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The Impact of Demographic Changes on Security Dynamics in Iran and Iraq*

Vahid Afrasiaban** - Morteza Nourmohamadi Ph.D.***

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Abstract

Population is one of the key factors influencing security. An increase or decrease in population can lead to security challenges such as unemployment, resource shortages, urban congestion and a decline in education and healthcare standards. Additionally, changes in age structure, density and population distribution impact social and economic relations. This article aims to examine the effects of demographic changes on security dynamics between Iran and Iraq through a comparative case study. The research question posed is How do demographic changes influence security dynamics between Iran and Iraq? In response, the research hypothesis suggests that demographic changes serve both as a factor for interaction and cooperation and as a factor for conflict and competition between the two countries. If demographic changes lead to imbalances in population, urbanization, age, gender, and migration, security tensions will escalate. Conversely, if demographic changes align with economic, political and social development, they will pave the way for mutual cooperation and enhanced security in both countries. The research method is qualitative, employing the analysis of quantitative data. Based on an evaluation of existing sources, the method of data collection has been determined as library research. The findings

* This article is based on a Ph.D. dissertation entitled "Demographic Changes and Security Dynamics in the Middle East" which examines the interplay between demographic transformations and the region's security dynamics.

** Ph.D. Student in Regional studies, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran. / Corresponding Author/
Email: vahid_afrasiaban@atu.ac.ir

*** Associate Professor of International Relations, Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.

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indicate that demographic trends in these two countries differ significantly and have various effects on their internal and external stability. Accordingly, it is suggested that fostering cooperation between Iran and Iraq should be prioritized to enhance security and promote economic, political and social development, leveraging demographic changes as a positive factor for growth and progress.

Keywords: Demographic Changes, Security Dynamics, Middle East, Iran, Iraq.

Introduction

National security refers to the preservation of national interests and concerns in the face of both internal and external threats. This concept evolves with changing conditions and environments and it is analyzed by considering each country's unique characteristics and priorities as well as global and regional developments. It is always imperative to review and adjust national security in light of new changes. This matter reflects the dynamic nature of the security field, which is comprehensively evaluated to serve national interests and concerns. In this context, and when examining the "Middle East issue," we find that the region has frequently faced internal and external tensions and conflicts. These tensions and conflicts can be influenced by demographic changes. Demographic changes include "population growth, shifts in age and gender ratios, migration and urbanization," which may lead to "an increased demand for resources, services and economic and social opportunities."

Considering the security dynamics of Iran and Iraq, these can be categorized into several groups. The factors include: Political factors such as "bilateral relations, interactions with regional and global partners, domestic conditions and the political system, public participation and civil rights". Economic factors such as "economic development, social welfare, diversification of income sources, reduced dependence on oil, international sanctions, regional and global trade and economic cooperation, and natural resource management" and Cultural and social factors such as "national and ethnic identity, respect for cultural and religious diversity, combating extremism, social solidarity and cohesion and interactions with other cultures." We examine the security dynamics of the two countries using criteria and indicators based on four dimensions: political,

economic, cultural and social and environmental.

In this research, the impact of demographic changes on the security dynamics of Iran and Iraq is examined using a case comparison method. The research question is, how can demographic changes affect the security dynamics in these two countries?

Preliminary studies indicate that the primary hypothesis of this paper is that demographic changes are both a driving factor for interaction and cooperation as well as a catalyst for conflict and competition in the two countries.

If demographic changes lead to imbalances in factors such as population, urbanization, age, gender and migration, security tensions are likely to increase. Conversely, if these changes are aligned with economic, political and social development, they establish a foundation for mutual cooperation and enhanced security in both countries. In the proposed hypothesis, the independent variable is "demographic changes" the dependent variable is "security dynamics" and the mediating variable is "economic, political and social development."

The necessity and importance of this research can be examined from both theoretical and practical perspectives. From a theoretical standpoint, the issue holds great significance because a precise analysis of the aforementioned impacts can help foster a better understanding of the relationship between population and security, play an important role in advancing knowledge about the effects of demographic changes on security dynamics and contribute to presenting a fresh perspective in this field.

From a practical perspective, the research topic is also of considerable importance. Analyzing these impacts can aid in enhancing security relations between the two countries and offer strategies for managing them, thereby reducing tensions in the sphere of security.

Based on the theoretical framework of "political demography" demographic changes influence security both directly and indirectly in three dimensions. The demographic dimension comprises variables such as the "size, distribution and change" of the population. The economic dimension includes variables like "Gross Domestic Product, per capita income, unemployment rate and poverty

rate" while the political dimension covers aspects such as the "political system, type of government, level of democracy, political participation and human rights."

1. Research Background

Ehsan Jafari-Far (2019), in an article published by the International Center for Peace Studies, examined the consequences of the security crisis and migration in the Middle East. The security crisis results in an increase in refugees and forced migration to other countries. The proposed measures for managing this crisis include enhancing regional and international cooperation, supporting both host and origin countries, creating appropriate security conditions for the return of refugees and improving the education and skill levels of migrants.

Abbas Mokarrami and colleagues (2016), in an article titled "Recent Developments in the Middle East and the National Security of the Islamic Republic of Iran" published in the quarterly «Iranian Policy Studies», investigated the relationship between developments in the Middle East and the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Changes in the regional power structure and attempts to shape a new regional order have had the most significant impact on Iran's security environment, by employing a defensive diplomacy strategy, the country's security threats can be controlled and an appropriate level of regional and national security can be achieved.

Shivan Fazil and Dr Alaa Tartir (2023), in an article titled "Iraq in 2023: Challenges and Prospects for Human Peace and Security" published by "the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute" , examined the situation in Iraq 20 years after the military attack on the country. This article identifies the challenges and opportunities facing Iraq in economic, political, social and environmental aspects and also analyzes the role of regional and international actors in supporting human peace and security in Iraq. The article emphasizes that establishing security and development in war-affected areas and safeguarding the rights of vulnerable groups, including women, children and religious and ethnic minorities is essential for achieving sustainable peace and

security in Iraq.

Patrick Clawson (2022), in an article titled "Changing Population Patterns Will Reshape the Middle East" published by the "Washington Post", investigated how demographic changes in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Yemen are unfolding and evaluated the balance of power and regional security challenges for the coming decades. The author believes that Iraq's population will eventually surpass those of Iran and Turkey, a shift that will have implications for the Shia–Sunni balance, the Kurdish issue and relations with the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Utilizing data from the United Nations and various scenarios, the author provides forecasts regarding the population, density, age structure and fertility rates of Middle Eastern countries, examining their influence on key security issues such as military threats, economic development, migration and climate change.

Kristian Coates Ulrichsen (2018), in his book "The Changing Security Dynamics of the Persian Gulf," provides an in-depth analysis of the impact of the Arab Spring and its repercussions on the security dynamics of the Persian Gulf, referring to various dimensions of security, including military, political, economic, energy, environmental and human security.

Roustaie, M. (2019) in an article titled "The Future of the Security Order in the Middle East," published by the International Peace Studies Center (IPSC), examines the factors influencing the future security order in the Middle East. These factors include the decline of Sunni Islamic discourse, demographic changes, economic developments, environmental threats, geopolitical shifts and domestic developments.

The distinguishing feature and innovation of the present article, compared to the mentioned background, lies in its case comparison methodology, which analyzes demographic changes and their impact on security dynamics in Iran and Iraq an aspect that makes it unique. Emphasizing "economic, political and social development" this research illustrates how demographic changes are connected to national and regional security in both countries. Furthermore, utilizing quantitative data, the differences and similarities between Iran and Iraq are

evaluated, providing more precise results. Ultimately, by comparing development conditions in the two countries, the positive or negative effects of demographic changes on security dynamics are clearly identified.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Political demography is a branch of political science that examines the relationship between population and politics. This theory can be subdivided into several smaller theories, each of which views the issue from a specific perspective. These include the Malthusian theory, the Ibn Khaldun theory, and the neo-Malthusian theory.

¹ The Malthusian theory is founded on the ideas of Thomas Malthus, whose work has greatly influenced demography and political economy. This theory posits that population increases at a "geometric rate" whereas biological resources grow at an "arithmetic rate." This disparity in growth rates leads to poverty, starvation, war, and disease (Malthus, 1798).

² The Ibn Khaldun theory is based on the ideas of Ibn Khaldun. It asserts that the population is divided into two main groups: the urban population and the tribal population. The urban population is characterized by its civilization, culture and wealth, yet it suffers from a lack of vigor and reflective dynamism. Conversely, the tribal population, though endowed with vigor and thoughtful engagement, experiences a deficiency in "civilization, culture and wealth." This theory further claims that history follows a cyclical pattern in which the tribal group attacks the cities, establishes new governments, but gradually urbanizes and loses its inherent vitality. Eventually, another tribal population launches an assault on the cities, overthrows the previous governments, and the cycle repeats itself. This theory has profoundly influenced the analysis of history and society in the Islamic world.

For instance, during the Islamic period in Iran, the tribal population from the Arab tribes attacked the cities and overthrew the Sasanian government. These

¹ Thomas Robert Malthus <https://theorium.net/>

² Ibn Khaldun's theory, https://se.qom.iau.ir/article_678931.html

historical changes underscore the impact of both urban and tribal groups on the political and social structures in Iran. Similarly, in Iraq, a comparable history is observed. The Ottomans—a tribal population originating from Turkish tribes—replaced the Abbasid state (Owaisi, 2021).

In the 20th century, the theory of Neo-Malthusianism emerged, which posits that population is connected not only to biological resources but also to economic, political and cultural resources. This theory contends that unchecked population growth can weaken political systems, heighten social tensions and alter quality of life. Its influence on population policymaking is evident in many developing countries. For instance, during the 1940s and 1950s in Iran, rapid population growth generated increased economic, social and cultural demands; however, the government at the time was unable to meet these needs and consequently faced crises on economic, political and cultural fronts (Dalali Isfahani, 2016).

Following the Islamic Revolution, the government adopted policies to boost population growth by discontinuing family planning programs, which led to rising fertility rates and a marked surge in population during the 1960s. Conversely, in the 1970s, the government reversed its policy by reinstating family planning programs—resulting in declining fertility rates and more gradual population growth through the 1980s and 1990s (Dalali Isfahani, 2016).

Political demography examines the relationship between population changes and their political effects. This field investigates how variations in population size, composition and distribution impact political policies and power dynamics. A critical focus within political demography is to assess how either population growth or decline influences a country's political stability. Whereas rapid population increases can strain natural resources, heighten competition for jobs and services, and spur social and political instability, population decline may maintain social welfare yet lead to diminished economic productivity and adverse political outcomes (Strassberg & Creanza, 2020).

Within the neo-Malthusian framework, an essential aspect of political demography is the analysis of demographic characteristics and their effects on

political behavior and electoral outcomes. Variables such as age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status can shape voting patterns, party preferences and political priorities. For example, younger populations often exhibit political priorities that differ from those of older groups and ethnic or religious divisions continue to influence societal structures and political alignments (Patterson et al., 2019).

Urbanization is transforming cities into hubs of economic and political activity, underscoring their fundamental role in overall economic and political development. Demographic shifts in urban areas have significant implications for policymaking and governance. Scholars in political demography study these phenomena, while demographers play a crucial role in formulating and implementing policies in social, health, educational and related sectors by analyzing population changes.

In accordance with neo-Malthusian theory, adjustments in social structures and healthcare policies are essential to address the challenges of an aging population, and changes in family structures and fertility rates can likewise influence child care and education policies (Teitelbaum, 2015).

Therefore, "political demography" as an important field of research, offers valuable insights into the relationship between demographic changes and political, social and security dynamics. Moreover, one of the key applications of political demography is to examine how demographic changes influence demand and resources, the distribution of power and influence, structural and cultural transformations, as well as elections, governance, participation and reforms in regions such as the Middle East.

Given the significant demographic changes in the Middle East, political demography serves as a valuable framework that can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how population factors impact security dynamics.

3. Demographic Trends of Iran and Iraq

Over the past 200 years, both Iran and Iraq have experienced significant

population growth. Iran's population, for example, increased from approximately 7.5 million people in 1901 (1280 in the Iranian calendar) to over 89 million in 2023 (1402 in the Iranian calendar). Similarly, Iraq's population grew from about 2.5 million in 1920 to more than 45 million in 2023. This expansion has been shaped by a variety of factors, including birth rates, mortality rates, migration, wars, diseases, economic and social development, government policies and cultural influences. While some of these factors have fostered population growth, others have caused declines at different times.

Year	Population of Iran	Annual Population Change Rate of Iran	Population of Iraq	Annual Population Change Rate of Iraq
1960	21,388,806	2.53%	7,084,678	2.04%
1965	24,667,026	2.89%	8,270,544	3.14%
1970	28,449,705	2.89%	9,811,347	3.48%
1975	32,856,976	2.92%	11,617,622	3.44%
1980	38,520,664	3.23%	13,653,369	3.28%
1985	47,266,160	4.18%	15,753,856	2.90%
1990	55,793,629	3.37%	17,658,381	2.31%
1995	60,794,809	1.73%	20,948,858	3.48%
2000	65,544,383	1.52%	24,628,858	3.29%
2005	70,182,594	1.38%	28,698,684	3.11%
2010	75,373,855	1.44%	31,264,875	1.73%
2015	81,790,841	1.65%	37,757,813	3.85%
2020	87,290,193	0.84%	42,556,984	2.39%
2022	88,550,570	0.71%	44,496,122	2.21%
2023	89,172,767	0.70%	45,504,560	2.27%

Table 1 – Annual Growth Rate of the Population of Iran and Iraq.

Source: (Worldometers, 2023)

Based on Table 1, the annual growth rates of both Iran and Iraq were analyzed for the period from 1960 to 2023. The data show that these rates have fluctuated

¹. <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/iran-population/>

². <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/iraq-population/>

over time. Overall, Iraq's population growth rate has been higher than Iran's, indicating that Iraq's population has increased more rapidly during these years. Examining these differences offers valuable insights into the security dynamics of the two countries.

3.1. Unstable Population Growth in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the populations of Iran and Iraq experienced slow and unstable growth, shaped by a multitude of interconnected factors. Chief among these was widespread poverty, which severely restricted access to vital resources such as water, food, healthcare, education and social services. This deprivation led to significant health challenges, including malnutrition, infectious diseases and high rates of illiteracy, all of which negatively impacted population growth. Diseases played a secondary yet substantial role, causing high mortality rates and lowering life expectancy (Eskandari, 2019).

Further contributing to demographic instability were shortages of water and food, as well as internal and external conflicts. Wars, notably World War I, resulted in countless deaths in Iran and Iraq, leaving lasting scars on their populations. Additionally, migration both within the region and to other countries further disrupted population dynamics, affecting labor forces and economic productivity. Declining fertility rates also contributed to the slow and inconsistent demographic growth during this period, illustrating how a combination of social, economic and political factors continued to shape the populations of Iran and Iraq through these turbulent decades (Mahdavi, 2018).

3.2. Sustainable Population Growth from the 1950s to the 1960s

During the 1950s and 1960s, the populations of Iran and Iraq experienced rapid growth, driven by several interconnected factors. Primarily, improvements in health and medical conditions significantly reduced mortality rates and increased life expectancy, by 1975, life expectancy in Iran had risen to 54.9 years, while in Iraq it reached 56.6 years. Alongside this, fertility rates also increased, with families in both countries having more children recorded at 6.8 in Iran and 6.9 in Iraq in 1975. Economic and social developments contributed further to this

demographic trend by boosting welfare, productivity and incomes, which enabled families to better afford raising more children. Additionally, government support through expanded public resources and services played a crucial role in sustaining and encouraging this population growth.

3.3. Slow Population Growth from the 1990s to 2011

From the 1990s to 2011, Iran experienced slow population growth due to a combination of social, economic and cultural factors. A significant contributor was the decline in fertility rates, which was closely linked to an increase in the average age at marriage. Consequently, families tended to have fewer children. Additionally, shifts in cultural and social patterns played a crucial role: as women's education and employment opportunities improved, their participation in family decision-making increased, leading to greater awareness and use of contraceptive methods. Economic pressures also influenced population trends, with rising costs of living and child-rearing making having larger families less feasible. Meanwhile, reduced government support and increased migration to urban centers or abroad further contributed to the slowdown in population growth, shaping the demographic landscape during this period.

3.4. Slow Population Growth during the Period 2011 to 2023

According to the United Nations, Iran's population in 2023 was approximately 89.4 million people, which represents about 1.11% of the world's total. Ranking 17th globally, Iran has a population density of around 55 people per square kilometer, with more than 75% of its people residing in urban areas and an average age of 33 years. Over the period from 2010 to 2023, the country's growth rate fluctuated, ultimately reaching 0.7% in 2023.

In a similar vein, Iraq's population was estimated to be around 45.9 million as of November 2023, accounting for about 0.57% of the global population. Iraq exhibits a higher density, with approximately 105 people per square kilometer and about 70.6% of its residents live in cities. Notably, the average age in Iraq was reported to be 20.2 years during that same period. While both nations have experienced population growth over the past decade, they have also witnessed a continuous decline in their growth rates with Iraq's rate decreasing less sharply

compared to Iran's.

4. The Impact of Demographic Changes on the Security of Iran and Iraq

Demographic changes in Iran and Iraq are assessed using various indicators such as fertility and mortality rates, migration patterns, urbanization trends, ethnic and religious compositions and shifts in gender and age ratios. These changes can have both positive and negative impacts across economic, social, cultural and political domains, ultimately influencing national and regional security. From a sociological standpoint, these demographic shifts reflect the influence of cultural, ideological, political and economic factors, shaping the social fabric of both countries. For example, Iran's declining population growth rate signals significant shifts in family structures, women's roles, prevailing values and beliefs and the perspectives of the elite, highlighting the complex interplay of these influences on society.

Year	Iran's Average Age	Iraq's Average Age	Iran's Fertility Rate	Iraq's Fertility Rate	Iran's Urbanization Percentage	Iraq's Urbanization Percentage
2000	20.7	17	2.02	4.95	64.60%	65.50%
2005	23.6	17.5	1.78	4.48	67.80%	64.70%
2010	26.4	18	1.77	4.43	69.90%	68.00%
2015	28.9	18.6	2.05	4.09	71.20%	66.90%
2020	31.4	19.6	1.71	3.55	72.70%	69.10%
2022	32.4	20	1.68	3.45	73.70%	70.10%
2023	33	20.2	1.68	3.4	74.20%	70.60%

Table No. 2 – Average Age, Fertility Rate, and Urbanization Percentage¹

Source: (Worldometers, 2023)

Table 2 compares six variables for Iran and Iraq from 2000 to 2023, including average age, fertility rate and urbanization rate. The average age represents the mean age of each country's population and is influenced by factors such as education, occupation, income, health and culture. The data shows that the

¹ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/>

average age has increased in both countries, indicating an aging population, with Iran's average age consistently higher than Iraq's throughout the period.

Fertility rate, affected by education, employment, income, women's societal roles, healthcare access and elite perspectives on childbearing, has fluctuated significantly in both countries over these years. Although fertility rates declined generally, Iraq's fertility rate has remained higher than Iran's each year.

Regarding urbanization, the percentage of populations living in urban areas has increased in both Iran and Iraq, reflecting growing urban populations. Iran's urbanization rate has also been consistently higher than Iraq's throughout the period. Overall, these demographic changes are shaped by a combination of economic, political, social and cultural factors influencing the populations of both nations over time.

4.1. Social and Cultural Security

Social and cultural security is a vital aspect of overall societal stability, influenced by numerous interconnected factors. It can be analyzed through indicators such as crime and violence rates, individual satisfaction and happiness, social trust and credibility, participation and solidarity within society, education and training and cultural diversity. Demographic changes—such as population growth, decline, and migration—play a significant role in shaping these indicators.

For example, population increases can boost economic development and social connections but may also lead to higher crime rates and social tensions. Immigration, similarly, enriches cultural diversity and fosters social cohesion but can introduce divergent values that may cause conflicts. The impact of population change on individual satisfaction depends largely on how well growth or decline is managed. Effective management in a growing population can enhance production, cultural richness and social happiness, whereas poor management risks overburdening resources, harming public health, and diminishing overall satisfaction. Conversely, handling population decline properly can reduce environmental strain and bolster social and economic

resilience. However, neglecting these shifts can lead to weakened labor forces, slower economic growth, increased public debt, and reduced social security, all of which depress happiness and social stability.

Social trust and credibility—trust in society’s honesty and integrity—are deeply affected by demographic trends. A growing population with diverse cultures can promote mutual understanding and trust, yet increased competition and conflict might undermine these qualities. Conversely, a smaller population might foster greater empathy and stronger communal bonds, but reduced social interactions and opportunities could weaken social trust. Participation and social solidarity are also influenced by demographic shifts. Population expansion, cultural diversity and active social engagement typically increase the demand for public services, which can stress resources and heighten social tensions. On the other hand, population decline often leads to a shrinking labor force and diminished economic productivity, reducing the capacity to fund public services and thus weakening social cohesion. Changes in age and gender composition further modify social needs, creating both challenges and opportunities for fostering participation and solidarity.

Education and training are critical for societal security as well. Demographic changes—like declining fertility rates—result in smaller student populations, which can improve educational quality but at the cost of future workforce size and innovation capacity. Conversely, a youthful demographic can enhance educational standards and societal dynamism, boosting economic growth and human capital development.

In summary, social and cultural security are complex, dynamic facets of society shaped by demographic trends, management strategies and the interplay of various indicators. Their influence on trust, participation, education, and overall happiness underscores the importance of thoughtful, adaptive policies to sustain societal stability amid demographic shifts.

4.2. Economic Security

Economic security is a multifaceted concept that can be better understood by

examining its various dimensions. These include its impacts on economic growth, trade and financial balances, employment and unemployment patterns, income distribution and social welfare, inflation and price stability, government size and efficiency, investment and innovation, job security, resilience to shocks and crises, food and agricultural security, and access to natural resources and energy. Each of these factors plays a significant role in shaping overall economic security.

Demographic changes also influence both economic security and growth. For example, population growth can positively affect economic development, especially when the share of the population over age 65 remains below 21%. In such contexts, a growing population often contributes to increased labor supply and market expansion. However, in countries where the proportion of seniors exceeds 21%, the benefits of population growth tend to diminish. Furthermore, nations with a life expectancy above 70 years tend to experience more favorable effects related to aging populations. Conversely, a higher proportion of individuals under 14 years old has a negative impact by increasing dependency burdens on adults and reducing the overall productivity of the workforce.

While a declining population might reduce competition for jobs and temporarily boost employment rates, it can also lead to a shortage of skilled workers. This decline hampers production, impairs economic growth, and decreases national income—factors that adversely affect economic security. In summary, demographic trends must be carefully managed, as their influence on economic security is complex and context-dependent. (Qavidel and Mirghiathi, 2017).

The relationship between economic security and demographic changes is complex and multifaceted, particularly in the context of trade and financial balance. When economic security is bolstered by population growth, it can lead to an increase in domestic demand for goods and services, fostering strong and sustainable economic growth. This growth may enhance exports and reduce reliance on imports, thereby improving the trade balance. However, population growth can also have adverse effects; it may lead to higher imports and a

deteriorating trade balance. Additionally, demographic changes can prompt inappropriate fiscal and trade policies, which may ultimately result in a negative trade and financial balance. Conversely, a decline in population can trigger economic stagnation and reduced demand for goods and services. Structural demographic shifts, such as an increase in the proportion of younger individuals, can expand the active workforce and boost production, contributing to a positive trade balance.

In contrast, an aging population often incurs rising healthcare and nursing costs, which can negatively impact the trade balance. The effects of demographic changes on economic security can also be evaluated through employment and unemployment rates. An increase in population typically raises the demand for labor and services, potentially driving economic growth. However, this growth may lead to unstable employment conditions, adversely affecting individuals' quality of life. On the other hand, a declining population can reduce job competition and improve working conditions for those in the labor market. Yet, this scenario may also result in decreased demand for labor and services, leading to higher unemployment rates and diminished economic growth. An aging population presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities. While it may lower the unemployment rate in sectors related to nursing and healthcare, it can simultaneously increase unemployment in industries that depend on a younger workforce, such as manufacturing. To further illustrate the impact of demographic changes on income distribution and social welfare, various indices, including the Human Development Index (HDI), can be employed. This analysis will be exemplified through a comparison of two countries, Iran and Iraq, which will be discussed in greater detail below.

The influence of economic security on the size and efficiency of government can be examined from two key perspectives. Firstly, population growth often leads to an increased demand for public services, which may necessitate an expansion of government size. If the government fails to respond efficiently to this demand, it can result in a decline in service quality and heightened public

dissatisfaction. Additionally, an aging population creates a greater need for welfare services and social security, further contributing to government expansion. If the government is unable to secure the necessary financial resources efficiently, this may lead to reduced fiscal sustainability and diminished public trust.

Another critical aspect to consider is the impact of economic security on investment and innovation. A growing population typically drives increased investment in infrastructure, production, and services, fueled by a boost in labor and demand. This population growth also encourages innovation as a competitive strategy aimed at cost reduction. Conversely, an aging population can lead to a decline in investment due to reduced labor and demand. However, it may also present opportunities for innovation as a means to address social challenges and improve quality of life.

Migration plays a significant role in this context, as it can positively influence innovation. The influx of labor and demand resulting from migration often leads to increased investment and ultimately, a rise in innovations.

Furthermore, economic security affects access to natural resources and energy. An increasing population can drive greater utilization of renewable energies, reduce pollution, enhance energy security and create job opportunities in this sector. However, this growth may also strain available water resources and pose challenges in agricultural, industrial, and household sectors, potentially leading to a reduction in arable land and increased soil erosion

4.3. Environmental Security

Environmental security is a multifaceted concept that involves safeguarding a nation's environmental resources, interests, and sovereignty from threats and breaches. It is shaped by various factors, including international cooperation, regional and global influence, defense and military capacities, crisis response abilities, resource management, and border control. These elements can either strengthen or undermine environmental security. For instance, population growth might boost a country's ability to counter aggression and foster

cooperation through increased human resources. However, it also intensifies competition for finite environmental resources, raising tensions and risking conflicts. Conversely, a declining population may reduce resource pressure and related conflicts but can also diminish diplomatic influence and economic vitality. Demographic changes—such as growth, decline, or aging—play a crucial role in this dynamic. Population growth often increases demand for environmental interests, leading to resource competition that heightens tensions and can provoke acts of aggression or sovereignty breaches. It also impacts the environment negatively by escalating pollution, habitat destruction, soil erosion, and desertification, all of which threaten overall environmental security.

On the other hand, a shrinking populace lessens demand and competition, potentially decreasing conflict risk and strengthening security. An aging population presents a complex picture. While it can reduce the capacity to respond to threats due to a shrinking workforce and declining scientific and military productivity—thus weakening environmental security—it also brings accumulated experience, wisdom, and a sense of responsibility that can promote cooperation and diplomatic dialogue. These positive qualities can help reinforce international collaboration and contribute to sustainable environmental management. Furthermore, demographic trends influence national defense and military strength. Larger populations may enhance a country's military potential and regional influence through technological and economic development. However, they also pose challenges related to resource allocation and increased regional tensions over access. Conversely, populations in decline tend to have diminished military and economic influence, which can weaken a country's regional and global standing. Overall, demographic shifts deeply affect a nation's capacity for environmental management, security, and influence. Recognizing the complexity of these relationships emphasizes the need for nuanced, holistic approaches to policymaking and international cooperation to balance growth, stability, and sustainability effectively.

4.4. Political Security

Demographic changes significantly impact political security, affecting a nation's territorial independence, integrity and overall stability. These shifts can weaken the political order by undermining social cohesion and increasing internal vulnerabilities. Moreover, they can diminish a country's capacity to confront external threats, making it more challenging to defend its sovereignty and interests. Demographic transformations also complicate the allocation of vital resources—financial, human, and material—necessary for achieving political objectives. Additionally, such changes can impair a nation's ability to exert influence and extend its power regionally and globally, ultimately hindering effective responses to crises and unforeseen events.

Demographic shifts have complex effects on a country's territorial independence and integrity within the sphere of political security. While population growth can enhance a nation's human resource base and bolster its defensive capabilities, it also places increased pressure on natural resources and the environment. This strain can lead to a decline in the quality of life, which may trigger social conflicts and tensions. If these social frictions intensify, they can undermine political stability and threaten the security of the state's sovereignty and cohesion.

Demographic changes have profound and multifaceted effects on political order and stability. An increasing population can strengthen the labor force, expand the domestic market, and enhance a country's military and national power, yielding positive economic and political benefits. However, it also heightens pressure on natural resources, the environment, education, healthcare and infrastructure, which can strain societal foundations and pose risks to stability. Conversely, a declining population may ease burdens such as poverty, disease, and social disorder, but it can also lead to reduced economic growth, a shrinking labor force and a decline in the youth population and welfare systems—factors that threaten political stability and cohesion.

Population aging introduces additional complexities, with rising healthcare costs, increased retirement expenses, and a declining quality of life that can

negatively impact national political stability. These demographic shifts influence government and leadership dynamics as well. While population growth provides a robust social and economic foundation, it also brings heightened demands and expectations from the public. In contrast, population decline may reduce economic and social burdens on governments but often results in slower growth, a diminished workforce, and weaker military capabilities, which can undermine political stability. On the positive side, an aging population may foster greater respect and confidence in leadership, contributing to political security. Overall, demographic changes shape the political landscape in diverse ways, demanding adaptable and nuanced responses from policymakers.

Demographic transformations significantly influence a nation's ability to address external threats and provocations. While a growing population can strengthen military and national capabilities, it also exerts additional pressure on resources and the environment, potentially leading to internal tensions and conflicts that threaten political security. These shifts can further affect the country's capacity to secure vital financial, human, and material resources, which are essential for maintaining stability. As population growth accelerates, it may deplete financial and material reserves because rising human needs can overwhelm social and economic systems. Consequently, an expanding population can undermine a government's ability to ensure political security, highlighting the complex and double-edged impact of demographic changes on national stability.

4.5. The Impact of Demographic Change on Security in Iran and Iraq

The impact of demographic change on security can be observed through a comparative analysis of Iran and Iraq, considering shifts such as population growth, decline, or aging. By examining various indicators—such as the Human Development Index (HDI), Gross Domestic Product (GDP), economic growth rate, unemployment rate and indices of economic and political freedom—we can assess the levels of progress or regression in each country. These metrics provide valuable insights into how demographic dynamics influence economic stability, social cohesion, and political security. Such comparisons help deepen the

understanding of how demographic changes affect the overall security landscape in Iran and Iraq, highlighting both challenges and opportunities for their development.

Year	Human Development Index (2014–2022) – Iran	Human Development Index (2014–2022) – Iraq	GDP Iran (billion dollars)	GDP Iraq (billion dollars)	Iran Economic Freedom Index	Global Average Economic Freedom Index
2010	-	-	486	138	-	-
2011	-	-	626	185	-	-
2012	-	-	644	218	-	-
2013	-	-	492	234	-	-
2014	0.79	0.66	460	228	40.3	60
2015	0.79	0.67	408	166	41.8	60.2
2016	0.804	0.675	458	166	43.5	60.5
2017	0.804	0.68	486	187	50.5	60.7
2018	0.8	0.68	328	227	50.9	60.9
2019	0.8	0.69	283	233	51.1	60.5
2020	0.78	0.677	239	181	49.2	61.4
2021	0.77	0.69	359	207	47.2	61.6
2022	-	-	388	264	42.4	60
2023	-	-	-	-	42.2	59.3

Table 3 – Human Development Index (HDI), Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Economic Freedom Index

Sources: (The Global Economy, 2023); (World Bank, 2023); (Heritage, 2023)

The recent United Nations report highlights that Iran's Human Development Index (HDI) reached 0.77 in 2021, placing the country in the 75th position globally. When compared to Iraq, Iran has demonstrated superior performance

¹ . https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Iran/human_development/

² . https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Iraq/human_development/

³ . <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=IR>

⁴ . <https://www.heritage.org/index/visualize>

in terms of human development. However, it is noteworthy that Iran's HDI has declined from 2014 to 2021, indicating a decrease in the levels of life, education, and health within the country. In contrast, Iraq has seen an improvement in its HDI during the same period, which is likely to have a positive impact on the nation's economy and security. This trend suggests a future enhancement in the welfare and satisfaction of the Iraqi populace. Table 3 further illustrates that Iran's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has experienced significant fluctuations over the years. After a period of improvement from 2010 to 2012, Iran's GDP subsequently declined. Conversely, Iraq's GDP has shown consistent

growth, even amidst challenges such as war and terrorism. This narrowing gap between the GDPs of Iran and Iraq signals economic growth in Iraq and stagnation in Iran. The fluctuations in Iran's GDP reflect the adverse effects of economic crises, while the increase in Iraq's GDP indicates economic progress and an improvement in living conditions, which positively influences the country's security. The Heritage Foundation, an American research institute, publishes the Economic Freedom Index annually for various countries, based on twelve economic criteria, including property rights, rule of law, corruption, inflation, budgeting, trade, investment, banking, labor, government, wages, and taxation. Each country is assigned a score between zero and one hundred based on these criteria and is ranked globally according to its overall score. Table 3 presents the Economic Freedom Index for Iran alongside the global average from 2014 to 2023. The data reveals that Iran's Economic Freedom Index increased from 40.3 to 42.2 during this period, indicating some improvement in economic indicators. However, this increase is modest, and Iran remains in the lower tiers globally, grappling with challenges such as corruption, sanctions, and government inefficiency. In contrast, the global average Economic Freedom Index decreased from 60 to 59.3 during the same timeframe, reflecting the negative impact of economic, political, and health crises on the economic freedom of various nations.

From 2016 to 2019, Iran's Economic Freedom Index rose from 43.5 to 51.1, showcasing the positive effects of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

(JCPOA) and the easing of sanctions on Iran's economy during that period. However, following the United States' withdrawal from the JCPOA and the subsequent intensification of sanctions, Iran's Economic Freedom Index has once again declined. This drop underscores how sanctions, coupled with economic and political crises, have adversely affected Iran's economy and contributed to a reduction in the country's economic freedom. In summary, national and regional security involves safeguarding the sovereignty, independence, and unity of countries against both internal and external threats. Economic security, in turn, refers to a nation's ability to meet the basic needs of its citizens, maintain economic prosperity, and create employment opportunities. Economic freedom can foster increased production, distribution, and trade, potentially leading to reductions in poverty, unemployment, inflation, and debt. Furthermore, economic freedom can enhance social indicators such as health, education, and human rights, all of which have a direct impact on the human and political security of nations.

Conclusion

This article employs a case study methodology to explore the interplay between demographics and security dynamics in Iran and Iraq within the context of the Middle East. Given the contemporary significance of population and security issues, the research aims to clarify the relationship between demographic changes and security in these two nations from economic, political, and social perspectives. To achieve this, statistical data and documents related to Iran and Iraq, sourced from reliable and contemporary outlets, have been meticulously analyzed and evaluated.

The findings indicate that the national security of both Iran and Iraq is influenced by two types of demographic changes: internal changes, which pertain to the quantity, structure, and distribution of the population within these countries, and external changes, which occur beyond their borders. Internal demographic shifts can have both positive and negative effects on various factors, including economic stability, social cohesion, political dynamics,

military readiness, international relations, national interests, regional and global interactions, security threats and opportunities, as well as the balance of power and influence. Conversely, external demographic changes in neighboring, rival, or allied countries can shape the nature of interactions among nations, affecting cooperation, competition, commitments, conflicts, and contradictions.

The analysis reveals that Iran and Iraq have experienced distinct population trends, leading to both opportunities and challenges. Therefore, it is recommended that both countries prioritize security, cooperation, and development, leveraging their demographic changes as a strategic asset to further their objectives. The article posits that enhanced bilateral cooperation can reduce tensions and improve coordination across various sectors. To realize these benefits, it is crucial to address economic issues and constraints while capitalizing on existing growth potentials and improving living conditions.

However, the decline in population and the increasing average age in both Iran and Iraq may have adverse repercussions. If these demographic trends are not adequately addressed, political, social, and security tensions between the two nations could escalate. By effectively harnessing human resources, advancing technological development, and improving living standards, both countries can enhance labor force participation, market development, social activities, and regional cooperation. Additionally, the historical, cultural, and religious ties between Iran and Iraq can further facilitate economic and social collaborations. To fully exploit their developmental and welfare potentials, overcoming economic barriers and constraints is essential.

The demographic shifts in Iran, characterized by an aging population, increased urbanization, and higher education levels, alongside a growing role for women in the labor market and society, necessitate a proactive response. To counteract these trends, Iran's economy must grow, and new attitudes towards childbearing should be promoted by its elite. Optimizing the use of human resources, advancing technology, and raising living standards can foster these new perceptions, ultimately enhancing the security of both Iran and Iraq. Failure

to address these challenges may lead to significant difficulties for the governments of both nations, particularly for Iran.

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