

The interdependence between military might and economic power and its impact on Iraqi politics

Author and researcher: Heydar Alkhafaji



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<https://www.almanbar.org>

info@almanbar.org



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The relationship between the different dimensions of public policy leads to either the overall success of the policy program or its failure, sometimes even resulting in the collapse of the entire governance system. This relationship is particularly evident in the close interdependence between military capability, economic and foreign policy.

A range of factors must be considered when defining strategic interests, including military might, economic power, and diplomatic capabilities. Evaluating these factors helps understand how power is acquired, consolidated, and displayed in the global order. These strategic pillars become effective when they complement and reinforce each other.

Foreign policy consists of three levels: conception, content, and implementation, all of which are underpinned by a pragmatic external vision¹.

¹ Analysing Foreign Policy. SUKHWANT S BINDRA, World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues. [Vol. 23, No. 3 \(AUTUMN 2019 \(JULY-SEPTEMBER\)\)](#), pp. 26-43 (18 pages) Published by: Kapur Surya Foundation.

Therefore, focusing on only one dimension in formulating foreign policy, such as relying on diplomatic capabilities without paying attention to the other important dimensions such as military and economic power, cannot lead to an effective foreign policy capable of achieving strategic objectives.

The strategic aims of any active state in the present day emerge from its effective policymaking and the balancing of military and economic capabilities as displayed in the global system. In the same vein, economics is inseparable from diplomacy, as foreign policy requires concerted efforts to strengthen the other areas of a nation's power, enabling them to become strategic advantages in politics.

The current situation in the Middle East and the ongoing armed conflict has created regional instability and positioned the countries, groups, and organizations of the region in a state of war. This poses significant dangers and risks to the economies of the region, particularly Iraq. In the event of a new military confrontation, the Iraqi economy would be under considerable threat.

The interdependence between military and economic capabilities can be analysed through the following three categories:

The first category – Imbalance between military might and economic power:

Over the past few decades, Iraq has relied heavily in its foreign policy on military might through military deterrence. Such an approach to foreign policy, which focuses entirely on military strength, has ignored Iraq's economic policy in the global system and its international competitiveness.

The limited success in military policy was not matched by similar outcomes in economic policy, leading to a major imbalance between military power and economic capacity. A large part of this imbalance is reflected in the lack of security and the international sanctions that were imposed on Iraq following the invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

The repercussions of previous wars and sanctions, along with ineffective decision-making, have led to the inefficiency of the Iraqi economy. Consequently, not only has the economy been unable to keep pace with the global economy, but it has also failed to achieve the country's strategic interests.

The second category – The impact of contradictory military and diplomatic approaches and outcomes on the Iraqi economy:

When military action inside and outside Iraqi territory has contradicted the diplomatic objectives of the Iraqi government, a negative impact is perceived in the Iraqi economy.

An example of this is the recent attacks on US military bases in Iraq, Jordan, and Syria², which have led to increasing pressure on both the Iraqi government and on the country's fragile economy.

It should be noted that the interests and objectives that determine the actions of regional powers and states in conflicts may differ and vary based on several political, economic, security and international factors.

The third category – The impact of foreign policy on the Iraqi economy:

Foreign policy is one of the dimensions of public policy that shares a special relationship with economics and trade. This interrelation is so close that if foreign policy is considered a science of strategic interests, then economics would be equally regarded as a complementary and supportive component of foreign policy in the contemporary world.

The state of turmoil currently witnessed in the world, especially in the Middle East, has made Iraq, by virtue of its strategic location, a hub for the intersection of regional and international interests. Many current crises and issues are interpreted in the context of the agendas, intentions, interests, objectives, and policies of foreign countries that have a presence in Iraqi politics. Under these circumstances, Iraq's foreign policy cannot be judged successful without scrutinizing its military, economic and political capabilities simultaneously.

Iraq's economy, the Achilles' heel of Iraqi strategic policy, has continuously lagged behind the country's diplomatic and security capabilities. A notable part of the October protests that broke out on October 1, 2019³ in Baghdad and the rest of the central and southern Iraqi governorates was down to the deteriorating economic conditions of the country. This included the spread of administrative and financial corruption and unemployment,

² Deadly attack on U.S. troops highlights an open-ended military mission.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/01/30/us-troops-mideast-jordan-iraq-syria/>

³ ظاهرة تشرين العراقية، أو الاحتجاجات العراقية في عام 2019، تعتبر موجة احتجاجات اندلعت في الأول من تشرين الأول 2019 في بغداد وعدد من المحافظات الجنوبية في العراق. اندلعت هذه الاحتجاجات نتيجة لتردي الأوضاع الاقتصادية في البلاد، وانتشار الفساد المالي والإداري، ومشكلة البطالة. كانت مطالب المتظاهرين تتمحور حول إسقاط النظام الحاكم واستقالة رئيس الوزراء عادل عبد المهدي، وتشكيل حكومة مؤقتة، وإجراء انتخابات مبكرة.

as well as the protests being a result of incorrect policies pursued by the country's politicians.

Although assessing responses to the policies of enemies or rivals is an inevitable principle in formulating a country's foreign policy, focusing on military might and regional allies without accounting for potential consequences is a major weakness in the formulation of foreign policy. Policymakers must consider the importance of formulating clear policies that preserve strategic interests. Effective deterrence policies should be prioritized in the face of any direct threat or organized sabotage, such as terrorist organizations that include the likes of ISIS.

There must be a close connection and mutual balance between military might on the one hand and economic power on the other hand, as any attack may endanger the country and harm both its economy and foreign policy in the absence of the required balance between military and economic capabilities.

Sources:

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- 2- Deadly attack on U.S. troops highlights an open-ended military mission. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/01/30/us-troops-mideast-jordan-iraq-syria/>