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Review of: *Human Development in Iraq, 1950–1990*, Bassam Yousif (2013)

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will he turn next? Is this book a one-off, or are there other issues towards which this is merely a stepping stone?

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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN IRAQ, 1950–1990, BASSAM YOUSIF (2013)

New York: Routledge, 211 pp.,

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Reviewed by Karen Pfeifer, Smith College

Given the ongoing turmoil in Iraq in 2014, this volume should be required reading in every course on Middle Eastern economies in particular and economic development in general. Yousif's contribution is unique within the range of books written about the history, politics and economic development of Iraq. His is the only work that puts human development at the centre, that measures human rights and political freedoms, and that relates both of these in a nuanced analysis of political economy overall. Other excellent predecessor works are complementary to Yousif's, but address human development issues either only in passing or not at all. These works include Charles Tripp's history of the state in Iraq (2002), the Penroses' emphasis on the importance of external forces in influencing (if not determining) Iraq's economic trajectory (1978), and Isam Al-Khafaji's argument that Europe and the Middle East, with Iraq as a key case, have had parallel and similar trajectories over recent centuries (2004). Other predecessor works that focus specifically on Iraq's economic transformation provide important analysis and insights but do not address human development at all. These include Hanna Batatu (1978), the Slugletts (2003) and Alnasrawi (1994, 2002). Other publications on Iraq since 2004 focus on its many deficits and what needs to be done, from the point of view of the western powers and the World Bank, to bring Iraq into the modern global economy, but such works ignore or downplay the remarkable story of achievement in human development that characterized Iraq from 1950 to 1990 (Al-Ali 2014; Gunter 2013; World Bank 2010).

The book's first chapter offers a clear and concise explanation of human development theory in comparison to the traditional theory of money-metric growth and capital accumulation in which human development was treated as secondary or irrelevant. In growth theory, literacy, nutrition, poverty, income distribution, and political and civil rights are assumed to automatically improve after growth takes place. In this theory, increased inequality is tolerated or even promoted (e.g., by lowering taxes on business) in order to generate the possibility of increased savings leading to increased investment which in turn leads to growth that raises everyone's standard of living in the long run. Along with other critics of growth theory, such as Amartya Sen, Yousif

1. argues that the 'trade off of equity for efficiency' is actually not necessary and
 2. may even be detrimental to broadly shared economic growth, and the benefits
 3. of growth are distributed through institutional mechanisms (such as public
 4. support for education) that are by no means automatic but themselves a result
 5. of societal dynamics and political decisions.

6. The book offers a concise yet thorough review of Iraq's economic history
 7. from 1920 to 1950 in the second chapter, from the era of the British mandate
 8. to that of 'independent' Iraq under the British-created monarchy. This pres-
 9. entation illuminates the context in which the republican coup that overthrew
 10. the monarchy in 1958 constituted the start of a 'revolution', in the sense of
 11. profound change, in economic and social progress that lasted from 1958
 12. to 1990. The book's analytical focus on the four decades from 1950 to 1990
 13. allows comparison of three periods in Iraq's post-World War II evolution: the
 14. monarchy, the transition from monarchy to republic after the revolution of
 15. 1958, and the passing of control of the republic to the Ba'ath party. Over the
 16. 30 years following the revolution, 1958–1988, state-led development managed
 17. to avoid the worst of the 'resource curse' that affects hydrocarbon exporters
 18. and to promote significant improvement in the various dimensions of human
 19. development. However, the increasingly centralized and repressive apparatus
 20. of the Ba'ath party under Saddam Hussein made two deeply flawed political
 21. decisions, the war against Iran 1980–1988, which slowed these develop-
 22. mental achievements, and the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, which led to the
 23. US-led military intervention and subsequent sanctions regime that reversed
 24. this progress.

25. Yousif systematically measures Iraq's successes and limitations in compar-
 26. ison to three groups of economies: primary-resource-export-dependent
 27. economies, other economies in the MENA region, and other middle-income
 28. countries around the world. Chapter 3 reviews the 'money-metric' dimen-
 29. sions of economic growth as traditionally defined, showing that after 1958
 30. the republican regime's programmes worked more effectively than the negli-
 31. gence of the monarchical regime. The author explains clearly the nature and
 32. meaning of the economic data he uses to illustrate his arguments and useful
 33. economic concepts such as 'Dutch Disease' (94). Chapters 4 through 6 detail
 34. the various dimensions of human development, in education, housing, public
 35. services, health, and the position of women, and illustrate with all available
 36. sources of data just how and why these improved to an impressive degree.
 37. Yousif provides clear explanations of each dimension of human develop-
 38. ment, how to measure it, and how it is interrelated with other dimensions.
 39. For example, as women's literacy and educational attainments improve, the
 40. fertility rate declines, and children are more likely to be educated and receive
 41. adequate health care and nutrition.

42. Iraq compares well to other economies in the various dimensions of human
 43. development but poorly on the dimensions of human rights and political
 44. freedoms (as measured by his creatively modified Humana Index). Chapter 7
 45. tackles the political dimension, documenting the denial and then further dete-
 46. rioration of human rights and political freedom as Saddam's reign wore on.
 47. In drawing lessons from this complex 30-year evolution, Yousif offers a telling
 48. critique of the damage that can be done when repressive politics increasingly
 49. intrude on what had been a successful economic and human development
 50. story (e.g., 62–63). Yousif attempts to reconcile this apparent contradiction in
 51. every chapter, arguing, in general, that the Ba'ath regime, even as it became
 52. increasingly repressive, was still subject to the constraints of Iraqi social and

historical sensibilities and had to continue to meet human development objectives in order to justify holding power (e.g., 84). Political authoritarianism is not a one-directional structure, but is embedded in the social dynamics of the era. For example, literacy rose from less than 20 per cent in 1957 to 73 per cent in 1987, and despite some bias towards the urban areas over the rural and towards higher education (a typical pattern in many developing countries), and despite the decline of the economy in the 1980s due to costs of war with Iran and decline of oil revenues as prices fell, the regime maintained its commitment to primary and secondary education and ensured an increase in the food supply and thus improved nutrition.

Overall, this book raises critical questions about how we define 'development' and appropriate public policy to promote it. In contrast to the traditional 'growth theory' that dominated economic thinking for decades, putting human needs and rights at the centre of 'development' broadens our view and allows us to understand the variations possible, given historical circumstances and cultural differences, among societies as they undergo transitions to the modern world. One important larger question that Yousif addresses head-on is the relationship of authoritarianism to successful state-led development. Despite Iraq's radical deepening of authoritarianism under Saddam Hussein, it was not unusual in linking concentrated political power to a successful economic and human development trajectory. Another larger question raised by the author is the position of women relative to men, a universal problem to be addressed in all societies around the world. In Iraq, women faced the traditional cultural constraints common to the Middle East and South Asia (relative seclusion) and the particular features of Islamic family and inheritance law, but the progress of women in education and in professional attainments, e.g., in the field of medicine, was impressive through the 1980s, and vestiges of it remain today. This illustrates that improvement in the position of women is possible and desirable when institutional structures permit and encourage it, and that it, like other aspects of human development, carries spillover benefits for society at large. In Iraq, that progress was stymied in the 1990s and 2000s, but such a setback is neither inevitable nor irrevocable.

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11. **LIVING TO SOME PURPOSE: MEMOIRS OF A SECULARIST IRAQI AND**
12. **ARAB STATESMAN, ADNAN PACHACHI (2013)**

13. London: Arabian Publishing Ltd, Index and appendices, 228 pp.,
14. ISBN: 9780957106031, h/bk, \$31.34
15.

16. *Reviewed by Antony T. Sullivan, TerraBuilt Corporation International*
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20. Scion of one of the wealthiest and most professionally distinguished Sunni
21. Arab families in Iraq, Adnan al-Pachachi (1923–), now and for some time
22. past a resident of the United Arab Emirates, paints in these intimately
23. personal memoirs the portrait of an eminently civilized man. A lover of
24. music – a passion shared with his wife Selwa, the daughter of the distin-
25. guished Iraqi statesman Ali Jawdat al-Ayyubi – al-Pachachi highlights his
26. lifelong struggle against sectarianism, intolerance and fanaticism of all sorts.
27. Because of various inequalities that he noticed between his own father and
28. mother, he early on became a ‘strong advocate of equality between men and
29. women’ (3). Al-Pachachi shares much concerning the occasionally problem-
30. atic relations with his father and speaks in detail about his own wife, a ‘beau-
31. tiful [woman] of great class and dignity’ (39–40) and their three talented
32. daughters. A powerful advocate of the Palestinian cause during a quar-
33. ter century as Iraq’s ambassador to the United Nations, al-Pachachi today
34. must despair of the *enrages* who bloody the Fertile Crescent so unsparingly.
35. Professor Peter Sluglett, who has written a brief foreword to this volume,
36. is surely correct that Adnan al-Pachachi represents the last of a vanishing
37. breed of Arab statesmen whom Iraq and the wider Arab world will not soon
38. see again (xii).

39. With roots in Mosul, the al-Pachachis before 1958 had been large land-
40. owners and successful businessmen for centuries. Adnan’s father, Muzahim
41. al-Pachachi (1890–1982), was a protege of the much older and notori-
42. ously treacherous Talib en-Naqib of Basra when they both were activists
43. in the proto-nationalist Arab Cultural Club of Baghdad in 1912. Muzahim
44. al-Pachachi went on to participate in the drafting of the Iraqi constitution in
45. 1924 and to serve as Iraqi Ambassador to the United Kingdom in 1927–1928,
46. to Italy in 1935–1939, and to France in 1939–1942. Al-Pachachi was also Iraqi
47. Ambassador to the League of Nations (1933–1935) and served as Iraqi Prime
48. Minister from June 1948 to January 1949. His government fell as a result of the
49. catastrophic defeat of Iraqi and Arab forces in Palestine. In 1950, he opposed
50. policies permitting Iraqi Jews to leave Iraq and take refuge abroad. Shortly
51. thereafter, Muzahim himself left Iraq and did not return until shortly after the
52. bloody coup that brought down the monarchy on 14 July 1958.