

3. **Study Sample:** A stratified random sample of (385) individuals was drawn to ensure the representation of various departments and functional levels.
4. **Data Collection Tool:** A predominantly closed-ended questionnaire was designed, using a five-point Likert scale, encompassing four axes: (Demographics, Strategic Planning, Impact on the Budget, Macroeconomic Impacts).
5. **Statistical Analysis Methods:**
 - o **Descriptive Statistics:** Frequencies, percentages, arithmetic means, standard deviation.
 - o **Inferential Statistics:** (T-test), Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), (Pearson Correlation) coefficient to test the hypotheses.

III. Theoretical Framework of the Study

Strategic Planning

In a world characterized by rapid change and intense competition, strategic planning is no longer a luxury but an imperative necessity for any organization seeking to survive and evolve. It is not merely a document to be written; it is a vital process that begins with analyzing the current situation and defining the future direction, and ends with implementing clear action plans that lead to tangible results.

Whether you work in the private or public sector, small or large, this article will take you on a comprehensive journey to understand strategic planning from all its aspects: from its concept and objectives, to its benefits and requirements, passing through effective tools and the most prominent obstacles you might face. You will also learn about the difference between strategic planning and strategic management, and how you can turn plans into tangible reality.

Concept of Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a systematic process aimed at defining the organization's long-term direction and establishing a clear roadmap to achieve its major goals. This approach relies on a precise analysis of the internal and external reality, using tools such as SWOT analysis to assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Balhaj, 2023, p. 43).

Through this process, the institution can formulate a clear vision and mission, define its strategic priorities, and allocate resources optimally. Furthermore, the strategic plan is not a static document; it is dynamic, requiring continuous monitoring and periodic evaluation to ensure its alignment with surrounding changes (Amhani, 2021, p. 45).

Ultimately, strategic planning aims to transform the shared vision into practical actions, ensuring that every individual in the organization works in one consistent direction, thereby enhancing chances of success and sustainability.

Importance of Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is considered the backbone of successful organization management. Its role is not limited to setting goals but extends to effecting a comprehensive transformation in the work culture and team performance. The following are the key aspects highlighting its importance (Al-Hashi, 2020, p. 32).

1. **Guiding Resources and Enhancing Efficiency:** Through a budget roadmap that translates strategic goals into an operational budget, it ensures that financial and human resources are directed toward the organization's real priorities.
2. **Enhancing Operational Efficiency:** It helps leadership identify top priorities, reducing waste and raising performance levels across all departments (Hamdi, 2020, p. 43).
3. **Developing Leadership and Empowering Employees:** By **highlighting leadership skills**, it allows managers to think proactively and demonstrate their abilities in long-term planning and managing daily challenges without losing sight of the future vision.
4. **Strengthening Team Spirit:** Employees feel like partners in success when they understand their role and how they contribute to achieving major goals, which enhances their sense of responsibility and job satisfaction.
5. **Enhancing Competitive Advantage and Growth:** Through **increasing profits:** by conducting market studies and data analysis, precise sales and marketing plans can be developed, leading to revenue growth and strengthening competitive positioning.

6. **Making wiser decisions:** The clear vision provides a solid foundation for selecting projects and investments that achieve the highest possible return.
7. **Building a Positive Culture: Enhancing communication:** It creates ongoing dialogue between management and employees, promoting transparency and mutual trust. **Stimulating innovation:** When employees feel their ideas are heard and valued, their enthusiasm for creativity and contribution increases.

Strategic Projects and Infrastructure through the Iraqi Public Budget Law for 2023-2025

Table 1: Analysis of Strategic Projects and Infrastructure

Project Type	Sector	Funding Mechanism	Legal Text	Link to the Development Road
Electric Power Projects	Electricity Sector	External Loans + Public Budget	Article (15) – Loan Agreements with China and Germany	Support the energy infrastructure needed to operate ports and industrial zones
Road and Bridge Projects	Transport Sector	Capital Allocations + Loans	Article (2) – Capital Expenditures	Connecting ports to the land network and border crossings
Port and Navigation Projects	Maritime Transport	Funding from Provincial Budgets	Article (5) – Regional Development Allocations	Developing port infrastructure to increase capacity
Water and Sanitation Projects	Infrastructure	Japanese and French Loans	Article (16) – Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Loans	Improving basic services in areas surrounding ports
Railway Projects	Land and Sea Transport	Agreements with International Companies	Article (22) – Railway Agreement with France and Korea	Connecting ports to the railway network for goods transport

Source: Iraqi Public Budget Law for 2023-2025.

The analytical table reveals an integrated and deliberate pattern to revive the Development Road project through an interconnected set of strategic projects in vital infrastructure sectors. These projects are not implemented in isolation but interact to form an integrated system supporting the larger strategic goal. This integration can be explained as follows:

First, Sector Integration as a Comprehensive Value Chain: The projects listed in the table show a design intent on addressing all elements of the logistics supply chain. The road, bridge, and railway projects represent the transport arteries that will connect the ports (Port and Navigation projects) to the hinterland and the region. However, this transport network cannot operate effectively without sustainable energy (Electric Power projects) to power the ports, trains, and industrial zones along the road. Additionally, Water and Sanitation projects are necessary to ensure the livability and investability of surrounding areas, enhancing the social and urban aspect of the major project.

Second, Diversity and Flexibility of Funding Mechanisms: The table illustrates a realistic approach to financing, reflecting an understanding of financial challenges. Instead of relying solely on the public budget, a smart mix includes local capital allocations for internal projects, soft external loans from partners like China, Germany, and Japan to fund

major projects, and even agreements with international companies to bring expertise and private financing for a vital project like railways. This diversity alleviates the burden on the public treasury and accelerates the pace of implementation.

Third, Legal Basis and Institutional Support: Each project has its specific legal basis, lending it legitimacy and ensuring funding and tender transparency. The reference to specific articles from loan agreements (with China, Germany, JICA) and laws on capital expenditures and regional development indicates that these projects are subject to a robust governance framework, which is crucial for attracting investments and building the confidence of international partners.

Finally, Direct Link to the Development Road: From Isolated Project to Integrated System: The link shown in the last column is the core of the analysis. Every project, regardless of its sector, is considered a vital building block in the edifice of the Development Road. Port development increases handling capacity, road and railway development ensures the efficient flow of goods to and from them, providing energy powers the entire system, and improving water services makes the project socially sustainable. By combining these projects, the "Development Road" transforms from a mere land route into an integrated logistics economic corridor that generates jobs, diversifies the economy, and places Iraq on the map of international trade.

Analysis of Funding Impact on Strategic Projects through the Iraqi Public Budget Law for 2023-2025

Table 2: Priority Projects for Ports

Project	Funding Source	Funding Status
Development of the Grand Faw Port	Chinese Loans + Public Budget	Partially Funded
Modernization of Berths and Equipment	Provincial Allocations	Fully Funded
Road and Transportation Networks	Basra Fund + Regional Development	Under Funding
Automation Systems	Japanese and German Loans	Under Study

Source: Iraqi Public Budget Law for 2023-2025.

The table of priority projects for ports reveals a clear direct correlation between the nature and source of funding on one hand, and the status and progress of projects on the other. It shows that the diversity and balance of funding sources are the critical factors in ensuring the continuity and sustainability of major strategic projects.

It is evident that giant projects of national dimension, such as the "Development of the Grand Faw Port" project, rely on a mix of local (public budget) and international (Chinese loans) funding. However, the complexities of negotiating external loans and the large amount of funding required place this project in a "partially funded" status, meaning its implementation pace may be slow and susceptible to delay due to political or financial fluctuations at the international level.

In contrast, medium-sized and more specific projects, such as the "Modernization of Berths and Equipment" project, which relies on direct local funding through "Provincial Allocations," are in a "fully funded" status. This confirms that relying on local funding sources accelerates the disbursement and implementation process and makes the project less vulnerable to external risks, although it may be limited by the size of the local budget.

As for projects of an integrative nature, such as the "Road and Transportation Networks" project, which relies on joint funding from the "Basra Fund" and "Regional Development," their status is "under funding." This indicates that joint funding, while important for distributing burdens, may lead to administrative complexities and delays in providing full liquidity, especially with multiple funding entities involved.

At the most sensitive end, stand specialized technological projects, such as the "Automation Systems" project, which relies entirely on "Japanese and German loans" and is in a status "under study." This highlights that projects relying solely on external funding - especially those associated with advanced technologies - are the most vulnerable to postponement or suspension due to political or bureaucratic circumstances related to the donor parties.

IV. Path of Development

The Concept of the Path of Development

Development is one of the most common terms in the lexicon of the modern era, representing the highest human aspiration towards improving living conditions and building a better future. However, development is not merely a passing word; it is a complex and multidimensional concept that has evolved over the years to transcend the narrow meaning of economic growth and reach the breadth of the concept of comprehensive and sustainable progress.

In its recent past, development was viewed as synonymous solely with industrialization and increasing Gross National Product. The primary criterion was the amount of goods and services a country's economy could produce. However, global experiences highlighted the inadequacy of this perspective, as growth in wealth does not necessarily mean achieving well-being for all, as it can be accompanied by massive social inequalities and significant environmental degradation.

The path of development is defined as: a metaphorical concept used to describe the strategic path or model chosen by a country or society to achieve the goals of comprehensive and sustainable development. There is no single "path" valid for all times and places; rather, it is an intellectual and practical framework that reflects the vision, priorities, mechanisms, and specific experiences of each society, taking into account its historical, cultural, economic, and political circumstances.

In other words, if "development" is the destination (achieving well-being and prosperity), then the "path of development" is the map and the travel plan that outlines how we will reach that destination, what landmarks we will pass through, and what vehicle we will use

Image 1: The Path of Development



The Grand Faw Port and the Port's Role in the Path of Development

The Grand Faw Port is considered a pivotal and strategic project that plays a crucial role in Iraq's path of development, particularly in its economic and logistical dimensions.

The Role of the Grand Faw Port in the Path of Development:

1. An Economic and Investment Catalyst:
 - Economic Diversification: It reduces the near-total reliance on oil revenues by opening new horizons for investment, trade, and industry.
 - Attracting Investments: The presence of a world-class port attracts local and foreign investments in the fields of transportation, storage, manufacturing industries, and logistical zones.
2. Enhancing the Region's Logistical Position:
 - Iraq's Maritime Gateway: It will become Iraq's main maritime outlet, alleviating pressure on other ports and reducing shipping time and cost.
 - A Regional Commercial Hub: Due to its strategic location on the Arabian Gulf, Iraq can transform into a vital commercial corridor connecting the Gulf and Middle Eastern countries with European and Asian markets.
3. Supporting Industry and Agriculture:

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- Exporting Products: It provides an effective outlet for exporting non-oil national products (such as dates, agricultural, and industrial products) to global markets.
- Importing Materials: It facilitates the import of raw materials and capital goods at competitive prices, thus supporting the industrial sector.

4. Job Creation:

- It provides thousands of direct and indirect job opportunities during the construction and operational phases, contributing to reducing unemployment rates and improving living standards.

5. Developing Integrated Infrastructure:

- The construction of the port will drive the development of linked infrastructure projects, such as road and railway networks connecting it to production and consumption centers throughout Iraq, thereby enhancing the efficiency of the entire logistical chain.

Image 2: Faw Port



Components of the Development Road: The Land and Railway Network

The Development Road represents an integrated logistics project that connects the Grand Faw Port with the rest of Iraq and neighboring countries. It is not a single "road," but rather an integrated network of land roads and railway lines designed to achieve maximum efficiency in goods transport.

First: The Land Highway (Development Road Highway)

- **Description:** A modern multi-lane highway (dual carriageway with two or more lanes in each direction) designed according to the highest international standards to handle heavy truck and container traffic.
- **Total Length:** Approximately **1,200 kilometers**.
- **Starting Point:** The Grand Faw Port in Basra Governorate, southern Iraq.
- **End Point:** The **Iraqi-Turkish border** in northern Iraq (the Fish Khabur area), to subsequently connect to Turkey and Europe.
- **Main Route:** The road runs parallel to the railway lines through the following governorates:
 - **Basra** (Starting from the port)
 - **Dhi Qar** (Passing through the city of Nasiriyah)
 - **Al-Diwaniyah**
 - **Babil**
 - **Karbala**
 - **Al-Anbar** (Passing through the city of Ramadi)
 - **Nineveh** (Reaching the Turkish border)

Second: The Railway Line (Development Road Railway)

- **Description:** A new, advanced railway line dedicated to high-speed freight, designed to transport containers and goods in massive quantities from the port to inside and outside Iraq.
- **Total Length:** Approximately 1,200 kilometers (running parallel to the land highway).
- **Starting Point:** The Grand Faw Port.
- **End Point:** The Iraqi-Turkish border.
- **Technical Specifications:**
 - High-quality railway allowing speeds of up to 150-250 km/h for trains.
 - It will run exactly parallel to the land highway to create one cohesive logistics corridor.

How will the roads be built?

The project will be implemented with high-quality, world-class specifications including:

1. **Advanced Engineering Design:** Considering curves and gradients to ensure the safety and smooth flow of truck and train traffic.
2. **High-Quality Materials:** Using the latest road and railway construction technologies to ensure their durability and ability to withstand heavy loads and weather conditions.
3. **Smart Infrastructure:** Incorporating advanced signaling systems for trains, traffic monitoring systems, and intelligent transportation management systems for the highway.
4. **Facilities and Services:** Establishing service stations, rest areas, and logistics complexes along the route to serve trucks and workers.

The Comprehensive Vision: "The Development Corridor"

The goal is not merely to build a road and a railway, but to create an integrated "**economic development corridor**" on both sides of this route, including:

- **Industrial cities** to attract factories and investments.
- **Logistics centers** for storage and distribution.
- **Power stations** to fuel the projects.
- **Agricultural projects** based on modern irrigation systems.

Therefore, the Development Road is the **backbone of the future Iraqi economy**, transforming Iraq from a country reliant on a single entry point (the southern ports) into a **global land and sea bridge** connecting the Arabian Gulf with Turkey and Europe, thereby creating thousands of opportunities and driving economic and industrial development in all the governorates it passes through.

The Leadership Role of Dr. Farhan Al-Fartousi in Developing Iraqi Ports and the Development Road

Dr. Farhan Al-Fartousi, the Director General of the General Company for Iraqi Ports, is considered a pivotal figure in leading the strategic transformation of Iraqi ports and linking them to the ambitious Development Road project. His main roles and achievements can be summarized as follows:

1. Developing and Modernizing the Infrastructure of Existing Ports:

- Leading development plans for **Umm Qasr Port** and Al-Basra Port to increase their operational efficiency and capacity.
- Working to modernize equipment and systems in existing ports to improve goods unloading and loading rates, thereby reducing ship waiting times and accelerating trade movement.

2. Overseeing Major Strategic Projects:

- **The Grand Faw Port Tunnel:** He plays a key role in supervising the massive marine tunnel project associated with the port. This tunnel is a vital link connecting the port to the land network of the Development Road, ensuring the smooth flow of goods to and from ships without obstacles.
- **Contributing to the Planning of the Development Road:** As the ports director, his efforts are focused on ensuring organic integration between the Grand Faw Port and the road and railway network of the Development Road, creating an integrated logistics corridor from the sea to the northern border.

3. Enhancing Cooperation and Finalizing Agreements:

- Seeking to conclude **partnership agreements with international companies** specialized in port management and operation to ensure the transfer of global expertise and the application of best standards.
- Coordinating with local and international government entities to finance and implement port projects and link them to the Development Road.

4. Impact on Diversifying the Economy in the Port Sector:

- **Diversifying Income Sources:** Through port development, their role is not limited to importing goods only. They can potentially be transformed into **regional centers for re-export** and logistics services, thereby diversifying the national economy and reducing reliance on oil revenues.
- **Attracting Investments:** Major projects like the Faw Port and the Development Road, under his supervision, attract massive investments in related sectors such as industry, storage, and transport, which stimulates the economy and creates job opportunities.
- **Enhancing Competitiveness:** Making Iraqi ports a commercial attraction on the global map, thereby boosting Iraq's share in international trade.

Therefore, **Dr. Farhan Al-Fartousi** is leading an ambitious vision to transform Iraqi ports from traditional service facilities into **strategic economic hubs** driving growth. Through infrastructure development, overseeing giant projects like the tunnel and the Development Road, and finalizing international partnerships, he directly contributes to **achieving integration between the ports and the national economy**, laying the foundation for a productive and diversified economy reliant on trade and logistics as a fundamental source of wealth.

Economic Development

Concept of Economic Development

Economic Development is a planned and purposeful economic transformation process through which countries adopt new techniques and methods to transition from one economic stage to a more advanced one. This process is not limited to the material aspect alone; it seeks to achieve comprehensive improvement in the structure of the economy and the standard of living (Al-Da'imi, 2018, p. 23).

The Essence of Economic Development:

- **Structural Transformation:** It involves the transition from traditional economic patterns, such as reliance on agriculture, to more complex and value-added ones, like industry or a knowledge-based technology economy (Youssef, 2021, p. 43).
- **Comprehensive Development:** It is a holistic process aimed at increasing the national economy's capacity for sustainable growth through the application of ambitious plans and strategies that enhance its efficiency and competitiveness.
- **Optimal Resource Utilization:** Societies seek through it to maximize the benefit from their available wealth and potential, especially in areas suffering from weak economic diversity, which positively reflects on the society and local environment.

Characteristics of Economic Development

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The economic development process is characterized by several fundamental features that make it a comprehensive and sustainable process, the most prominent of which are (Salih, 2017, p. 65):

1. **Strategic Planning:** Development does not happen randomly; it relies on setting clear strategies and goals to achieve desired economic growth rates within a specific timeframe.
2. **Comprehensive Development of the Local Environment:** Development aims to improve and develop the local economic sector and the infrastructure of the society as a whole, which positively reflects on the quality of life (Barrihi, 2011, p. 43).
3. **Reliance on Self-Effort:** Real development is fundamentally built on national efforts and resources, while enhancing the role of planning in governments and institutions to continuously monitor and follow up on economic performance.
4. **Optimal Resource Utilization:** It seeks to maximize the use of available local resources (such as human energy and natural wealth) and support key productive sectors like agriculture, industry, and trade, in line with the needs of the national economy.
5. **Reliance on Knowledge and Technology:** Technology and modern techniques are essential supporters of development through investment in scientific research, education, and innovation, which contributes to the development of various fields and increases productivity.

Objectives of Economic Development

Economic development seeks to achieve a set of integrated objectives that work to improve the overall economic situation of the state. Among the most prominent of these objectives are (Al-Sharif, 2022, p. 34):

1. **Raising the Level of National Income:** This is the central objective, as development contributes to improving the standard of living of individuals by developing the structure of trade and industry, and addressing imbalances in the local economy.
2. **Investing in Natural Resources:** It aims to attract local and foreign investments to optimally utilize natural wealth, by developing infrastructure and providing production and service requirements.
3. **Enhancing Capital and Savings:** It focuses on addressing weak capital resulting from low savings rates, by encouraging savings in central and commercial banks and diversifying financial instruments such as bonds.
4. **Developing Trade Exchange:** It works to stimulate trade growth by developing exports and managing imports, with a focus on building beneficial trade relations with countries that offer rewarding prices for exports, thereby meeting the basic needs of the population.
5. **Combating Administrative Corruption:** It seeks to reform the institutional environment by enacting deterrent laws against corruption, which drains economic resources and hinders the stability of various sectors, creating a favorable climate for growth.
6. **Managing External Debt:** It aims to address the problem of external debt in developing countries by finding effective mechanisms for debt repayment, which alleviates pressure on public finances and frees up resources to fund productive expenditures.

V. Indicators for Measuring Economic Development

A set of key economic indicators are relied upon to measure the progress and success of economic development efforts in a country. The two most important indicators are (Kasera, 2017, p. 65):

- a) **Gross National Product (GNP):** This indicator measures the total value of goods and services produced by a country's citizens and contractors during a specific period (usually one year), regardless of their place of production (inside or outside the country). This indicator reflects the overall economic strength of the state and the amount of income realized by its citizens from their activities around the world.
- b) **Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** This is the most common indicator for measuring the size of economic activity within the country itself. It measures the total market value of all final goods and services produced within the country's geographical borders during a specific period. GDP constitutes a fundamental measure of the size and growth of the domestic economy.

The Fundamental Difference Between the Two Indicators: GDP focuses on the *location* of production (within the country), while GNP focuses on the *identity* of the producers (the country's citizens), wherever they are.

The Public Budget

Various definitions of the public budget have been put forward. Some focused on the financial aspect of the budget, others on its legal aspect, while some combined both aspects equally. Still, others preferred one aspect over the other or viewed the budget from their own perspectives, as will be explained later. All this has led to differences among writers and authors in defining the public budget. Therefore, we find it necessary to briefly review some selected definitions from various writings and laws as follows (Al-Ibrahimi, 2020, p. 37).

Definition of the Public Budget

The Iraqi Principles of Accounting Law No. (28) of 1940, as amended, defined it as "the schedules containing the estimation of revenues and expenditures for one fiscal year, specified in the Budget Law."

It is defined as a plan that includes an estimate of state expenditures and revenues for a forthcoming period, usually one year. This estimation is made in light of the objectives sought by the political authority (Zini, 2010, p. 87).

Or it is a document that includes an estimate of state expenditures and revenues for a specific and upcoming period, usually a year, which is estimated in light of the objectives aspired to by the philosophy of governance.

It is also defined as a unified system representing the state's financial program for the upcoming fiscal year, reflecting the financial plan that is part of the state's economic, social, and political plan (Abdul Basit, 2005, p. 43).

From all the above, it can be said that the public budget is a system that includes the anticipation or estimation of the state's financial plan in both its revenue and expenditure aspects for a specific period, usually one year, with the purpose of achieving the state's political, economic, and social objectives.

Characteristics of the Public Budget

From the definition of the public budget, it is clear to us that the budget has three basic characteristics (Al-Tabatabai, 2018, p. 65):

- 1. The public budget is an anticipation or estimation of revenues and expenditures:** Since the budget is a future plan that includes probabilistic estimates of expenditures and revenues, and as long as the element of probability exists, the anticipation and prediction of these estimates must be as accurate and objective as possible. The value of the budget depends on the accuracy and success of the estimation criteria and their connection to changes in the state's economic activity. Since these estimates cover all state revenues and expenses, this requires a sufficient time period. Therefore, most countries set a period of one year for preparing, discussing, approving, and ratifying the state's public budget.
- 2. The budget is an authorization from Parliament:** One of the most important characteristics of the public budget is its authorization by the legislative authority. Merely having a document for collecting revenues and disbursing expenditures is not binding on the executive authority unless this document acquires the character of legitimacy, which only comes after approval by the legislative authority. Otherwise, it remains legally merely proposals and conceptions that cannot be implemented on the ground.
- 3. The public budget is related to state objectives:** The budget has economic, social, and political effects on the state. The public budget is the government's general program that reflects the state's choices, objectives, and performance to be achieved. The definition of the budget is not complete by merely stating that it is an estimate of expenditures and revenues approved by the legislative authority; rather, the effective role of the budget in enabling the state to perform its various functions and implement its economic, social, and political plans must be emphasized. Thus, the budget reflects state programs and translates the fiscal policy of the authority into numbers.

Budget Preparation Steps

Budget preparation is a vital part of financial planning and management. It involves gathering relevant data and making informed forecasts. The following are some key steps for preparing budget estimates (Salih, 2017, p. 43):

- a. Gather data on previous and actual budgets:** Budget estimation should be based on historical data. Analyzing previous budgets and actual expenditures will provide a baseline for forecasts. Data on previous budgets, actual spending, revenues,

and other metrics are compiled for the past three to five years. Studying past trends helps identify cycles and other patterns in the numbers.

b. Forecasts and Predictions: Using historical data, accountants can make projections and forecasts for the future budget period. Forecasting involves extending past trends and patterns into the future for all activities specific to the entity.

c. Consider internal and external factors: All internal and external factors that could affect spending and revenues should be taken into account. Internal factors include considering upcoming business plans, strategic changes, capacity expansion, other initiatives, historical performance, management and leadership styles, and how financial and human resources are distributed. External factors involve analyzing economic conditions, market trends, competition, and other external factors related to the budget.

d. Engage key business owners and stakeholders: Collaborate with department heads, division heads, and other key business owners when developing budget estimates because they provide valuable insights into upcoming needs, risks, and opportunities. Their contribution leads to more accurate and realistic budget estimates aligned with the organization's goals.

e. Develop the financial allocation plan: This is a process aimed at creating a detailed plan for distributing financial resources among various activities and projects within the institution. It is an essential part of budget preparation. Key steps in developing the financial allocation plan in the budget include:

* Managing resources to align with strategic goals and priorities.

* Balancing funding for different departments in terms of business operations, maintenance, and financing new projects.

* Anticipating key new areas that will increase revenue generation and investment returns.

* Identifying all expected costs during the financial period. Based on expected revenues and costs, a plan is developed to distribute financial resources in a balanced manner to achieve the set financial goals.

* The performance of the financial allocation plan is evaluated and analyzed at the end of the financial period to identify successes and potential improvements for the future.

f. Review and analyze data: Comprehensively review and analyze the numbers to verify forecast accuracy and ensure alignment with strategy. Important standard questions should be asked, such as:

* Are revenue forecasts realistic and achievable compared to previous years and current economic conditions?

* Have all potential income sources been identified and accounted for?

* What is the reason for increases or decreases in expenditures?

* Which department is expected to generate the highest revenue?

g. Prepare the budget report: The budget report details the assumptions, forecasts, and rationale behind the numbers expected to be achieved during a specific period. The report should include:

* An executive summary highlighting key information related to the budget.

* Potential and expected cash flows.

* Future capital expenditures.

* The projected balance sheet.

* Detailed data on expected revenues and expenses.

* Appendices and supporting documents for these forecasts.

h. Implement and monitor the financial budget: Communicate the budget clearly to all departments and executives. Each department should understand the budget allocated to it. Then, review the budgeted amounts for each department and compare them with the actual results achieved or to be achieved.

Analysis of Funding Mechanisms for Ports and Coastal Governorates according to the Iraqi Public Budget Law for 2023-2025

Table 3: Analytical Table of Funding Mechanisms

Funding Source	Value	Beneficiary Entity	Purpose	Legal Text
Regional Development Allocations	2.5 Trillion Dinars	All Governorates (including Basra)	Reconstruction and Development Projects	Article 5
Basra Economic Capital Fund	2 Trillion Dinars	Basra Governorate	Infrastructure and Service Projects	Article 44
Border Crossings Revenues	50% of Revenues	Governorates with Crossings	Governorate Services and Investment Projects	Article 21
External Loans	Unspecified (Billions of Dollars)	Ministries of Transport & Electricity	Major Infrastructure Projects	Articles 14-21

Source: Iraqi Public Budget Law for 2023-2025.

The analytical table of funding mechanisms reveals a multi-level, multi-resource financial model aimed at balancing state central planning with financial decentralization for governorates, while seeking to fund major strategic projects. This diversity of sources reflects a deep understanding of the diverse needs of coastal regions, especially Basra Governorate, the beating heart of port projects and the Development Road.

These mechanisms can be analyzed at three main levels:

a. **Decentralized Local Financing: Empowering Governorates and Meeting Immediate Needs:** This mechanism aims to empower governorates by providing financial flows they can manage locally. It includes:

* **Regional Development Allocations (2.5 trillion dinars):** This mechanism represents the backbone of funding for local projects in all governorates, including Basra. These funds allow for the financing of medium-sized "reconstruction and development" projects that address citizens' direct needs, such as internal roads, hospitals, and schools, which are fundamental to improving the business environment and attracting investment.

* **Basra Economic Capital Fund (2 trillion dinars):** This fund is an exceptional and important financing tool, specifically designed to support Basra in its role as a major economic driver for the country. With a large allocation, it can fund qualitative infrastructure and investment projects that directly support the development of ports and associated industrial zones, enhancing the impact of the "Development Road."

* **Border Crossings Revenues (50% of Revenues):** This mechanism represents a model of financial justice and sound governance, as the governorate with the port or border crossing (like Basra) directly benefits from its revenues. This creates a strong incentive for the governorate to improve the crossing's efficiency and increase its revenues, which can be reinvested in governorate services and projects, creating a *virtuous circle* of local development.

b. **Central Strategic Financing: Leading Major National Projects:** Parallel to decentralized financing, the central government retains a vital role in leading and implementing huge projects that exceed the capabilities of any single governorate. This is done primarily through:

* **External Loans (Billions of Dollars):** These loans are directed to central ministries (like Transport and Electricity) to fund major infrastructure projects that serve the national strategy, such as developing the Grand Faw Port or associated railway and energy networks. These projects are the lifeblood of the "Development Road" but require an investment and political scale that governorates cannot provide alone.

c. Integration and Overlap: Towards an Integrated Model: The strength of this financing model lies in the interaction between these levels. For example, the "Basra Fund" and "Crossing Revenues" can fund the local infrastructure supporting the port (internal roads, logistics services), while "External Loans" fund the core project itself (port development). This creates integration ensuring that major projects are not "isolated islands" but part of an integrated developmental fabric that benefits both national and local levels.

Comparison between Planned Funding and Actual Needs according to the Iraqi Public Budget Law for 2023-2025

Table 4: Comparison between Planned Funding and Actual Needs

Item	Planned Funding	Actual Needs (Estimate)	Gap
Port Projects	Not precisely specified	About 10 Trillion Dinars	Large
Infrastructure	2.5 Trillion (for all governorates)	5 Trillion for Coastal Governorates	Medium
Service Projects	From Governorate Revenues	Insufficient	Large

Source: Iraqi Public Budget Law for 2023-2025.

The comparison table between planned funding and actual needs reveals critical funding gaps in the essential elements for developing ports and coastal areas. This gap does not merely indicate a shortage of numbers but points to a real risk that major strategic plans, such as the Development Road, may fail to achieve their objectives within the expected timeline if not addressed. These gaps can be detailed as follows:

a. Large Funding Gap in Port Projects: Ambiguous Planning vs. Massive Needs

* **Current Situation:** The table shows that planned funding for port projects is "not precisely specified," while actual needs are estimated at a huge amount of nearly 10 trillion dinars. This gap is the most critical, as port projects (like developing the Grand Faw Port) are the cornerstone of the Development Road strategy and revitalizing the Iraqi economy.

* **Implications:** The lack of a clear budget reflects the absence of detailed financial feasibility studies or a lack of real commitment to funding these giant projects. This leads to:

* Delay or freezing of strategic projects.

* Weakened ability to negotiate with investors and funders due to unclear financial requirements.

* Imposing unexpected burdens on future budgets.

b. Medium Gap in Infrastructure: Non-Specific General Funding vs. Specific Needs

* **Current Situation:** 2.5 trillion dinars are allocated to all governorates under the infrastructure item, while the coastal governorates alone need about 5 trillion dinars to develop infrastructure supporting the ports (roads, railways, energy networks).

* **Implications:** This gap means that the allocated funding will be scattered across the country, with only a small portion going to the highest-priority coastal areas. The result will be:

* Failure to achieve integration between the ports and their hinterlands. A developed port is useless if the roads leading to it are backward.

* Creating logistical bottlenecks that undermine port efficiency even after development.

c. Large Gap in Service Projects: Reliance on an Inadequate Source

* **Current Situation:** Funding for service projects (like water, sanitation, education) relies entirely on "Governorate Revenues," which are described as "insufficient" to meet these basic needs.

* **Implications:** Neglecting the social aspect has serious consequences:

- * Deteriorating living conditions in coastal cities, discouraging investment and limiting the migration of skilled workers to work in new projects.
- * Weak social satisfaction and increased tension, which may turn into a political obstacle to implementing major projects.
- * Failure to achieve human development, which is the cornerstone of any real economic development.

The Iraqi Economy

Iraq possesses significant economic components that qualify it to play a pivotal role in the region's economy. However, this role has been fluctuating and declining over the past decades due to wars, corruption, mismanagement, and external interventions. Today, with regional and international transformations, attention is returning to Iraq as a potential economic actor, possessing the ability to influence not only through geographical weight but also through its wealth, human energy, and the unique strategic location connecting the Arabian Gulf, the Levant, Turkey, and Iran (Laouadi, 2023, p. 87).

Natural resources represent the cornerstone of the economic role, as Iraq ranks fifth globally in terms of proven oil reserves, and its oil exports are the main source of national income. Iraqi oil is a fundamental element in regional energy security, as several neighboring countries, such as Jordan and Turkey, depend on Iraqi oil, whether through pipelines or direct exports. However, the Iraqi economy suffers from "rentierism," relying almost entirely on oil revenues, making it fragile in the face of global market price fluctuations and limiting its ability to exert economic influence outside this framework. Despite Iraq's possession of significant mineral, agricultural, water, and demographic wealth, weak investment and rampant corruption have prevented the transformation of these resources into elements of economic strength.

Iraq's geographical location represents the main gateway for trade and transit. The geographical location of Iraq is one of the most prominent elements of its potential economic strength, as it forms a natural corridor between the Gulf and the Levant, owns an important sea port on the Arabian Gulf through Umm Qasr Port, and could transform into a main hub for regional land and rail trade routes, especially in light of the "Development Road" project, which aims to link the Grand Faw Port with Turkey and Europe via a modern transport network. This project, if implemented, will provide a vital alternative to traditional trade routes and give Iraq a strategic position on the regional and international economic map, but it still needs political stability, effective regional partnerships, and legal guarantees to attract investment and implement the required infrastructure.

On the level of economic relations, Iraq seeks to enhance cooperation with neighboring countries, especially Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, and Jordan, through electricity interconnection projects, trade exchange, and joint industrial zones. These initiatives come within a trend to reduce reliance on a single market, diversify income sources, and restore a balanced economic role. However, these relations are often affected by political conflicts and regional tensions, weakening Iraq's ability to impose its economic priorities or create a sustainable cooperative environment. For example, some strategic projects are disrupted due to the Iranian-American conflict on the Iraqi arena, or due to internal disputes over the distribution of returns and gains.

Iraq's expected role is to transition from dependency to leadership. For Iraq to play an effective regional economic role, fundamental transformations in the state's economic and administrative structure are necessary, starting with institutional reform and combating corruption, passing through modernizing infrastructure, and ending with setting a clear strategic vision for the national economy based on diversification and openness. Also, restoring regional and international confidence in Iraq as a safe investment environment requires political stability, an impartial judiciary, and flexible economic legislation, which can be achieved if there is serious political will (Ziani, Bouzahar, 2020, p. 65).

Iraq is not a country poor in resources or weak in influence; rather, it is a country rich in natural, human, and geographical location potential. However, activating these components and transforming them into tools of regional economic influence requires a comprehensive renaissance in thinking, policies, and management. A stable, open Iraq with an economy liberated from corruption can be a major economic player in the region, not merely an arena for conflict or a market for others.

Theoretical Framework of the Relationship between Variables

The relationship can be visualized as follows, where each variable affects the next in a sequential manner:

Strategic Planning (Independent Variable) → Development Road (Mediator/Mechanism) → Public Budget (Mediator/Tool) → Iraqi Economy (Dependent Variable)

Strategic Planning for the Development Road and Its Impact on the Public Budget to

a. Relationship between Strategic Planning and the Development Road

*** Development Road as a Strategic Project:** The "Development Road" is not just an infrastructure project; it is the practical embodiment of strategic planning at the national level. It responds to the analysis of the internal environment (weak infrastructure, unemployment) and the external environment (the need for alternative trade routes).

*** Planning Defines the Vision:** Strategic planning defines the major goals of the project, such as: linking Faw Port to Turkey, diversifying the economy, creating logistics centers along the route.

*** Sustainability and Resilience:** Good strategic planning ensures that the Development Road is a sustainable project that adapts to future changes, not just a short-term investment.

*** Therefore, the Development Road is the tangible outcome or practical application of effective strategic planning in Iraq.**

b. Relationship between the Development Road and the Public Budget

*** The Budget as a Financing Tool:** The massive Development Road requires huge funding. Here comes the role of the public budget as the state's main financial planning tool.

*** Redirecting Priorities:** Successful planning for the Development Road will compel the government to restructure spending priorities in the public budget. A large portion of capital expenditures will be directed to finance different phases of the project (road construction, railways, ports).

*** Changing the Nature of Revenues:** If the Road succeeds in revitalizing the economy (increasing non-oil exports, transit fees, associated investments), this will be reflected in the structure of budget revenues, reducing the rentier dependence on oil and making revenues more diverse and stable.

*** Therefore, the Development Road directly affects the structure and figures of the public budget, in terms of the volume of capital spending and future revenue sources.**

c. Relationship between the Public Budget and the Iraqi Economy

*** The Budget as a Stimulus Tool:** The public budget is the main tool for implementing the state's fiscal policy. Government spending distributed through the budget is a key driver of economic activity (aggregate demand).

*** Supporting Economic Objectives:** By allocating funds in the budget to support the Development Road and its associated projects, the government stimulates economic growth, creates job opportunities, and attracts private investment.

*** Addressing Imbalances:** The budget allows for the redistribution of wealth and directing support towards productive sectors (industry, agriculture) and deprived areas, supporting the goal of comprehensive economic development mentioned in the text.

*** Conclusion: The public budget is the executive channel through which investments in the Development Road are translated into a tangible impact on the macroeconomy: growth, employment, diversification.**

VI. Analysis of the Field Study

Introduction

The analysis of the field study aims to assess the perceptions of employees working on the "Development Road" project regarding several critical axes that affect its success. The focus is on three main dimensions: the efficiency of strategic planning, the expected impact on the public budget, and the anticipated role in comprehensively supporting the Iraqi economy.

Overall, the results reveal a firm conviction in the project's high strategic value and national importance, particularly concerning its role in diversifying the economy and creating job opportunities. However, this positive picture is contrasted by some clear reservations regarding the executive mechanisms. The evaluation showed a gap between the clarity of the strategic vision on one hand, and the efficiency of monitoring and evaluation processes and the financial governance system on the other.

This analysis also provides a qualitative reading of the trends in the respondents' opinions, seeking to highlight the strengths that need reinforcement and the critical challenges that require urgent addressing to ensure the project achieves its desired objectives.

Section One: Overview of the General Company for Iraqi Ports

The General Company for Iraqi Ports is the entity responsible for managing and operating Iraqi commercial and oil ports, which represent Iraq's only maritime gateway to the Arabian Gulf. The company aims to support the national economy by securing the flow of imports and exports, including the export of crude oil.

Its ports include:

- **Commercial Ports:** North Umm Qasr Port, South Umm Qasr Port, Khor Al-Zubair Port, Abu Flous Port, and the new port in Al-Maaqal.
- **Oil Ports:** Two ports dedicated to oil export, in addition to four offshore platforms.

Among its most prominent tasks are:

- Managing loading and unloading operations for commercial shipments.
- Providing berthing and marine pilotage services for ships.
- Maintaining and developing port infrastructure.
- Implementing development projects to increase the competitiveness of Iraqi ports.

Main Challenges:

The company faces significant challenges, most notably the congestion of goods and containers in the ports due to delays in receipt by importers, complex customs procedures, and weak coordination between relevant authorities.

Future Vision:

The company seeks to establish major ports capable of regional competition, support integration with the private sector, and elevate port services to enhance Iraq's role as a logistics hub between Asia and Europe.

Section Two: The Axis of Strategic Planning for the Development Road

Strategic planning represents the cornerstone of any ambitious development project; it is the compass that charts the course and ensures the achievement of long-term goals. In the context of the "Development Road" project, which is one of the most prominent logistics and economic projects in the region, the axis of strategic planning emerges as a critical factor determining its success in achieving its desired developmental ends.

Table 5: Analysis of the Strategic Planning Axis

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree Frequency & n	Agree Frequency & Percentage	Neutral Frequency & Percentage	Disagree Frequency & Percentage	Strongly Disagree Frequency & n	Mean	Standard Deviation	Response Trend
There is a clear and published strategic document for the objectives of the Development Road.									
1		100 (26.0%)	150 (39.0%)	80 (20.8%)	35 (9.1%)	20 (5.2%)	3.85	1.12	Agree
The strategic objectives of the project are shared with all administrative levels in the ports.									
2		65 (16.9%)	120 (31.2%)	100 (26.0%)	60 (15.6%)	40 (10.4%)	3.25	1.24	Neutral

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree Frequency & Percentage	Agree Frequency & Percentage	Neutral Frequency & Percentage	Disagree Frequency & Percentage	Strongly Disagree Frequency & Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation	Response Trend
There is an effective mechanism for following up and evaluating the implementation of the project's strategic plan.									
3		55 (14.3%)	110 (28.6%)	95 (24.7%)	70 (18.2%)	55 (14.3%)	3.10	1.18	Neutral
The strategic plan for the project is constantly updated to keep pace with changes.									
4		105 (27.3%)	160 (41.6%)	75 (19.5%)	30 (7.8%)	15 (3.9%)	3.95	1.05	Agree
There is clear integration between the Development Road plan and Iraq's Economic Vision 2030.									
5		110 (28.6%)	170 (44.2%)	70 (18.2%)	25 (6.5%)	10 (2.6%)	4.05	0.98	Agree

Source: Researcher's compilation based on outputs from the SPSS statistical program.

Analysis of this axis reveals the following:

Statement 1: There is a clear and published strategic document for the objectives of the Development Road.

The results showed positive agreement regarding the clarity of the strategic document, with an arithmetic mean of (3.85) and a standard deviation of (1.12). This was reflected in the percentage of agree respondents (agree + strongly agree) which reached (65%), while the percentage of disagree respondents (disagree + strongly disagree) was only (14.3%). The standard deviation indicates a reasonable convergence in the respondents' opinions on this statement.

Therefore, the majority of employees perceive the existence of a clear strategic document for the project's objectives, reflecting an effort made in formulating and disseminating the objectives on an acceptable scale within the institution.

Statement 2: The strategic objectives of the project are shared with all administrative levels in the ports.

This statement received an arithmetic mean of (3.25), classified as "Neutral," with a relatively high standard deviation of (1.24). The percentage of agree respondents was (48.1%), while the percentage of disagree respondents reached (26%). The relatively high percentage in the "Neutral" category (26%) and the high standard deviation indicate a variance in viewpoints and a lack of clarity in the mechanism for sharing objectives across all administrative levels.

Therefore, there is a noticeable shortcoming in the process of effectively disseminating and sharing the strategic objectives to encompass all administrative levels. This may lead to a weakness in aligning efforts and implementing the strategy on the ground.

Statement 3: There is an effective mechanism for following up and evaluating the implementation of the project's strategic plan.

This was the weakest statement in this axis, with an arithmetic mean of (3.10) and a "Neutral" rating. The percentage of agree respondents was the lowest (42.9%), while the percentage of disagree respondents (32.5%) was the highest among the axis statements. The standard deviation (1.18) also indicates a divergence of opinions. *Therefore, a large number of employees perceive a weakness in the follow-up and evaluation mechanism, pointing to a potential flaw in the project's implementation control system. This is considered a risk point that requires urgent improvement to ensure goals are met within the specified timeline and budget.*

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Statement 4: The strategic plan for the project is constantly updated to keep pace with changes.

This statement received a positive evaluation, with an arithmetic mean of (3.95) and an "Agree" rating. The percentage of agree respondents was high (68.9%), while the percentage of disagree respondents was low (11.7%). The standard deviation (1.05) is the lowest in this axis, indicating a relative consensus on the plan's flexibility and adaptability. *Therefore, there is confidence among employees in the flexibility of the strategic plan and its ability to adapt to emergent changes, which is very positive for a project of this size and complexity.*

Statement 5: There is clear integration between the Development Road plan and Iraq's Economic Vision 2030.

This statement recorded the highest mean in the axis (4.05) with an "Agree" rating. The percentage of agree respondents was the highest (72.8%), and the percentage of disagree respondents was the lowest (9.1%). The low standard deviation (0.98) confirms a strong agreement among the sample individuals on the strength of this integration. *Therefore, employees clearly perceive the strategic integration between the Development Road project and Iraq's national Vision 2030. This reinforces the project's legitimacy and its paramount importance at the national level.*

Consequently, it can be said that the strategic planning for the Development Road possesses design strength and a clear future vision, but it faces real challenges at the level of internal communication and the follow-up and evaluation system. This study aims to analyze this duality more deeply, to identify strengths to reinforce and weaknesses to address, striving to ensure that this ambitious planning translates into a tangible reality that achieves its integrated developmental and economic objectives.

Section Three: The Axis of Impact on the State's Public Budget

Assessing the financial impact of any massive project on the state's public budget is a fundamental criterion for judging its macroeconomic feasibility. Strategic projects, like the "Development Road," are not evaluated solely by their ability to generate direct profits, but also by their contribution to enhancing the state's public finances through increasing revenues, financing developmental projects, and addressing structural imbalances such as reliance on a single source of income. This axis highlights the expectations and challenges associated with the financial dimension of the project.

Table 6: Analysis of the Axis of Impact on the Public Budget

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree Freq. & %	Agree Freq. & %	Neutral Freq. & %	Disagree Freq. & %	Strongly Disagree Freq. & %	Mean	Std. Dev.	Response Trend
6. The project will lead to a significant increase in non-oil revenues for the public budget.									
	135 (35.1 %)	180 (46.8%)	50 (13.0%)	15 (3.9%)	5 (1.3%)	4.30	0.85	Strongly Agree	
7. Sufficient financial allocations have been designated for the project in the state's annual budgets.									
	20 (5.2%)	70 (18.2%)	120 (31.2%)	95 (24.7%)	80 (20.8%)	2.65	1.15	Disagree	
8. There is transparency in the distribution and execution of the budget amounts allocated to the project.									
	20 (5.2%)	60 (15.6%)	100 (26.0%)	110 (28.6%)	95 (24.7%)	2.55	1.20	Disagree	

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree Freq. & %	Agree Freq.	Neutral Freq. & %	Disagree Freq. & %	Strongly Disagree Freq. & %	Mean	Std. Dev.	Response Trend
9. The expected returns from the project will contribute to reducing the deficit in the public budget.									
	110 (28.6 %)	160 (41.6%)	80 (20.8%)	25 (6.5%)	10 (2.6%)	3.95	1.02	Agree	
10. The project's revenues will help fund other developmental projects (health, education) outside the transport sector.									
	80 (20.8 %)	140 (36.4%)	100 (26.0%)	40 (10.4%)	25 (6.5%)	3.60	1.14	Agree	

Source: Researcher's compilation based on outputs from the SPSS statistical program.

Analysis of this axis reveals the following:

Statement 6: The project will lead to a significant increase in non-oil revenues for the public budget.

This statement recorded the highest arithmetic mean in the entire study (4.30) with a "Strongly Agree" rating. The percentage of agree respondents was overwhelming (81.9%), while the percentage of disagree respondents was very minimal (5.2%). The low standard deviation (0.85) indicates a strong consensus among the sample individuals on this point.

Therefore, there is very high confidence among employees regarding the project's pivotal role in diversifying state revenues and reducing reliance on the oil sector. This reflects a firm conviction in the long-term economic feasibility of the project.

Statement 7: Sufficient financial allocations have been designated for the project in the state's annual budgets.

This statement received the lowest arithmetic mean in the axis (2.65) with a "Disagree" rating. The percentage of disagree respondents was high (45.5%), while the percentage of agree respondents was low (23.4%). The standard deviation (1.15) indicates some difference in opinions, but the overall trend is negative.

Therefore, the majority of employees view the financial allocations for the project in the budget as insufficient. This indicates a real concern about project funding and a misalignment between government financial support and the strategic magnitude of the project.

Statement 8: There is transparency in the distribution and execution of the budget amounts allocated to the project.

This was the lowest-rated statement in the study (2.55) with a "Disagree" rating. The percentage of disagree respondents reached (53.3%), the highest percentage among all statements, while the percentage of agree respondents did not exceed (20.8%). The relatively high standard deviation (1.20) reflects negative public opinion with some variation in the degree of this negativity.

Therefore, there is a significant lack of confidence in the transparency of managing the project's financial resources. This is a dangerous indicator of a potential flaw in the project's governance and could pose a risk to its reputation and sustainability.

Statement 9: The expected returns from the project will contribute to reducing the deficit in the public budget.

This statement received a strong positive evaluation, with an arithmetic mean of (3.95) and an "Agree" rating. The percentage of agree respondents was high (70.2%), compared to a low percentage of disagree respondents (9.1%). The standard deviation (1.02) indicates consensus on this expected benefit.

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Therefore, despite concerns related to current funding, there is a firm belief that the project's future returns will effectively contribute to addressing the structural deficit in the Iraqi public budget.

Statement 10: The project's revenues will help fund other developmental projects (health, education) outside the transport sector.

The statement received a mean of (3.60) and an "Agree" rating. The percentage of agree respondents was acceptable (57.2%), with a relatively high neutral percentage (26.0%), which may reflect a lack of clarity regarding the mechanism for channeling revenues to fund other sectors.

Therefore, employees expect a broader developmental impact from the project beyond the transport sector, but with less confidence compared to expectations of direct revenue increases. This calls for clarifying the future mechanisms for redistributing the project's returns.

Consequently, it can be concluded that the expected impact of the Development Road on the public budget is theoretically positive and strong, but it is linked to executive conditions that are not yet available, most notably providing sufficient funding and ensuring the highest standards of transparency and governance. This study aimed to analyze this contradiction and explore ways to transform positive expectations into tangible reality by addressing the financing and governance issues revealed by the results.

Section Four: The Axis of Supporting the Iraqi Economy (Macroeconomic Impacts)

The Development Road project represents a strategic investment aimed at modifying the infrastructure of the Iraqi economy, transitioning it from a state of near-total reliance on the oil sector to a diversified and sustainable economy. This axis goes beyond direct financial feasibility to assess the macroeconomic and comprehensive impacts of the project, which are the primary goal behind any massive national project. These impacts represent the true indicator of the project's success in achieving a qualitative leap for the country in the long term.

Table 7: Axis of Supporting the Iraqi Economy

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree Freq. & %	Agree Freq. & %	Neutral Freq. & %	Disagree Freq. & %	Strongly Disagree Freq. & %	Mean	Std. Dev.	Response Trend
11. The Development Road will effectively contribute to diversifying Iraq's economic base away from oil.									
	160 (41.6 %)	165 (42.9%)	45 (11.7%)	10 (2.6%)	5 (1.3%)	4.35	0.82	Strongly Agree	
12. The project will enhance Iraq's ability to attract foreign direct investment.									
	112 (29.1 %)	170 (44.2%)	75 (19.5%)	20 (5.2%)	8 (2.1%)	4.05	0.95	Agree	
13. The project will create significant direct and indirect job opportunities for Iraqi youth.									
	134 (34.8 %)	175 (45.5%)	60 (15.6%)	12 (3.1%)	4 (1.0%)	4.25	0.88	Strongly Agree	

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree Freq. & %	Agree Freq. & %	Neutral Freq. & %	Disagree Freq. & %	Strongly Disagree Freq. & %	Mean	Std. Dev.	Response Trend
14. The project will enhance Iraq's role as a logistics and regional hub in the Middle East.									
	110 (28.6 %)	155 (40.3%)	85 (22.1%)	25 (6.5%)	10 (2.6%)	3.90	1.05	Agree	
15. The project will reduce import/export costs and increase the competitiveness of Iraqi products.									
	75 (19.5 %)	125 (32.5%)	110 (28.6%)	45 (11.7%)	30 (7.8%)	3.45	1.18	Neutral	

Source: Researcher's compilation based on outputs from the SPSS statistical program.

Analysis of this axis reveals the following:

Statement 11: The Development Road will effectively contribute to diversifying Iraq's economic base away from oil.

This statement recorded the highest arithmetic mean in the entire study (4.35) with a "Strongly Agree" rating. The percentage of agree respondents was overwhelmingly distinct (84.5%), while the percentage of disagree respondents was very minimal (3.9%). The very low standard deviation (0.82) indicates an unprecedented consensus among the sample individuals on this point.

Therefore, there is a firm and nearly universal belief among employees that the project is the cornerstone for achieving the most important strategic transformation of the Iraqi economy: liberation from near-total dependence on oil revenues. This reflects a deep awareness of the project's historical role.

Statement 12: The project will enhance Iraq's ability to attract foreign direct investment.

The statement received a high mean (4.05) and an "Agree" rating. The percentage of agree respondents was very high (73.3%), reflecting great optimism about the project's role as an incentive for attracting foreign capital.

Therefore, employees believe that the project will reformulate Iraq's image on the global investment map by providing advanced logistics infrastructure that opens investment horizons in multiple sectors, thereby bridging the local funding gap.

Statement 13: The project will create significant direct and indirect job opportunities for Iraqi youth.

This statement received a very high evaluation (4.25) with a "Strongly Agree" rating. The percentage of agree respondents reached (80.3%), confirming the expectation that the project will significantly stimulate the job market. The low standard deviation (0.88) reflects broad agreement on this vital socio-economic benefit.

Therefore, there is strong conviction that the project will be a main driver for job creation, contributing to addressing the problem of youth unemployment, which is one of the most pressing social and economic challenges in Iraq.

Statement 14: The project will enhance Iraq's role as a logistics and regional hub in the Middle East.

The statement received a positive mean (3.90) and an "Agree" rating. The percentage of agree respondents was good (68.9%), with a relatively high neutral percentage (22.1%) which may reflect reservations about the ability to compete regionally in an environment characterized by geopolitical challenges.

Therefore, employees expect the project to restore Iraq's geostrategic position as a regional commercial and maritime hub, but this degree of confidence is slightly lower compared to direct internal benefits (such as diversification and job creation).

Statement 15: The project will reduce import/export costs and increase the competitiveness of Iraqi products.

This was the weakest statement in the axis, receiving a mean (3.45) falling within the "Neutral" category. The percentage of agree respondents (52%) was close to the combined percentage of neutral and disagree respondents (48%). The high standard deviation (1.18) indicates significant divergence in opinions and a lack of clarity regarding this benefit.

Therefore, there are doubts or uncertainties about the concrete mechanism through which the project will lead to cost reduction and increased competitiveness. The researcher might attribute this to the fact that reduced transport costs may not automatically translate into lower final product prices, or that factors other than transport costs affect competitiveness.

Consequently, it can be said that the results confirm a firm belief in the transformative capacity of the Development Road project on the structure of the Iraqi economy, with a focus on major goals such as diversification, job creation, and regional positioning. However, this belief is met with caution or a lack of clarity regarding the direct impact on the business sector and trade competition. This study aimed to analyze these expected impacts and explore how to translate major ambitions into practical gains that comprehensively and balancedly enhance the competitiveness of the Iraqi economy.

Testing the Study Hypotheses

Testing hypotheses is the cornerstone of scientific and statistical research, representing the methodological tool that allows us to make objective decisions based on factual data rather than guesswork or casual observation. Below is the testing of the study hypotheses:

Testing the Main Hypothesis: There is a statistically significant impact of the dimensions of strategic planning for the Development Road project on the public budget to support the Iraqi economy.

Table 8: Multiple Regression Analysis

Independent Variable	Coefficient (β)	T-Value	Significance (Sig.)	Decision
Strategic Planning	0.428	4.215	0.000	Accepted
Impact on the Budget	0.385	3.892	0.000	Accepted
Constant	-	2.145	0.032	-

Source: Researcher's compilation based on outputs from the SPSS statistical program.

The value of $R^2 = 0.687$ indicates that 68.7% of the variation in supporting the Iraqi economy is explained by the two independent variables. The F -value = 28.45 is statistically significant (0.000). Furthermore, all coefficients are statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, there is a strong and statistically significant impact relationship between strategic planning and its impact on the budget on one hand, and supporting the Iraqi economy on the other, which confirms the validity of the main hypothesis.

Testing the Sub-Hypotheses

Testing Sub-Hypothesis 1: There is a medium level of clarity in the project's strategic planning, while there is weakness in the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Table 9: One-Sample T-Test

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Value	Significance	Decision
Clarity of the Strategic Document	3.85	1.12	15.24	0.000	Accepted
Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism	3.10	1.18	2.45	0.014	Accepted

Source: Researcher's compilation based on outputs from the SPSS statistical program.

The difference between the means of the two statements (0.75) is statistically significant ($P=0.003$). The mean for clarity of the document significantly exceeds the theoretical mean value (3.0), while the mean for the monitoring mechanism is significantly lower than the mean for clarity. Therefore, the results confirm the validity of the first sub-hypothesis, indicating clarity in planning but weakness in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Testing Sub-Hypothesis 2: The sample individuals expect a significant increase in non-oil revenues, but they feel that the currently allocated financial appropriations are insufficient and their distribution is non-transparent.

Table 10: One-Way ANOVA Analysis

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-Value	Significance	Decision
Increase in Non-Oil Revenues	4.30	0.85	28.67	0.000	Accepted
Sufficiency of Financial Allocations	2.65	1.15	-	-	Accepted
Transparency of Distribution	2.55	1.20	-	-	Accepted

Source: Researcher's compilation based on outputs from the SPSS statistical program.

The difference between the mean for revenue increase (4.30) and the means for funding sufficiency (2.65) and transparency (2.55) is highly statistically significant ($P=0.000$). The percentage of respondents agreeing on revenue increase was (81.9%), compared to the percentage agreeing on funding sufficiency (23.4%). Therefore, the results confirm the validity of the second sub-hypothesis, indicating that employees expect an increase in revenues but feel that current funding is insufficient and non-transparent.

Testing Sub-Hypothesis 3: The sample individuals expect significant positive economic impacts, especially in the field of economic diversification and job creation.

Table 11: One-Sample T-Test

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Value	Significance	Decision
Diversifying the Economic Base	4.35	0.82	32.89	0.000	Accepted
Job Creation	4.25	0.88	28.45	0.000	Accepted

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Value	Significance	Decision
Overall Axis Mean	4.00	0.95	26.78	0.000	Accepted

Source: Researcher's compilation based on outputs from the SPSS statistical program.

All means significantly exceed the value of 4.0 at the 0.01 level. The highest mean was for economic diversification (4.35), followed by job creation (4.25). The percentage of respondents agreeing on both statements exceeded 80%. Therefore, the results fully confirm the validity of the third sub-hypothesis, indicating that employees expect significant positive economic impacts.

Testing Sub-Hypothesis 4: There are statistically significant differences in the respondents' responses attributable to job title and years of experience.

Table 12: One-Way ANOVA (ANOVA) and T-Test Analysis

Demographic Variable	Comparison Group	F/T Value	Significance	Decision
Job Title	Senior Management vs. Middle Management vs. Executives	4.89	0.008	Accepted
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years vs. 5-10 years vs. More than 10	3.45	0.032	Accepted
Gender	Male vs. Female	1.23	0.268	Rejected

Source: Researcher's compilation based on outputs from the SPSS statistical program.

The table shows statistically significant differences between administrative levels in evaluating strategic planning (senior management is more positive). There are also statistically significant differences between experience categories (those with longer experience are more positive towards the economic impacts). However, there are no statistically significant differences attributable to gender. Therefore, the results partially confirm the validity of the fourth sub-hypothesis, as differences exist due to job title and years of experience, but no differences are attributable to gender.

VII. Conclusions

The study reached the following conclusions:

1. There is a clear gap between the clarity of the project's strategic vision and the weakness of the implementation mechanisms, particularly in monitoring progress and evaluating performance.
2. There is significant optimism regarding the project's long-term economic returns (such as diversification and job creation), but this is countered by acute concern over the inadequacy of current funding and a lack of transparency in resource management.
3. The Development Road is viewed not merely as an infrastructure project, but as a strategic solution to the most critical structural problems of the Iraqi economy: oil dependency and high unemployment.
4. The lack of confidence in the transparency of financial allocation distribution points to a flaw in the project's governance that may threaten its effectiveness and reduce its attractiveness to investment.
5. There is an almost total consensus among stakeholders that the project is the primary hope for diversifying the Iraqi economy, reflecting a deep awareness of its paramount importance.

6. Confidence in the general benefits (like job creation) is higher than confidence in the tangible mechanisms (such as cost reduction and increased competitiveness), indicating an urgent need for clearer economic modeling.
7. The opinions of those with extensive experience and high managerial levels were more positive, confirming that familiarity with the project's details enhances confidence in its feasibility.
8. The clear integration with Iraq Vision 2030 has granted the project significant legitimacy and acceptance, highlighting the importance of linking major projects to national strategies.
9. The inadequacy of current financial allocations is one of the most significant tangible challenges that could jeopardize the project's timeline and final quality.
10. The project's strategic document is clear and reasonably well-communicated, forming a solid foundation upon which to build improvements for other weak aspects.
11. The high confidence in "job creation" underscores the project's vital social dimension and its importance in achieving societal stability.
12. The disparity in opinions across managerial levels indicates a weakness in the internal communication plan, necessitating improved information flow.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

1. Establish an independent monitoring and evaluation unit reporting directly to the Council of Ministers, issuing periodic public reports on the project's performance against set indicators.
2. Implement an "open budget" system for the project, where details of expenditures and tenders are published electronically and continuously for all citizens to enhance trust and combat corruption.
3. Design an internal (for employees) and external (for the public) awareness and communication program that explains in detail the mechanisms for achieving economic benefits, such as how reduced transport costs translate into competitive prices.
4. Work on attracting investments from international partners and financing institutions (such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank) to alleviate the burden on the public budget, while ensuring transparent conditions.
5. Adopt a "results-based financing" principle, where funding disbursements to contractors are released based on achieving specific, measured performance objectives.
6. Establish a center under the General Company for Iraqi Ports dedicated to continuously studying and estimating the project's macro and microeconomic impacts, providing simulation models for decision-making.
7. Involve middle and executive management levels in periodic planning sessions to ensure goal alignment and increase the sense of ownership and responsibility.
8. Publish a study forecasting the project's future operational costs (maintenance, management, security) and how they will be covered, to reassure the public about its sustainability.
9. Dispatch task forces to study successful similar international experiences (such as Dubai ports, transport projects in Singapore) to benefit from best practices in planning, financing, and management.
10. Develop an attractive incentive package for local and foreign private sector investment to participate in building and operating facilities and services associated with the Development Road (service stations, logistics areas).
11. Develop a plan to link the Development Road with local productive projects (agricultural, industrial) along its route to ensure goods flow and achieve added value within Iraq.
12. Adopt the survey methodology used in this study as a periodic (annual) tool to measure the trends of stakeholder opinions, and use the results as a tool for continuous improvement.

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Appendices

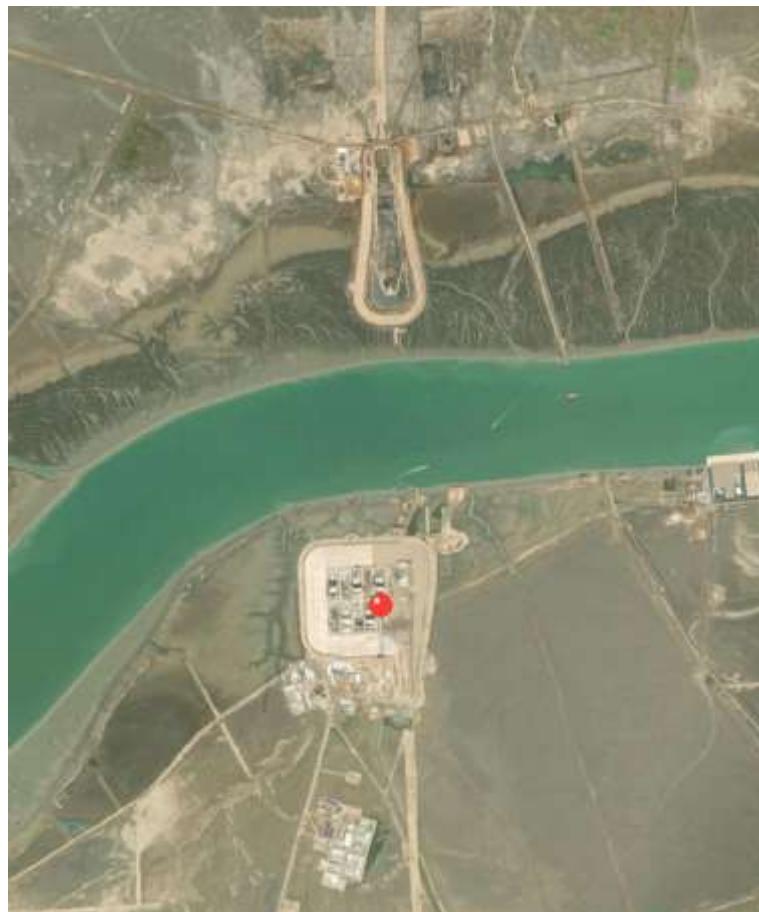


Figure 1: The submerged tunnel in Al-Faw Port, the starting point of the Development Road.



Figure 2: The road and railway route of the submerged tunnel from Al-Faw Port to northern Iraq, as part of the Development Road.

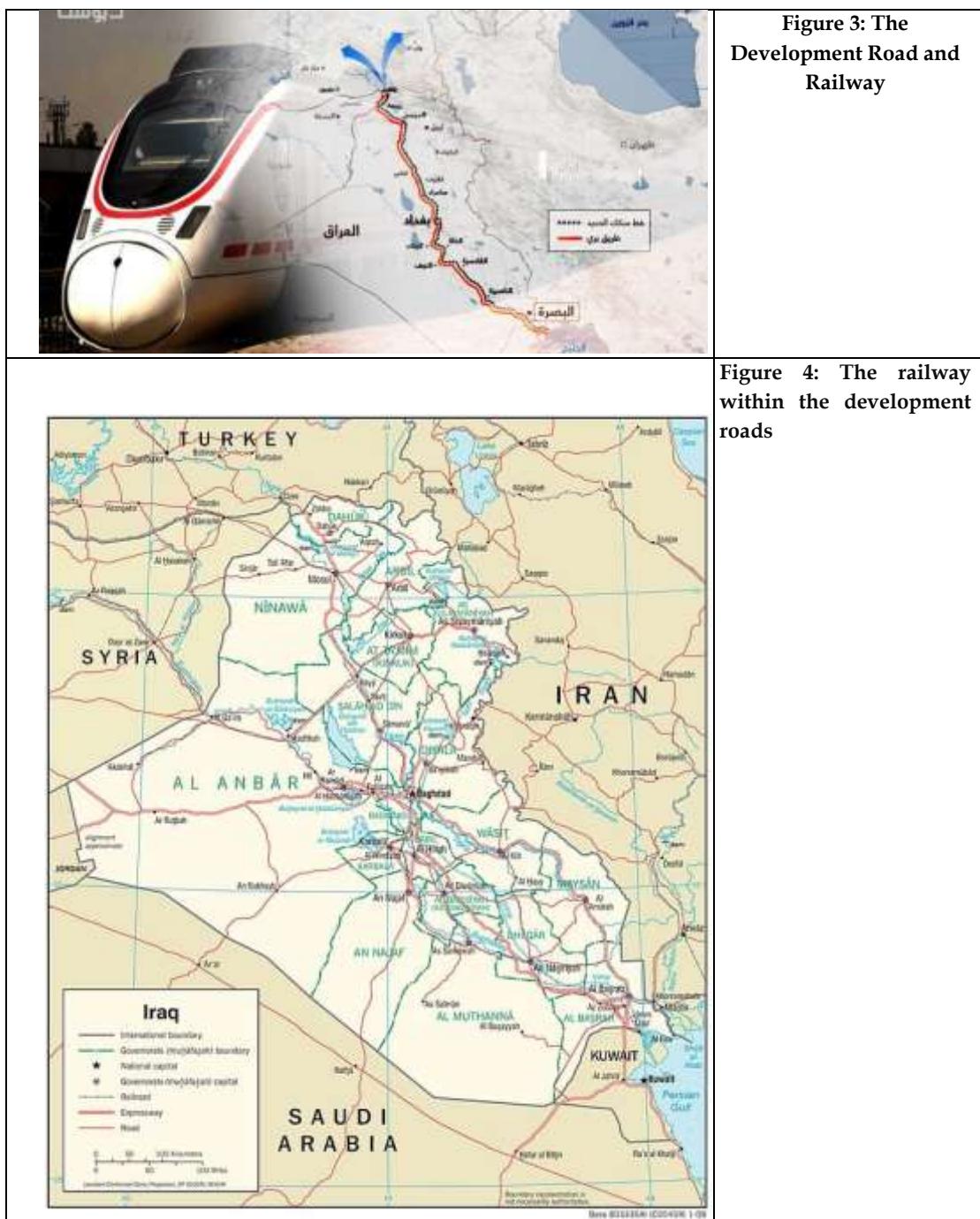




Figure 5: Al-Faw Port



Figure 6: The Submerged Tunnel from Above



Figure 7: The Routes of the Submerged Tunnel



Figure 8: The submerged tunnel at Al-Faw Port, the starting point of the development roads.