Governance Center for Public Policies

National Endowment for Democracy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

National Index for Democratic Transformation

in Iraq 2019 – 2020

Back Seat Democracy

Country		National Index for Democratic Transformation in Iraq 2019 – 2020		Economist Democracy Index 2019		Freedom House 2020	
		Score	Regime type	Score	Regime type	Score	status
	Iraq	3	Authoritarian	3.74	Authoritarian	31	Not Free

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Edited by : Governance Center for Public Policies (GCPP)

INTRODUCTION

The annual national index of democratic transformation in Iraq provides an assessment of the performance of democratic system in Iraq by an index of 59 indicators to measure change over time. The main goal of the index is to influence the process of democratic transformation by highlighting progress over time, provide policy makers and groups supportive of democracy with tools to mobilize governmental and public support for specific recommendations needed to enhance status of democracy in Iraq. The survey seeks to identify dynamics of democratic transformation, performance of governmental institutions, interactions of economic, societal, and political developments in Iraq, and identify how the political systems aim to revive the political process in a way or another amid continued challenges. The survey was developed, monitored, and analyzed by experts in sociology, economics, law, and political science.

The index of this year comes after major changes and important developments in Iraq, mainly the popular protest movement that erupted in October 2019 and spread to Baghdad and provinces of Central and Southern Iraq and was able to impose its demands on political class, despite the use of excessive violence that led to the killing of 561 protestors and more than 24 thousands injured based on latest governmental statistics, which led eventually to the resignation of Adil Abdul Mahdi government and the formation of transitional government, led by PM Mustafa al-Kadhimi to address protestors' demands, including conducting early elections. PM Kadhimi declared lately 6 June 2021 as a date for early elections. Also, new electoral law was legislated by parliament that meets protestors demand by relying on individual candidacy and multi-constituencies for each province. However, the spread of COVID-19 led to

closure for long periods and suspending public life and the work of state institutions. Additionally, attempts of targeting activists, journalists, and researchers supportive of protest movement continued, most prominent case was the assassination of the expert Hisham Al-Hashimi. All this led to many obstacles in assessing democratic transformation in Iraq, but the team was able to overcome these challenges and conduct the survey in timely manner.

This year survey was conducted based on cooperation between Governance Institute for Public Policies (GCPP) and Independent Group for Research (IIACSS).

Methodology

The national index of democratic transformation in Iraq was based on studying international indexes and attempt to localize them through series of discussions with academics in relevant specialties (political science, law, media, statistics, economics, and sociology) to reach indicators that are more relevant to realities of the democratic experience in Iraq. Five main aspects were adopted to assess democratic transformation in Iraq, taking into consideration previous indexes and particularities of Iraqi society and influential determinants in consolidating democracy.

These five areas are:

- *Liberal rights and freedom*
- *Rule of law*
- *Government performance*
- *Economic stability*
- *Electoral reform*

Each aspect was studied by group of experts to determine indicators, develop questions to measure it, and have three possible responses (Agree, neutral, disagree) with weights (0, 0.5, 1) subsequently. Eventually, the questionnaire was studies by group of experts to double check its clarity, ability to measure indicators targeted, and removing repeated or unclear questions. After that, a preliminary survey was conducted on a sample of individuals and the team found that questions are clear and built trust in the questionnaire ability to measure targeted indicators.

An index of ten values was developed to cover all possible types of systems: dictatorship, authoritarian, transforming, democratic, and consolidated democracy. These ten values range from 0 to 10 to have accurate categorization of the nature of the political system in Iraq, as appears in table (1 – 1). It was assumed that all indicators have the same weight, therefore, average was taken to calculate accumulative score for each aspect and was multiplied by ten to obtain accumulative score for the index.

**Table 1 – 1: Index of democratic transformation in Iraq**

Category	Values
Fully Consolidated Democracy	10 – 9.1
Preliminary Consolidated Democracy	9 – 8.1
Full Democracy	8 – 7.1
Preliminary Democracy	7 – 6.1
Fully Transitioned	6 – 5.1
Partially Transitioned	5 – 4.1
Partially Authoritarian	4 – 3.1
Total Authoritarian	3 – 2.1
Partially Autocracy	2 – 1.1
Total Autocracy	1 - 0

The survey was designed and launched on Facebook due to Covid-19 that made face to face interviews difficult and for the popularity of Facebook, as there are 24.8 Million users in Iraq and its political usage by groups cover the whole political spectrum, from governing political blocs and officials to protestors. The survey was promoted to target groups that are 18 years old or above nationwide for the period 9 – 14 June, and was seen by 256,719 accounts and received 5,541 interactions, including 577 comments, 137 share, and 12,814 pressed the link of the survey. 4884 participants finalized the survey nationwide, distributed as appears in table (1 - 2) and chart (1 – 1). The sample size of 11 provinces was very close to population percent published by Ministry of Planning, with overrepresentation of provinces of Baghdad and Salah al-Din at the expense of Northern Provinces, which could be attributed to language barrier, as well as some southern provinces, such as Basra, Myssan, and Muthana, given the difficulty of controlling geographic distribution in online surveys.

Table 1 – 2: Geographic distribution of the sample

Province	Population percent	Number of participants	% of sample size
Baghdad	21.3	1690	34.6
Salah al-Din	4.2	277	5.7
Nineveh	9.8	438	9.0
Thi Qar	5.5	265	5.4
Babil	5.4	261	5.3
Najaf	3.9	199	4.1
Anbar	4.6	194	4.0
Kirkuk	4.2	197	4.0
Karbala	3.2	191	3.9
Qadissiyah	3.4	164	3.4
Wassit	3.6	149	3.1
Dohuk	3.4	148	3.0
Basra	7.6	206	4.2
Erbil	4.9	155	3.2
Diyala	4.3	143	2.9
Muthana	3.4	75	1.5
Sulimanyiah	5.7	68	1.4
Myssan	2.9	64	1.3
Total		4884	%100

Chart 1 – 1: Geographic distribution of the sample
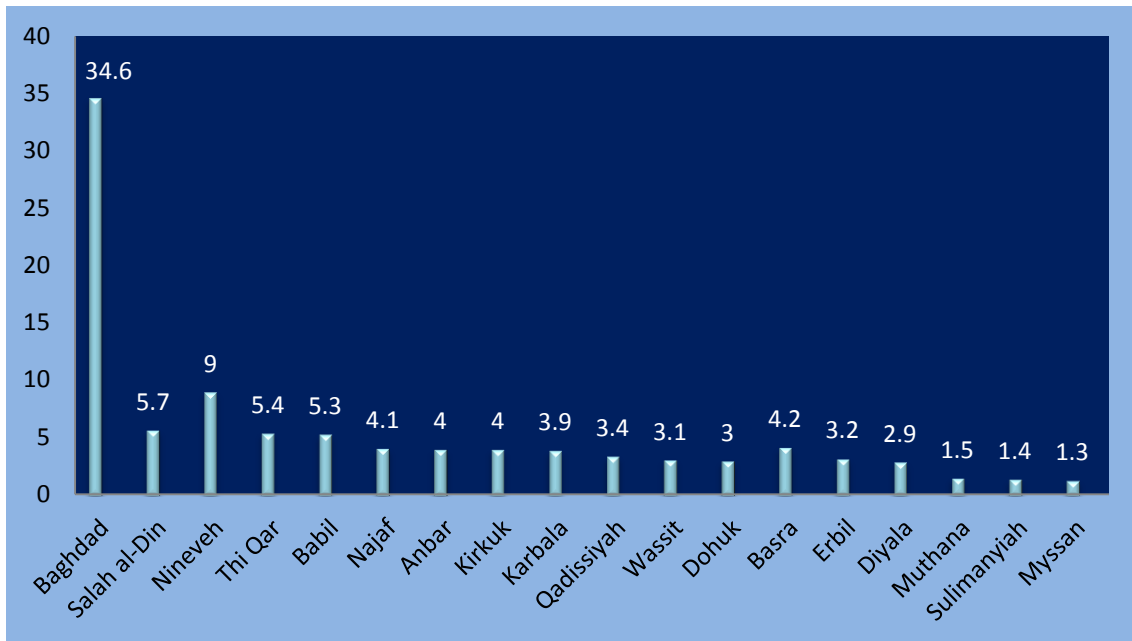
Regarding gender, 3623 male and 1261 female participated in the survey in 74.2% and 25.8% subsequently, as appears in Chart (1 - 2). This varies from statistics released by Ministry of Planning for 2018 (51% males, 49% females) and could be attributed for women lack of participation in survey due to the conservative nature of society. Also, the preliminary survey identified there is no significant difference among male and females assessment of democratic experience in Iraq.

## Chart 1 – 2: Gender distribution of the sample
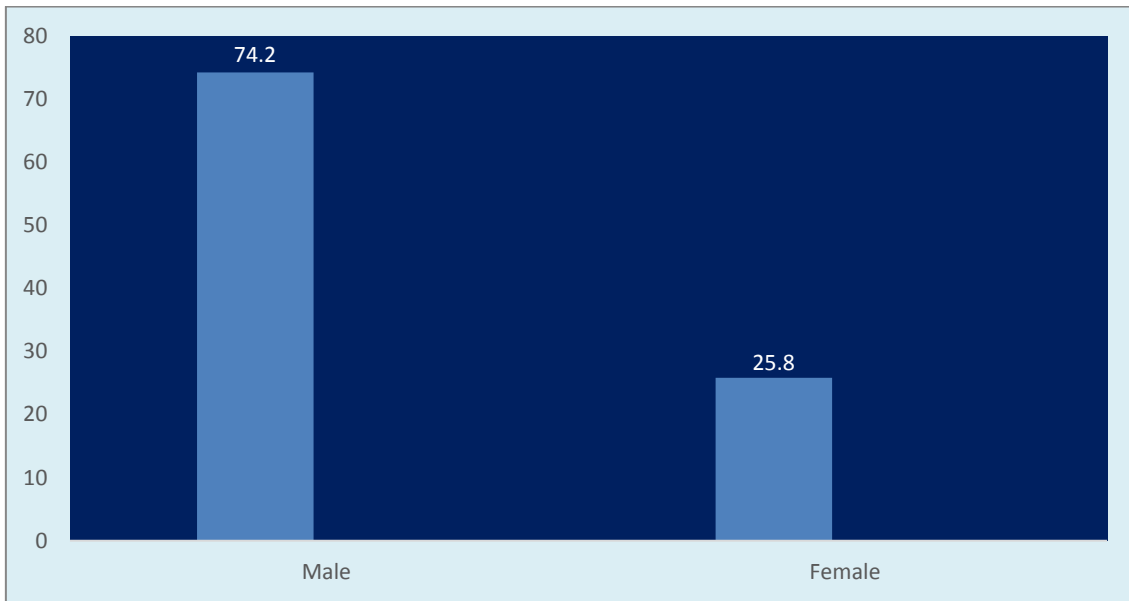
The sample covered all age groups as appears in table and chart (1 – 3), where 66.7% of participants were less than 36% years old and this could be attribute to the popularity of social media platforms among younger generations and youth prominent role in politics as manifested in the protest movement.

Table 1 – 3: Distribution of the Sample based on age groups

Age Group	Number of Participants	Percent of Sample
18 - 25	1205	24.7
26 - 35	1249	25.6
36 - 45	800	16.4
46 - 55	903	18.5
56 - 65	563	11.5
66 and above	164	3.4
Total	4884	%100

**Chart 1 – 3: Distribution of the Sample based on age groups**
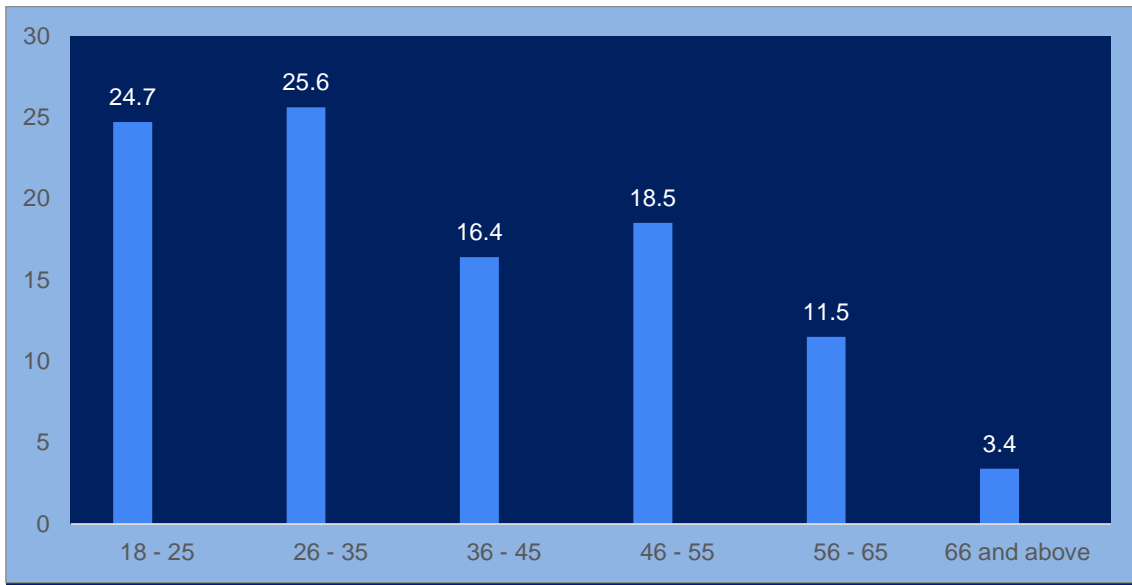
The sample also covered all education levels as appears in table and chart (1 - 4).

Table 1 – 4: Educational levels of participants

Educational Level	Number of Participants	Percent of Sample
Illiterate	6	**0.1**
Read and write	11	**0.2**
Preliminary School	54	**1.1**
Secondary School	177	**3.6**
High School	536	**11**
Diploma	593	**12.1**
Bachelor	2667	**54.6**
Masters'	559	**11.4**
PhD	281	**5.8**
Total	4884	**%100**

Chart 1 – 4: Educational levels of participants
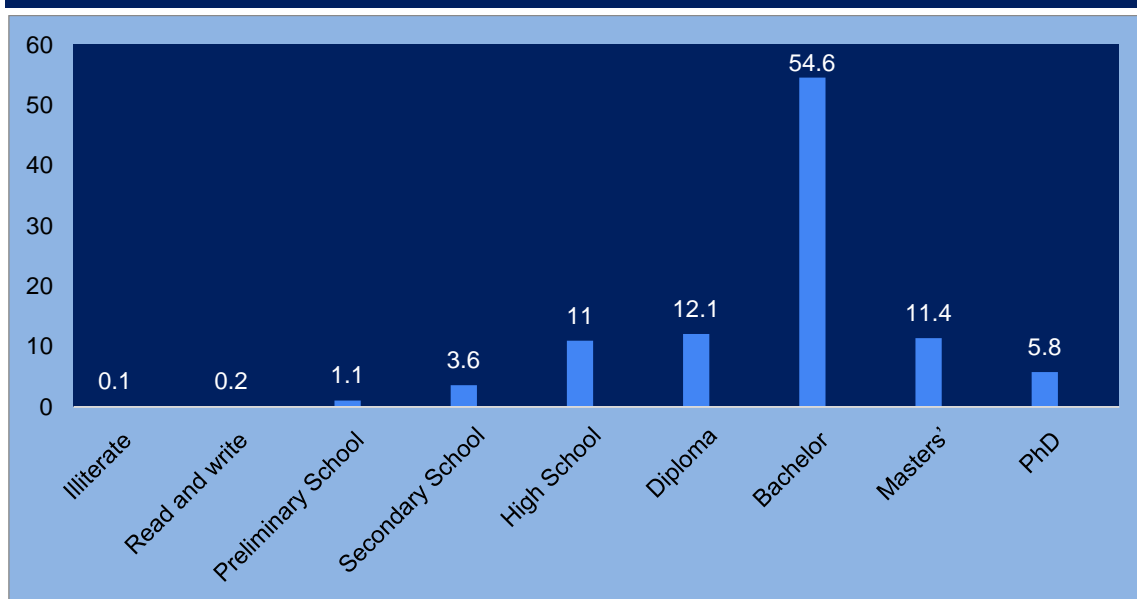
The socio-economic status of participants was determined by identifying their income level and job. 56.9% of participants stated that they faced difficulties in covering their monthly expenses, as appears in table and chart (1 – 5), despite only 14.3% were unemployment, as shown in table and chart (1 – 6). This could be explained by the economic ramifications of Covid-19 which severely hit private sector.

Table 1 – 5: Income levels of participants.

Income level	Number of participants	Percent of sample
Good	626	**12.8**
Medium	1481	**30.3**
Weak	2777	**56.9**
Total	4884	**%100**

Chart 1 – 5: Income levels of participants

Income Level	Percent
Good	12.8
Medium	30.3
Weak	56.9
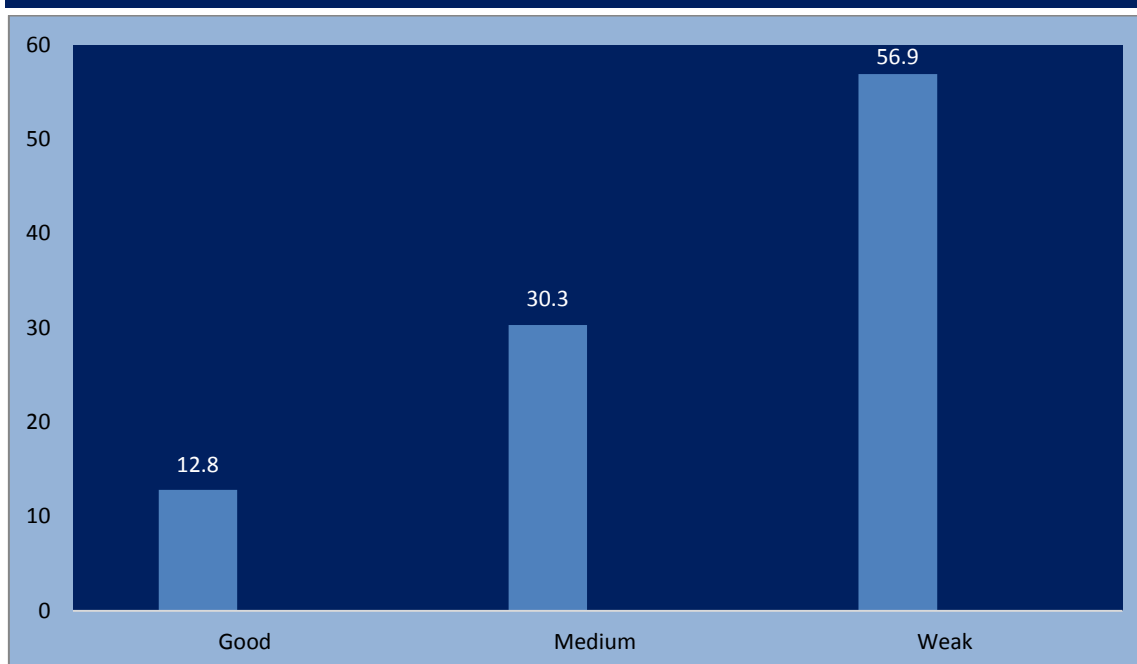
Table 1 – 6: Job types of participants

Job Type	Number of Participants	Percent
Public sector	1945	**39.8**
Private sector	377	**7.7**
Free grafts	448	**9.2**
Retired	494	**10.1**
Housekeeper	130	**2.7**
Student	791	**16.2**
Unemployed	699	**14.3**
Total	4884	**%100**

Chart 1 – 6: Job types of participants

Job type	Percentage
Public sector	39.8
Private sector	7.7
Free grafts	9.2
Retired	10.1
Housekeeper	2.7
Student	16.2
Unemployed	14.3
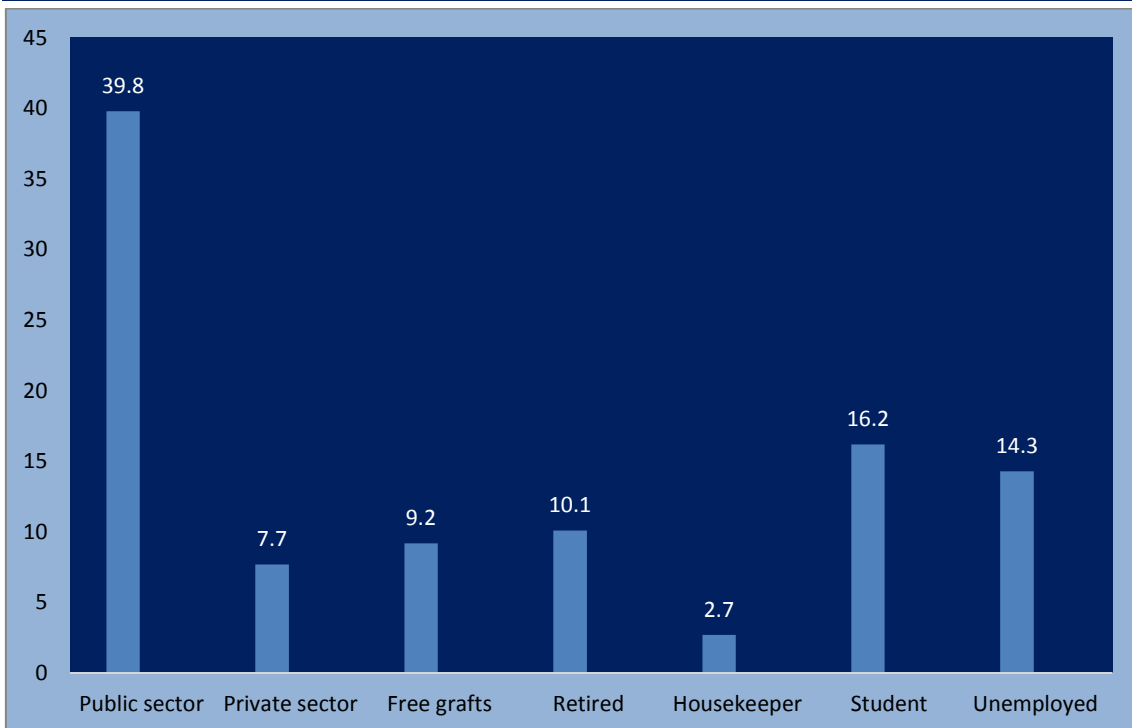
Hence, the findings of study could be generalized, given that the sample was close to demographics of society and with a margin of error 1%.

Results

This year index identified a setback in democratic transformation and a deviation from principles and processes of democratic transition, which was manipulated and misused, as was evident in the government response to protest movement.

Government performance was lacking and relations with citizens deteriorated due to wide spread corruption and lack of transparency (81%), mismanagement and nepotism (83.5%), lack of parliamentary oversight (91.9%). On the other hand, only 16.4% trust the ability of new government to conduct positive change and popular support for government efforts to control borders (46.8%).

On economic level, participants indicated the huge inequality gap between political class and the masses and 72.9% expressed their distrust of government ability to raise standards of livings, 85.1% think there is no quality in access to jobs, and banking sector does not have the trust of citizens (69.8%).

As for the rule of law aspect, 85.1% of participants did not agree with the statement "all equals in front of laws" and 83.7% indicated that judiciary is not independent and subjected to political pressures and interventions. Also, 70.7% of participants believe there is a selective implementation of transitional justice laws. However, there were hopes of the new government ability to control arms.

On the other hand, the survey identified that protestors succeeded to impose their main demands, as participants endorsed protest effectiveness in leading change and their demands reflect reformist agenda in 47.5% and 67.5% subsequently. This indicates the opportunities of change, especially there are positive indicators towards electoral reform approved by Council of Representatives in late December 2019, as 72.7% endorsed individual candidacy and 52.4% think early election is the only exit from current political crises. However, there were doubts about the new IHEC and its independence as only 33.6% think that having IHEC run by judges ensure integrity of elections and 30% disagreed with this statement.

The Index concluded with a set of recommendation requiring serious efforts by political actors and institutions to correct democratic pathway.

The national index of democratic transformation in Iraq of 2019 – 2010 demonstrated that Iraq is in a lower rank of democratic transformation, as it only obtained a score of 3.0 out of 10 as appears in Table and Chart (1 - 7). Therefore, Iraq political system was categorized as Back Seat Democracy, reflecting a retreat from last year index, where a score of 4.5 was obtained. This score is validated by the categorization of Iraq in international indexes. For example, the Economist Index of 2019 categorizes Iraq as authoritarian system. Freedom House Index of 2020 also categorizes Iraq unfree.

Table 1 – 7: Accumulative Score of Iraq

Aspect	Mean*	SD	SV
Electoral Reform	4.7	0.21	**0.44**
Freedom & Rights	3	0.17	**0.59**
Government Performance	2	0.17	**0.85**
Rule of Law	2.2	0.07	**0.33**
Economic Stability	2.9	0.18	**0.64**
Iraq	3		

Mean was multiplied by 1o to determine Iraq status on Index of democratic transformation in Iraq.

Chart 1 – 7: Iraq Accumulative Score

Category	Score
Iraq	3
Total Autocracy	1
Partially Autocracy	2
Total Authoritarian	3
Partially Authoritarian	4
Partially Transitioned	5
Fully Transitioned	6
Preliminary Democracy	7
Full Democracy	8
Preliminary Consolidated Democracy	9
Fully Consolidated Democracy	10