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From Battlefields to Energy and Trade Routes

Why Iraq, the Kurdistan Region, Syria and Türkiye Must Build a New Economic Geography

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For more than a century, the Middle East has been defined by the wrong maps.

Political maps divided peoples into states. Military maps divided states into spheres of influence. Energy maps reduced entire countries to oilfields, pipelines and export terminals. Strategic maps portrayed the region as a chessboard on which outside powers competed for advantage, frequently with little regard for the interests of those who actually lived there.

The consequences are painfully familiar. Wars have redrawn borders but rarely created lasting peace. Military victories have proved temporary. Political settlements have remained fragile. Oil wealth has generated enormous revenues without consistently producing diversified economies, accountable institutions or resilient societies.

The region has become extraordinarily rich in natural resources, yet chronically poor in regional integration.

Meanwhile, the world has changed.

The twenty-first century is increasingly organised not around territorial expansion but around connectivity. Economic power now flows through ports, railways, highways, pipelines, electricity grids, logistics platforms, fibre-optic cables, financial centres, data networks and artificial-intelligence infrastructure. Countries that connect markets prosper. Those that remain isolated, fragmented or dependent on a single route fall behind.

Singapore understood this decades ago. The Netherlands transformed geography into influence. The United Arab Emirates built ports, airlines, logistics systems and financial centres that multiplied the value of its location. Saudi Arabia is now seeking to reposition itself through Vision 2030 as an investment, industrial and connectivity hub rather than merely an oil exporter.

The Middle East's northern heartland—stretching from Basra through Baghdad, Kirkuk, Mosul, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah to Aleppo, Mardin, Mersin and Ceyhan—possesses comparable strategic potential. Yet instead of becoming one of Eurasia's greatest economic corridors, it has too often served as one of the world's principal geopolitical fault lines.

That is neither inevitable nor irreversible.

The crises that have shaken the region—from the war in Syria and the rise and defeat of ISIS to renewed confrontation in the Gulf, disruption in the Red Sea and uncertainty surrounding the Strait of Hormuz—have exposed the vulnerabilities of the existing economic order.

Dependence on single export routes has become increasingly dangerous. Fragmented infrastructure has weakened national resilience. Political disagreements have repeatedly interrupted commercially vital projects. Competing regulatory systems, sanctions, corruption and legal uncertainty have deterred investment on a scale that no country in the region can afford indefinitely.

The lesson is becoming impossible to ignore.

Security can no longer be achieved through military deterrence alone.

It increasingly depends upon resilient economic interdependence.

The next Middle East will therefore be shaped less by those who control the most territory than by those who connect the most territory.

Instead of asking who dominates a border, governments should ask how many railways, pipelines, electricity interconnectors, highways and data cables cross it.

Instead of viewing neighbouring countries primarily as threats or competitors, they should increasingly recognise them as indispensable economic partners.

Instead of measuring national strength only through military expenditure, governments should assess the resilience of supply chains, the reliability of electricity systems, the sophistication of industrial capacity, the quality of institutions and the ability to attract productive investment.

This is where Iraq occupies a unique position.

Iraq's Historic Opportunity

Few countries have been shaped more profoundly by geography than Iraq.

Situated between the Gulf, Anatolia, the Levant and the Iranian plateau, Iraq has historically functioned as a crossroads of civilisations. Mesopotamia was not merely one of humanity's earliest centres of agriculture, writing and urban life. It was also a vast commercial system through which merchants, scholars, craftsmen and engineers moved long before modern nation states emerged.

Modern Iraq, however, has rarely been permitted to exploit that inheritance.

Its geography has instead become associated with conflict: the Iran–Iraq War, the Gulf Wars, international sanctions, the invasion of 2003, sectarian violence, the rise of ISIS and continuing regional proxy competition.

Each successive crisis weakened infrastructure, hollowed out institutions, displaced communities and damaged investor confidence.

Yet Iraq today possesses an opportunity unlike any since the discovery of oil.

Its hydrocarbon resources remain enormously valuable. But oil alone will not define Iraq's future.

Geography will.

The proposed Development Road, connecting the Grand Faw Port through Iraq to Türkiye and onwards to Europe, represents far more than a railway or motorway. Properly conceived, it could become the backbone of a new regional economy.

Its purpose should not merely be to move containers more quickly from the Gulf to Europe. It should become an integrated economic ecosystem.

Industrial parks should emerge along the corridor. Petrochemical and fertiliser complexes could process Iraqi hydrocarbons into higher-value products. Food-processing centres could connect Iraq's agricultural regions to regional markets. Logistics hubs, dry ports, bonded warehouses and modern customs facilities could reduce the cost of trade. Data centres could be powered by reliable electricity. Universities and technical institutes could be linked to innovation clusters. Special economic zones could attract Gulf, Turkish, European and Asian capital.

Instead of exporting crude oil and importing manufactured goods, Iraq could process, manufacture and innovate domestically.

That transition would alter the country's political economy more profoundly than any increase in oil production alone.

History demonstrates that transport corridors become transformative only when value is created around them. A railway that merely carries foreign goods across Iraqi territory may generate transit fees, but it will not produce national renewal.

The Development Road must therefore become more than an infrastructure project. It should form the centrepiece of Iraq's national development strategy.

Its success should be measured not only in kilometres of railway laid, but in jobs created, factories opened, exports diversified, technologies transferred and private capital mobilised.

Equally important, the corridor should not end at Türkiye.

It should connect seamlessly with European transport systems while integrating southwards with Gulf markets and, when political conditions permit, westwards through Syria to Mediterranean ports.

Such a network would transform Iraq from a commodity exporter into a continental connector.

That distinction matters enormously.

Countries that sell commodities remain vulnerable to price cycles.

Countries that connect continents generate value every day.

Energy Security Requires More Than One Door

Recent crises in and around the Gulf have reinforced another strategic reality: no major energy producer can afford excessive dependence upon a single export route.

The Strait of Hormuz remains indispensable to the global energy system. Yet every confrontation reminds policymakers that concentration creates vulnerability.

For Iraq, diversification is therefore no longer optional.

It is a strategic necessity.

The northern export route through the Kurdistan Region and Türkiye to Ceyhan should become a permanent pillar of Iraqi energy security—not as an alternative to southern exports, but as an additional guarantee of resilience.

Likewise, the eventual restoration of a western route through Syria to the Mediterranean deserves serious consideration when political and security conditions allow. The historic logic of connecting Iraqi oilfields to Mediterranean ports has not disappeared simply because the infrastructure has deteriorated or regional relations have broken down.

The objective should not be to replace Basra with Ceyhan, or Ceyhan with Baniyas.

It should be to create optionality.

Resilient countries build redundancy. Successful infrastructure systems offer alternatives. The more export routes Iraq possesses, the greater its geopolitical autonomy and bargaining power.

Energy security increasingly depends not only on how much a country produces, but also on how flexibly it can move what it produces.

The Kurdistan Region as the Hinge

If Iraq is the geographical heart of this emerging economic architecture, the Kurdistan Region is its hinge.

Too often, the Region has been viewed almost exclusively through the prism of political and security disputes: constitutional authority, budget transfers, oil ownership, territorial boundaries, party rivalry and relations with neighbouring states.

Those issues are undeniably important. But they have obscured a larger strategic reality.

The Kurdistan Region occupies one of the most valuable economic locations in the Middle East.

It sits at the intersection of federal Iraq, Türkiye, Syria and Iran. It lies near one of the shortest land routes connecting the Gulf with Europe. It possesses hydrocarbons, an entrepreneurial private sector, experienced energy companies, growing commercial networks and a young population eager to participate in the global economy.

In a century defined by connectivity rather than confrontation, those assets become far more valuable than many policymakers presently recognise.

The challenge is to stop treating the Kurdistan Region as a buffer separating competing powers and instead transform it into a bridge connecting them.

That requires a change in strategic thinking not only in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, but also in Baghdad, Ankara, Damascus and Tehran.

Moving Beyond the Oil Dispute

For nearly two decades, debate over the Kurdistan Region's energy sector has revolved around one question: who owns the oil?

It is an understandable question, but not necessarily the most consequential one.

A more important question is now emerging:

How can Iraq's hydrocarbon wealth become the foundation of a diversified national and regional economy?

The future belongs to integrated energy systems combining oil, natural gas, electricity, petrochemicals, renewables, hydrogen, storage, digital technologies and efficient industrial demand.

Viewed through this wider lens, the recurring disputes between Baghdad and Erbil appear increasingly self-defeating.

Neither side can fully realise its ambitions without the other.

Baghdad needs the investment experience, commercial flexibility and international partnerships that the Kurdistan Region has cultivated.

The Kurdistan Region needs the sovereign authority, national market, fiscal capacity and legal certainty that only the federal state can provide.

International investors need both.

Instead of continuing the cycle of litigation, arbitration, interrupted exports, delayed payments and political bargaining, Iraq should conclude a durable federal energy compact.

Such an arrangement should establish transparent rules governing production, metering, exports, revenue collection, budget transfers, company payments, investment protection and environmental standards.

One sovereign Iraqi energy framework need not mean one centralised model that denies the Region meaningful authority.

Nor should regional authority mean an export system disconnected from federal sovereignty.

A workable federal arrangement must recognise both realities.

Predictability, rather than political improvisation, should become Iraq's greatest competitive advantage.

Energy markets reward certainty.

Investors reward stability.

Citizens deserve both.

Natural Gas: Iraq's Great Untapped Asset

Oil financed much of the twentieth century.

Natural gas may determine the industrial competitiveness of the twenty-first.

Here lies one of Iraq's greatest opportunities—and one of its most striking contradictions.

The country continues to flare substantial volumes of associated gas while struggling to satisfy domestic electricity demand and relying heavily on imported energy during peak periods.

This weakens economic sovereignty and wastes a resource that could power factories, fertiliser plants, petrochemical facilities, homes and hospitals.

Capturing associated gas from southern oilfields, accelerating the development of non-associated gas resources in the Kurdistan Region and integrating them into a modern national network could transform Iraq's industrial future.

Reliable gas would support electricity generation.

Reliable electricity would support manufacturing.

Manufacturing would generate employment

Employment would strengthen social stability.

A stronger domestic economy would reinforce national security more effectively than additional military expenditure alone.

The Kurdistan Region's gas resources deserve particular attention.

They should not become the next source of endless dispute between Baghdad and Erbil. They should become a strategic pillar of Iraq's long-term energy independence.

The sequence should be clear.

Domestic Iraqi requirements first.

Regional integration second.

Exports third.

Gas produced in the Kurdistan Region could help satisfy electricity demand in northern and central Iraq. Once domestic requirements are reliably met, additional volumes could eventually flow towards Türkiye and, in the longer term, perhaps towards Syria and Mediterranean markets.

This would reassure Iraqi citizens that national interests remain paramount while demonstrating to investors that Iraq is serious about becoming a reliable commercial partner.

A molecule of gas has no ethnicity. It follows infrastructure, contracts and price signals.

Political wisdom lies in ensuring that its benefits are distributed fairly.

Electricity: The Quiet Revolution

Pipelines capture headlines.

Electricity transforms societies quietly.

Reliable power means functioning hospitals, productive factories, efficient irrigation, modern education, digital businesses and an attractive investment climate.

Yet electricity remains one of Iraq's greatest structural weaknesses. Power shortages continue to constrain economic development despite the country's extraordinary energy resources.

This should not be accepted as normal.

Regional electricity interconnections offer an opportunity to think beyond isolated national systems.

Imagine a connected power market stretching from the Gulf through Basra, Baghdad, Kirkuk, Mosul, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah into Türkiye, and eventually towards Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Solar electricity from southern and western Iraq.

Gas-fired generation across the country.

Hydropower from Türkiye and the mountainous north.

Future renewable capacity in Syria.

Cross-border balancing markets.

Shared reserve capacity.

Battery storage.

Smart transmission systems supported by artificial intelligence.

Such a system could reduce costs, improve reliability and create greater resilience against disruptions.

Perhaps more importantly, electricity creates habits of cooperation.

Power-system operators must communicate daily regardless of political disagreements. Technical coordination frequently precedes political trust. Engineers often build confidence long before diplomats do.

Every functioning interconnector becomes a small but tangible argument against conflict.

Syria Must Return to the Regional Economy

No serious connectivity strategy can ignore Syria.

For more than a decade, Syria has been viewed primarily through the lenses of war, humanitarian suffering, sanctions, displacement and geopolitical competition.

Yet before becoming synonymous with conflict, Syria was one of the Middle East's great commercial crossroads.

Aleppo connected Anatolia with Mesopotamia. Latakia and Tartus linked inland economies to the Mediterranean. Trade routes crossed Syrian territory centuries before modern borders were drawn.

That historical logic has not disappeared.

It has merely been interrupted.

Syria's reconstruction will eventually have to mean more than rebuilding damaged buildings and roads. It must involve reconnecting entire economic systems: railways, pipelines, electricity networks, agricultural supply chains, industrial zones, digital infrastructure, universities and markets.

Syria's recovery should therefore not be regarded solely as a humanitarian obligation.

It is also one of the region's most consequential economic opportunities.

A prosperous Syria strengthens Iraq.

A connected Syria benefits Türkiye.

A stable Syria reduces pressure on Lebanon and Jordan.

A functioning Syrian economy creates conditions for voluntary refugee returns and reduces the space available to militias, smugglers and extremist organisations.

Isolation has never produced sustainable peace.

Economic participation offers a stronger foundation.

This does not mean that infrastructure can substitute for a political settlement. Nor should corridors be designed to impose control over local communities.

Arab, Kurdish, Turkmen, Christian and other communities must benefit from new projects. Local revenue sharing, land rights, employment, environmental standards and security guarantees must be incorporated from the beginning.

Connectivity should become an instrument of inclusion, not another method of domination.

Sulaymaniyah's Strategic Calling

Among the cities of the region, Sulaymaniyah occupies a distinctive place.

It has long been recognised for its intellectual life, universities, writers, artists, entrepreneurs and political culture. Those strengths now provide an opportunity to assume a much broader regional role.

Every great transformation requires institutions capable of generating ideas.

Think tanks.

Universities.

Policy centres.

Business associations.

Professional networks.

Dialogue platforms.

Infrastructure alone cannot integrate a region.

Ideas must travel before pipelines do.

Sulaymaniyah could become precisely such a centre.

A city once perceived as peripheral could become the intellectual capital of a new regional connectivity agenda.

It could host an annual Mesopotamia Energy and Connectivity Forum, bringing together ministers, investors, companies, engineers, economists, academics and entrepreneurs from Iraq, the Kurdistan Region, Türkiye, Syria, the Gulf and Europe.

It could establish specialised research programmes on energy transition, gas-market development, artificial intelligence, logistics, water diplomacy, critical minerals and cross-border investment.

It could bring young Kurdish, Arab, Turkish and Syrian professionals together to study, design and eventually manage regional infrastructure.

This is not idealism.

It is strategic investment in human and institutional capital.

Great trading cities have always been centres of knowledge as much as commerce.

Venice, Amsterdam, Singapore and Dubai built influence not only through ports and capital, but through information, expertise, networks and confidence.

Sulaymaniyah can aspire to develop its own distinctive version of that tradition.

Its value does not rest only on the resources beneath the ground.

It rests on the ideas, relationships and institutions it can build above it.

The Digital Silk Road

The next generation of regional integration will not be measured only in barrels of oil, cubic metres of gas or tonnes of freight.

Increasingly, it will be measured in data.

Artificial intelligence requires data centres. Data centres require reliable electricity, cooling systems, fibre connectivity and cybersecurity. Digital economies require cloud infrastructure, skilled professionals, transparent regulation and access to capital.

These systems should be incorporated into every major transport and energy corridor.

Whenever a railway is built, fibre-optic cables should accompany it.

Whenever electricity transmission expands, digital infrastructure should follow.

Whenever an industrial zone is established, technology incubators and vocational-training centres should be included from the outset.

Iraq, the Kurdistan Region, Syria and Türkiye should aspire not merely to become an energy and transport bridge between Asia, the Gulf and Europe, but also a digital corridor.

The Middle East missed too many earlier industrial revolutions.

It cannot afford to miss the artificial-intelligence revolution.

The winners of the coming decades will not necessarily be those with the largest oil reserves. They will be those with the smartest infrastructure and the strongest human capital.

They will connect energy with technology, universities with venture capital, manufacturing with artificial intelligence, and ports with cloud computing.

Connectivity is no longer simply about moving goods.

It is also about moving knowledge, capital and ideas.

Türkiye’s Role: Gateway, Not Gatekeeper

No regional connectivity strategy can succeed without Türkiye.

Its industrial base, ports, logistics companies, engineering capacity, construction sector, financial institutions and access to European markets make it the natural northern anchor of this emerging economic geography.

Yet Türkiye also faces an important strategic choice.

It can continue approaching its southern neighbourhood primarily through the language of security, border control and military deterrence.

Or it can complement its legitimate security concerns with an ambitious economic strategy that makes stability profitable for all sides.

The second path offers greater long-term returns.

Ankara should aspire to become the region’s preferred gateway rather than its gatekeeper.

There is an important difference.

A gatekeeper controls access.

A gateway facilitates opportunity.

The first creates dependence and, eventually, resistance.

The second creates partnerships and lasting influence.

Türkiye's greatest strategic asset is not military power alone. It is the combination of geography, industrial capacity, entrepreneurial dynamism and access to European value chains.

If southeastern Türkiye becomes deeply integrated with northern Iraq and, eventually, with a recovering Syria, cities such as Gaziantep, Mardin, Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa and Mersin could emerge alongside Mosul, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Kirkuk and Aleppo as engines of a new regional growth zone.

Borders that once divided markets could begin connecting them.

Gulf Capital as an Investment in Stability

The Gulf states also have an opportunity to redefine their regional role.

For decades, Gulf capital has financed projects across the Middle East, but much of this investment has remained fragmented, bilateral or focused on individual assets.

The next phase should be more strategic.

Sovereign wealth funds and companies from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait could help finance integrated regional infrastructure: railways, power interconnections, industrial zones, digital corridors, logistics hubs, green-hydrogen projects, water infrastructure and artificial-intelligence campuses.

These are not merely commercial investments.

They are investments in stability.

Every successful industrial zone creates jobs that reduce the appeal of extremism.

Every functioning logistics corridor raises the economic cost of conflict.

Every electricity interconnection creates mutual dependence.

Every jointly financed project creates a constituency interested in continuity rather than disruption.

Infrastructure, in this sense, becomes a form of preventive diplomacy.

A Platform for Competitive Cooperation

The emerging regional architecture should not become another battleground for great-power rivalry.

It should become one of the few arenas in which their interests can overlap.

Europe seeks diversified energy supplies, secure trade routes and reduced migration pressure.

The United States seeks regional stability, resilient partners and secure commercial corridors.

China seeks reliable Belt and Road connections, trade expansion and long-term investment.

Japan and South Korea seek energy security and industrial partnerships.

India increasingly views the Gulf and West Asia as an essential bridge towards Europe.

Each possesses legitimate interests.

None should dominate the system.

The strongest model would be one of competitive cooperation: multiple investors, diversified financiers, transparent procurement, common technical standards, independent arbitration and open access.

Infrastructure becomes more resilient when no single external actor can monopolise it.

Strategic autonomy is strengthened not by rejecting partnerships but by diversifying them.

Iraq, together with the Kurdistan Region, should pursue a form of multi-vector economic diplomacy.

Not choosing one camp against another.

Choosing national interest above all.

Water: The Forgotten Strategic Resource

Energy dominates regional debate.

Water will increasingly shape the region's future.

Climate change, population growth, urbanisation and agricultural demand are placing unprecedented pressure on the Tigris and Euphrates basins.

Water security can no longer be separated from energy security.

Hydropower affects electricity production.

Electricity powers irrigation and desalination.

Efficient irrigation protects agriculture.

Agriculture supports rural employment and social stability.

Türkiye, Iraq and Syria should therefore establish a permanent basin-wide cooperation mechanism based on scientific data, transparency and long-term planning.

Joint monitoring, water recycling, smart agriculture, modern irrigation, drought management, shared early-warning systems and climate-adaptation programmes should replace accusation and improvisation.

The objective should not be to maximise one country's advantage in a single year.

It should be to maximise collective resilience across generations.

Countries sharing rivers also share responsibility.

Security Must Protect Connectivity

Capital is brave.

But it is not reckless.

No matter how attractive the economic opportunity, serious private investment will remain limited if infrastructure is vulnerable to sabotage, terrorism, organised crime, political retaliation or arbitrary shutdown.

Security therefore remains indispensable.

But the meaning of security must evolve.

The objective should not simply be to protect borders.

It should be to protect connectivity.

Pipelines, railways, ports, electricity lines, data centres, fibre-optic networks, industrial zones and logistics hubs will form the strategic nervous system of the future regional economy.

Their protection must become a shared responsibility.

Regional governments do not need to agree on every political or geopolitical issue to cooperate against threats targeting common infrastructure.

No armed group should possess the power to shut down a national export route.

No political dispute should be allowed to switch off electricity for millions of citizens.

No major corridor should depend on the goodwill of a single faction, party or foreign patron.

Pragmatism must prevail over ideology.

A Mesopotamian Connectivity Compact

Vision requires institutions.

Good intentions require implementation.

It is therefore time to consider establishing a Mesopotamian Connectivity Compact.

This should not become another ceremonial organisation producing declarations that are never implemented.

It should be a practical platform dedicated to regional economic integration.

Its core participants should include the federal government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government within Iraq’s constitutional framework, Türkiye and, when conditions permit, Syria.

The Gulf Cooperation Council, the European Union, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, the World Bank, regional development banks and other interested partners could participate as observers, investors or technical supporters.

Its agenda should remain tightly focused:

Energy integration.

Transport corridors.

Trade facilitation.

Digital transformation.

Water cooperation.

Industrial development.

Investment protection.

Skills and education.

Infrastructure security.

Dispute resolution.

Progress should not be measured through speeches or diplomatic communiqués.

It should be measured in kilometres of railway completed, megawatts interconnected, gas flaring reduced, border delays shortened, factories opened, investments mobilised and jobs created.

Success must become measurable.

Ten Principles for a New Regional Doctrine

If the twentieth century was an era of territorial competition, the twenty-first will increasingly be an era of connectivity.

The countries that prosper will not necessarily be those possessing the largest armies or even the largest energy reserves.

They will be those creating the most efficient economic ecosystems.

A new regional doctrine should rest on ten principles.

First, geography becomes destiny only when it is intelligently managed.

Second, infrastructure creates influence.

Third, connectivity can strengthen sovereignty rather than weaken it.

Fourth, energy security now encompasses oil, gas, electricity, renewables, storage and digital resilience.

Fifth, national prosperity requires diversified routes to markets.

Sixth, investors value legal certainty more than political promises.

Seventh, artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure must become central components of economic strategy.

Eighth, water cooperation is as important as oil cooperation.

Ninth, economic interdependence is among the strongest long-term deterrents against conflict.

And tenth, lasting peace cannot simply be negotiated in conference rooms.

It must be constructed through shared interests.

One railway.

One pipeline.

One electricity grid.

One industrial park.

One university partnership.

One investment agreement at a time.

A Choice History Rarely Offers

There are moments when geography offers nations a second opportunity.

This is such a moment.

The global economy is reorganising itself. Supply chains are shifting. Energy systems are diversifying. Artificial intelligence is transforming production. Trade routes are being redesigned. New corridors are emerging across Eurasia.

The question is no longer whether this transformation will occur.

It is whether Iraq, the Kurdistan Region, Syria and Türkiye will shape it—or simply watch it unfold elsewhere.

For generations, this region has exported crude oil while importing geopolitical instability.

It has exported talented young people while importing strategic uncertainty.

It has exported opportunity because it failed to connect opportunity.

That cycle can be broken.

Imagine a train departing from the Grand Faw Port carrying goods manufactured in Basra, using electricity generated from Iraqi gas, software developed in Sulaymaniyah, engineering services provided in Gaziantep and components destined for European markets through Türkiye.

Imagine fibre-optic cables carrying data beside pipelines carrying energy.

Imagine Iraqi, Kurdish, Turkish and Syrian universities cooperating across borders instead of societies being divided by them.

Imagine a generation that associates borders with opportunity rather than conflict.

This is not utopia.

It is an achievable strategy.

The choice before the region is stark.

It can remain trapped in the geopolitics of the twentieth century, where influence is measured by territory controlled, militias sponsored and crises managed.

Or it can embrace the economics of the twenty-first century, where influence is measured by markets connected, ideas exchanged, investment attracted, technologies developed and prosperity shared.

The Middle East has produced enough battlefields.

What it now needs are energy and trade routes.

Not because commerce erases political differences.

But because societies that build, invest and prosper together acquire powerful reasons not to destroy together.

The great civilisations of Mesopotamia did not flourish because they built walls.

They flourished because they created connections.

The future of this region may depend not on rediscovering its divisions, but on rediscovering that timeless truth