

## The Role of Trade Policy in Reducing Poverty in Iraq

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**ABSTRACT:** The main content of the research is to know the nature of the relationship between trade policy and the phenomenon of poverty, as well as analyzing the relationship at the level of the Iraqi economy between trade policy tools and the phenomenon of poverty in Iraq for the period (1990-2018), and according to the results and conclusions of the research, it was concluded that the trade policy It suffers from severe confusion, in addition to the lack of a clear vision, which pushed negatively towards increased trade exposure, which revealed the high level of imports against the export of one commodity (crude oil), which created structural imbalances in economic growth and a real obstacle to development policy, as well as Making Iraq more sensitive to external shocks, and this confusion in this policy had negative repercussions on the reality of poverty in the country, and more precisely, this policy did not contribute effectively and tangibly to alleviating poverty in Iraq during the studied period.

**KEYWORD:** trade policy, Gini coefficient, Iraq.

### INTRODUCTION

Poverty is one of the phenomena that are related to the economic and political system in which aggravating problems prevail. Which the development process seeks to achieve in its various modern and advanced forms, and whose most prominent manifestations are (sustainable human development), which among its main objectives is the eradication of poverty by gradually reducing its severity, and this is in accordance with specific methods and standards that are applied and measured on the The level of the various peoples of the world, including developing countries, including Iraq, and from here governments in various countries of the world have sought to adapt their macroeconomic policies to achieve the desired goal of eliminating poverty through their basic tools used by those policies, individually or in combination with each other. And in accordance with the prevailing economic circumstance.

#### First: the research problem

The main problem of the research centers on the following question:

To what extent can trade policy play its role in alleviating poverty in Iraq? In light of the unfavorable circumstances and political and economic crises.

#### Second, the research hypothesis

The research starts from the premise that:

There is a relationship going in different and different directions between the tools of trade policy and the level of poverty in Iraq, expressed in its various indicators, including the Gini coefficient). Another hypothesis falls under this hypothesis:

1. There is a direct relationship between the commercial vulnerability coefficient and the Gini coefficient.

**Third: The purpose of the research**

At the level of the Iraqi economy, the main objectives of the research are as follows: -

1. Identifying the nature of the theoretical relationship between trade policy and the phenomenon of poverty.
2. Analysis of the impact of trade policy on poverty in Iraq during the period (1990-2019).

**Fourth: The importance of research**

1. The research dealt with one of the most important topics, which is one of the controversial topics between economists and thinkers, as it captured the attention of economic systems, government institutions and individuals because of its effects on the human, political, economic and social aspects.
2. Disclose the reasons for the high rates of poverty in Iraq, as well as give appropriate solutions that must be taken by the competent authorities in the economic aspect to address the problems experienced by the Iraqi economy, foremost of which is the high rates of poverty, by directing trade policy towards the right path to reduce them.

**Fifth: Sample and duration of research**

1. Spatial limits: the Iraqi economy.
2. Temporal limits: (1990-2019).

**Sixth: Research Methodology**

The research was divided into three main axes:

1. The first axis: the theoretical rooting of trade policy.
2. The second axis: the theoretical rooting of the phenomenon of poverty.
3. The third axis: analysis of trade policy in reducing the phenomenon of poverty.

**The first axis: the theoretical rooting of trade policy**

**First, the concept of trade policy**

Trade policy is also one of the tools of general economic policy, as economists defined it as (a set of means and procedures taken by the state to express in its international trade with the intention of achieving specific goals and objectives, or it is the position of countries towards economic relations established by individuals through their personal capacity or as companies residing on its territory with individuals or companies residing abroad)<sup>(1)</sup>. It is also known as (a set of measures taken by the state to regulate foreign trade and export and import relations with abroad)<sup>(2)</sup>. It is defined as a set of procedures and measures used by the state within the scope of its economic relations with other countries of the world in the export and import sector, mainly. These procedures and measures include protection methods represented in direct restrictions, such as import licenses, quotas and other means that are used for development and protection purposes<sup>(3)</sup>).

## Second, the objectives of the trade policy

In this aspect, we address the most important objectives of the trade policy, which revolve around the following points <sup>(4)</sup>: -

1. Protection of local production from external (foreign) competition: what is meant is to isolate external influences that are harmful to local production in some cases, and protection is required when the real cost of production abroad is less than the real cost of production at home. The protection of the national product It is essential, then protection is applied, and protection has been applied in many countries, including the countries of Western Europe, for the agricultural product.
2. Protection of the national economy from the danger of dumping policy: Dumping policy represents a devious tool for acquiring the external market at the expense of local producers, especially from some foreign monopolists, permanently or temporarily. Therefore, the Cat and Uruguay Round in 1994, and the World Trade Organization in 1995 undertook the implementation of measures Specific to work to combat the policy of dumping and gave countries the right of protection against the country that practices the policy of dumping.
3. Achieving balance in the balance of payments: by increasing the supply through foreign exchange, ie maximizing the proceeds of imports and foreign exchange resources and reducing demand through rationalizing imports.

## Third: Trade Policy Tools

The effectiveness of the commercial policy to achieve the goals it aspires to lies in a set of means that it uses according to the requirements of the prevailing economic situation in the country, and these means can be represented in the following points: -

1. Customs taxes: Historically, customs tariffs are considered one of the most important and oldest tools of trade policy and have been used traditionally as a source of government income. For example, the United States of America collected most of its revenues from customs duties, and it was to achieve two goals, the first is to provide revenue and the second is to provide Special protection for local industries, which is considered a tariff imposed on commercial goods and services across national borders <sup>(5)</sup>. It can be imposed by the state either on imports or on exports according to the country's conditions, and although in reality it is imposed on imports, many third world countries It imposes it on its products exported abroad, and it may use the customs tariff to protect the emerging industries from foreign competition. Its function is to reap revenues to the public treasury <sup>(6)</sup>. Customs taxes are divided into several types and can be summarized in the following points:

- Agreement taxes set by the state through treaties with other countries, such as the European Common Market.
- The independent customs tariff imposed by the state.
- Single or double customs taxes imposed by the state on a single commodity.
- And there is the reserve tax or the regular tax that the state imposes in emergency cases.
- The customs tax with a protective purpose and the customs tax with a financial purpose, which is imposed by the state for the purpose of protecting economic activity <sup>(7)</sup>.

2. Export subsidies: They are the other tool of the trade policy that the economic authority uses by influencing the prices at which the commodity is sold locally and internationally by reducing marginal costs

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for the local product in order to encourage an increase in its production, and this may take the form of tax exemptions for the industry. For example, the state may give a subsidy amounting to (4) dollars on each phone produced by the Electronic Industries Company <sup>(8)</sup>.

3. Dumping: Dumping represents one of the means adopted by the state or monopoly projects to differentiate between the prevailing prices abroad and those prevailing at home, where the prevailing prices abroad are low compared to the internal price of the commodity plus transportation costs and other expenses that are related to the transfer of the commodity from the local market to the market. It is possible to differentiate in terms of the duration of its stay into three types, namely: accidental dumping, which is explained by the conditions of emergency cases, and permanent dumping associated with an ongoing policy based on the existence of a monopoly in the protected local market. The condition for the success of the dumping policy is the separation of markets from each other, which facilitates the process for the monopolist to differentiate in terms of the price that he imposes on different markets <sup>(9)</sup>.

4. The exchange control method: It is one of the means used by trade policy for protection purposes, and it was used by a group of European countries after the global recession in their efforts to resist the phenomenon of capital flight after the collapse of the international monetary system, the emergence of unemployment and the disruption of productive resources. The direct objective of using this system is to provide protection for the national product from foreign competition by refusing to license the exchange, and it is also used with the intention of setting a barrier to limit the import of luxury goods or non-essential goods, in order not to waste money in the use of foreign currencies needed to import necessary goods (Consumer goods) and production goods necessary to carry out industrial development projects <sup>(10)</sup>.

5. Changing the exchange rate: It is one of the methods of trade policy. The purpose of changing the exchange rate is an increase or decrease in the price of the local monetary unit in terms of foreign monetary units. The process of decreasing the exchange rate is a measure rarely undertaken by the state for multiple motives, and there is often a change. The exchange rate is about devaluing the local currency, and devaluing the local currency against foreign currencies is one of the magic tools used in foreign trade <sup>(11)</sup>.

## **The second axis: the theoretical rooting of the phenomenon of poverty**

### **First: definitions of poverty**

There are many and varied concepts of poverty, because it represents a complex phenomenon, and difficult to explain, because of its diverse and multiple dimensions: economic, social, cultural, political and environmental. We will address a group of concepts that explain the concept of poverty through definitions that we will review some of, as follows:

The World Bank has defined poverty as the living of the poor without enjoying the freedom to work and choose, which the rich take for granted, and they often need sufficient health care, food, shelter, food and education, which prevents them from enjoying the life that every human desires, and they are vulnerable. They suffer from diseases, natural disasters and economic turmoil, and they are often subjected to ill-treatment by state institutions and society, and they do not have the ability and power to influence important decisions that affect their lives <sup>(12)</sup>.

Both Annan and Harris define poverty as an unacceptable standard of living and a situation characterized by deprivation of resources and capabilities necessary for a decent life <sup>(13)</sup>.

While poverty is defined as the economic situation in which individuals lack the income necessary to obtain the minimum levels of food, health care, clothing, education and all that is considered among the basic needs to secure an adequate standard of life <sup>(14)</sup>.

Poverty is also defined by the United Nations Human Rights Organization as a human condition characterized by the persistent or chronic deprivation of the capabilities, resources, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of life and other civil, economic, political, social and cultural rights <sup>(15)</sup>.

### **Second: Types of poverty**

1. Human poverty: It is of a multi-dimensional character, in which there are no options and opportunities of fundamental importance for human development, and its content is not characterized by uniformity but by diversity, and the human index of deprivation is measured in the specialization of human development in the same ways and dimensions used by the Human Development Index. These are represented by survival, literacy, and an adequate standard of living, and the elements used are the percentage of illiteracy among adults, the percentage of the population that cannot live up to 40 years, and the percentage of the population that does not have access to health services, supplies and water <sup>(16)</sup>.

2. Relative poverty: which includes a temporal content, that is, in which families or individuals are poor compared to a previous period of time for the same societies, and it may include spatial content, so that families or individuals are poor relative to other geographical locations, such as between one country and another or between the city and the countryside or between one region and another. It is represented in the relative deprivation in the situation of poor families in practice and excluded from traditional living patterns, events and customs, and thus society includes deprived and non-deprived individuals, and the second section of individuals practice a lifestyle that frames the term belonging to society and that the poor live outside the framework of this society <sup>(17)</sup>.

3. Absolute poverty: We mean that level or boundary between the minimum and adequate standard of living in the society in the society and what is below it <sup>(18)</sup>. An individual is considered absolutely poor if he does not have sufficient income that enables him to obtain the minimum amount of food, clothing, housing, education and health services and means of social participation. one <sup>(19)</sup>.

4. Extreme poverty: What is meant is the decrease in the level of income to the extent that the individual is unable to spend on basic needs and foodstuffs, which leads to the poor reaching the stage of suffering from malnutrition and disease, and according to World Bank estimates that the individual who falls within the level of income Less than a dollar a day is within this type of poverty <sup>(20)</sup>. The World Bank defines it as living on less than \$1.90 per day, which fully reflects the cost of adequate dietary energy and other basic needs <sup>(21)</sup>.

### **Third: The effectiveness of trade policy in reducing poverty**

Trade economic openness is one of the main reasons for increasing the level of economic well-being, and thus the recovery of economic activity, and some economists believe that economic openness has negative effects on the poor in the short term, and as a result, it requires the development of appropriate policies for protection, and that trade openness shows its effect in the long term. The long-term impact on economic activity positively, and another group of economists believes that the economy concerned may be exposed in the case of trade openness to trade shocks, which requires the development of appropriate policies to reduce those crises <sup>(22)</sup>.

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Trade openness can achieve significant gains in poor countries through the consequent adoption of a set of measures aimed at creating new jobs, raising wage rates, and removing producers from the cycle of dependence on primary products that represent the main source of most developing countries <sup>(23)</sup>. Domestic supply constraints are one of the main reasons for the lack of trade growth and diversification in many poor developing countries. In order for trade openness to yield the fruits of its success, it must be accompanied by economic policies that include other economic variables, as well as technical progress does not depend only on trade transformations, but comes through modern innovations in research and development in developing countries. How to mix free trade policies with technical progress and its impact on poverty <sup>(24)</sup>. Whatever the result of global efforts to reduce trade barriers, there is a phenomenon of poverty that needs to be reduced, which shows the need for complementary measures to improve the ability of families in low-income countries to benefit from trade opportunities, and it will be Such measures have an effective effect if they help families to get out of subsistence production and improve their productivity and standard of living <sup>(25)</sup>. As well as working on developing the infrastructure, which is one of the necessary requirements to provide opportunities for the poor to benefit from the free trade system, which allows the poor to have better access to their products to markets, and then benefit from the opportunities of the trade liberalization process. The low cost of living for the poor, as well as the ability to bring cheap goods to urban areas. Accordingly, the loss of infrastructure may generate negative and undesirable effects on free trade for the poor <sup>(26)</sup>. On the other hand, supporters of the idea of encouraging exports see the place of imports for both semi-manufactured and semi-manufactured goods, as they praised the role of free trade and full competition in raising the efficiency and effectiveness of economic growth, in addition to the importance of substituting large global markets for small local markets and addressing price imbalances and the negative effects of costs Protection, and among the most important countries that have succeeded in achieving high growth rates through exports are: Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan <sup>(27)</sup>.

The effectiveness of the trade policy is also increased by providing protection to the local economy from the dumping policies pursued by some countries to stimulate their export sector, which makes them able to sell their products at a low price less than their real costs in the foreign market. Among the reasons why the country follows this policy are <sup>(28)</sup>: -

A - Willingness to obtain a surplus of hard currency.

B - Achieving self-sufficiency in some commodities, especially those commodities that are described as strategic commodities.

C- Hedging against emergency circumstances that will happen in the future, such as economic sanctions or war, which imposes on the government authority to support part of the economic sectors to provide the conditions for their investment and expansion.

Trade policy sometimes faces some obstacles in some markets of developing countries, and it has two types of obstacles, including:

First: Despite the ease of access to global markets, these countries lack trade-related capabilities and infrastructure to integrate into the global trading system.

Second: There is a great deal of heterogeneity in the response to economic growth, in other words, there are some domestic constraints that have the explicit effect of limiting trade expansion on the economy and its growth <sup>(29)</sup>.

Inflation is a major obstacle to trade policy by limiting exports to the outside world, and some economists believe that the continuation of inflation may lead to structural changes in the labor market and in wage

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levels, and in individuals' attitudes towards many professions in the national economy, which are important from the point of view of The view of society, and that the high level of prices will weaken the competitiveness of local exports and make them less attractive in local markets and make them less attractive in foreign markets. Consumers in foreign markets are turning towards alternative goods in other countries whose prices are stable and stable, as well as the low relative prices in favor of the products of those countries, which in itself will tempt many to raise domestic demand for them, and then increase domestic imports, and thus increase foreign payments at the same time. in which domestic exports to abroad declined<sup>(30)</sup>. All of this will lead to double negative effects on the balance of payments and trade balance and on economic activity as a whole, and then raise unemployment rates, which will have a negative impact on the low standards of living and the exacerbation of the phenomenon of poverty.

### The third axis: analysis of trade policy in reducing the phenomenon of poverty

It is one of the tools of macroeconomic policies that the economic authorities use to influence the foreign trade movement of their countries, in order to achieve goals at the local level related to (the national economy) or goals related to (the outside world), and among the most important tools used by trade policy are (subsidies, Customs restrictions, quota systems and licenses)<sup>(31)</sup>. The impact of trade policy on Gini coefficient rates in Iraq during the studied period can be clarified through the degree of trade exposure that reflects the development of trade policy and by following the following table (20):

Table (21): The evolution of trade exposure in the impact on the Gini coefficient in Iraq for the period (1990-2019)

| ) Gini coefficientG ( | Trade exposure growth<br>% rate | The degree of<br>commercial<br>exposure | the years |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|---|-----------|
| 0.37                  |                                 | 151.277                                 | 1990      |
| 0.39                  | -7578                           | 75.495                                  | 1991      |
| 0.41                  | -6732                           | 8.174                                   | 1992      |
| 0.42                  | 105                             | 9.227                                   | 1993      |
| 0.45                  | -303                            | 6.195                                   | 1994      |
| 0.48                  | 243                             | 8.629                                   | 1995      |
| 0.51                  | 1088                            | 19.512                                  | 1996      |
| 0.54                  | 2086                            | 40.371                                  | 1997      |
| 0.54                  | -40                             | 39.976                                  | 1998      |
| 0.55                  | 3004                            | 70.018                                  | 1999      |
| 0.57                  | 1203                            | 82.045                                  | 2000      |
| 0.58                  | -2274                           | 59.307                                  | 2001      |
| 0.59                  | 6                               | 59.367                                  | 2002      |
| 0.39                  | 5557                            | 114.935                                 | 2003      |
| 0.41                  | -1179                           | 103.144                                 | 2004      |
| 0.42                  | -854                            | 94.607                                  | 2005      |
| 0.39                  | -1398                           | 80.632                                  | 2006      |
| 0.34                  | -7248                           | 8.153                                   | 2007      |
| 0.31                  | 6605                            | 74.202                                  | 2008      |
| 0.32                  | -588                            | 68.322                                  | 2009      |
| 0.32                  | -260                            | 65.725                                  | 2010      |

|      |       |        |      |
|------|-------|--------|------|
| 0.31 | 440   | 70.128 | 2011 |
| 0.29 | -1571 | 54.420 | 2012 |
| 0.27 | -193  | 52.486 | 2013 |
| 0.25 | -1407 | 38.415 | 2014 |
| 0.23 | 642   | 44.834 | 2015 |
| 0.24 | 21    | 45.040 | 2016 |
| 0.27 | 501   | 50.54  | 2017 |
| 0.29 | 1214  | 62.190 | 2018 |
| 0.31 | -394  | 58.251 | 2019 |

Source: From the researcher's work based on: Central Bank of Iraq data, annual economic reports, Statistics and Research Directorate, different years.

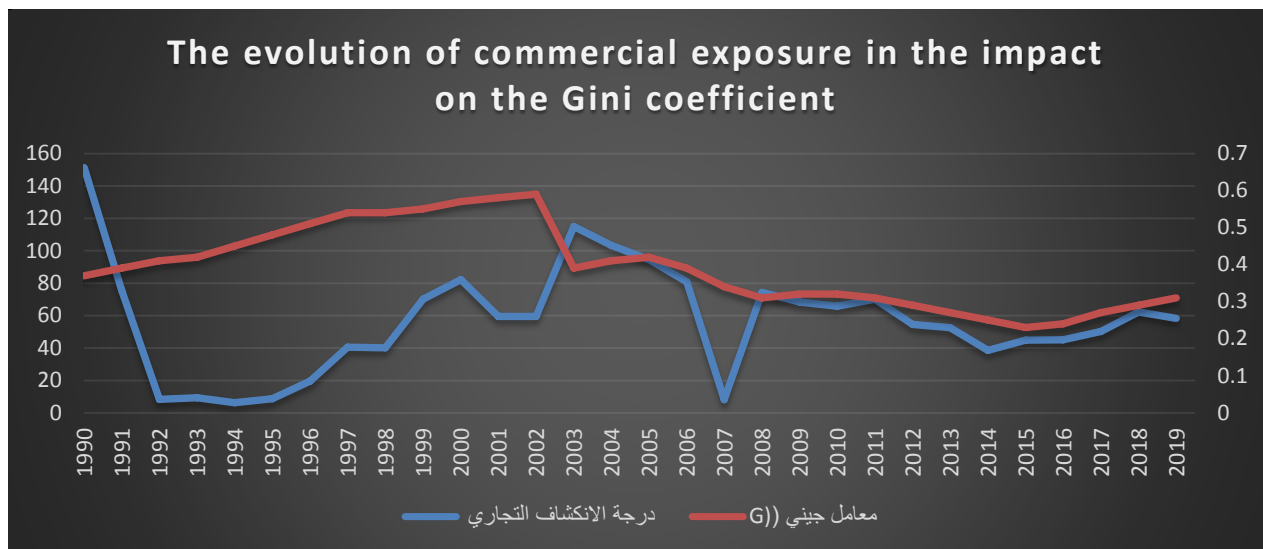
\*Note: The degree of trade exposure was calculated according to the following formula:  $[100 * (\text{exports} + \text{imports}) / (\text{GDP})]$ .

It is noted from Table (21) that the measure of the degree of commercial exposure decreased during the period (1990-1995) from (151.277%) to (8.629%), which negatively affected living standards as it led to an increase in the Gini coefficient for the period (1990-1995). ), from (0.37%) to (0.48%), and the reasons for this decline are due to the wars that Iraq witnessed during that period, as well as the economic sanctions imposed on it by the United Nations, which resulted in a decrease in Iraq's export share and a low level of revenues that affected in a way It is clear on the low standard of living of individuals and the exacerbation of the phenomenon of poverty, but after the signing of Iraq (the Memorandum of Understanding) for the year (1997), which allowed Iraq to export crude oil, but in a limited way only for the purposes of medicine and food, as it is noted that an increase in the average degree of commercial exposure for the period (1997-2002) ) from (40.371%) to (59.367%), and this increase deepened the phenomenon of poverty, as it is noted from the table that the rates of the Gini coefficient continued with a gradual increase for the period (1997-2002) from (0.51%) to (0.59%), as a result of fluctuation The rate of gross domestic product, as well as the decline in the per capita share of it in recent years, and the weakness of the flexibility of the production system compared to Work, but after the year (2003) and the regime change, the Iraqi economy witnessed an explosion in the trade exposure index as a result of the application of the principle of liberalizing foreign trade, as the trade exposure rate for the year (2003) reached (114.935%), and this rise was reflected positively On the living standards, the Gini coefficient decreased for that year, as it reached (0.39%), and it is noted from table (21) that the Iraqi economy in the subsequent years remained exposed to the outside world, which was negatively reflected on the living standards in the high rates of the Gini coefficient. Except in (2015), in which the Gini coefficient decreased to (0.29%) and then increased again in subsequent years, until the degree of trade exposure for the year (2019) reached (58.251%) and the Gini coefficient for the same year reached (0.31%).

From the foregoing, we conclude that the trade policy suffers from severe confusion, in addition to the lack of a clear vision, which negatively pushed towards the increase in trade exposure, which revealed the high level of imports against the export of one commodity (crude oil), which created structural imbalances in economic growth. And a real obstacle to the development policy, as well as making Iraq more sensitive to external shocks, and this confusion in this policy had negative repercussions on the reality of poverty in the country, and more precisely, this policy did not contribute effectively and tangibly to alleviating poverty in Iraq during the period studied, and this can be inferred through the following graph (17):



impact on the Gini coefficient in Iraq For the Figure (17): The evolution of trade exposure in the im  
2019-duration (1990



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on: Table (21) data fromMicrosoft Office Excel 2019.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### First: the conclusions

1. The analytical study revealed to us that there is a long-term equilibrium relationship between trade policy through its approved tools and the phenomenon of poverty through the Gini coefficient index.
2. The trade policy suffers from severe confusion, in addition to the lack of a clear vision, which negatively pushed towards the increase in trade exposure, which revealed the high level of imports against the export of one commodity (crude oil), which created structural imbalances in economic growth and hindered real development policy, as well as making Iraq more sensitive to external shocks, and this confusion in this policy had negative repercussions on the reality of poverty in the country, and more precisely, this policy did not contribute effectively and tangibly to alleviating poverty in Iraq during the studied period .

### Second: Recommendations

1. Control of all land, sea and air ports in order to control all customs revenues.
2. Work to establish an integrated system for electronic payment to facilitate tax collection and reduce its costs on the one hand, and to keep pace with scientific and technological developments on the other hand, with the need to restructure the tax system through conducting procedures to deal with taxpayers to encourage them to pay taxes, and to abolish complexity and administrative routines that are More vulnerable to tax evasion by taxpayers.
3. To develop tax revenues, work must be done to activate the progressive personal income tax, which is imposed on individuals with high incomes.

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