



Money and Power: The Influence of Wealth in Iraq's Post-2003 Political Process

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Abstract. The impact of financial resources on the elections, governance processes, and political parties has fostered a system where wealth is not a tool of political leverage. This situation results in widespread concern related to corruption, transparency as well erosion of the democratic processes. After the death of Saddam Hussein, a new political system was established. The current study aims to investigate the influence of wealth in Iraq's political system. for this purpose, mixed methodological approach was used to meet the aim quantitatively and qualitatively. For quantitative analysis a questionnaire was used, and responses were collected whereas, for qualitative analysis, face to face interviews were conducted, and themes were made based on the responses of the participants. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis and the thematic analysis was done for quantitatively and qualitatively analyze the results. The findings of the study suggest greater influence of wealth on the overall political system as various political elites use wealth as source of power. The results of the study suggest that eventually, developing a political system that prioritizes responsibility over economic supremacy is important for improving long-term stability and community belief or self-determination in Iraq.

Keywords: Iraq, financial resources, governance, political parties, corruption, transparency, democratic processes, accountability, political reforms, quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis, power, influence, social instability.

Introduction

The study will help the researchers to get information on the various factors that can affect political processes. It also highlights the need to prevent financial manipulation in politics, an important role in politics, improve the significant responsibility mechanism, and ensure public resources are owed in a manner that serves the bigger interests of society rather than minority interests.

Since the 2003 invasion of Iraq, significant political changes have been experienced in the country. After the death of Saddam Hussein, a new political system was established (Matsunaga, 2019). After that, finance is in the hands of a few elites, and the influence of financial resources on political decisions becomes a major concern. Political parties and influential groups use financial power to maintain their control, transparency, social stability, and impact governance [1].

Moreover, this political journey results in the implementation of profound changes in its governance, social structure, and economy [2]. This type of establishment of a new democratic political system provides an opportunity for the country to move forward toward stability. Additionally, the post-2003 period led to significant challenges, among which the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few political elites stands out as one of the most pressing issues [3].

Similarly, the upward increase in the wealth of political elites, and national fuel resources such as revenues, foreign investments, as well as contracts, significantly shaped Iraq's political landscape. The impact of financial resources on the elections, governance processes, and political parties has fostered a system where wealth is not a tool of political leverage. It also helps in control and power [4]. This situation results in widespread concern related to corruption, transparency as well erosion of the democratic processes.

Now, in Iraq, wealth has become a vital power of the political parties., political elites use financial resources to secure their positions, manipulate rectoral outcomes, and influence public opinion which further increases their control of the country's political and economic spheres [4]. Further, the lack of transparency, institutional integrity, and accountability has led to the development of trust issues among citizens involving significant democratic deficits [5].

Interestingly, the inequality in the economic status has exacerbated the social division, which contributes to the instability and conflict within the country. Still, majority of the Iraq's population continues to face unemployment, poverty, and a lack of basic services [6]. Such disparities have undermined the legitimacy of the political system. Moreover, it has also sparked widespread protests, with calls for greater political as well as economic reforms [7].

The current study seeks to examine the influence of wealth in Iraq's post-2003 political system. It also focuses on the role of shaping political decision-making, exacerbating corruption, and declining the democratic processes [8]. By combining the quantitative and qualitative analysis, the research will provide a deeper understanding of how wealth and power impact the political governance of Iraq along with their long-term implication for the political stability of the country [9].

Significance of the study:

The study is significant as it offers valuable insight for various policy makers, international actors, and the civil society organizations to address the persistent challenges of corruption. Moreover, it is also helpful to address the role of wealth in Iraq's post 2003 political processes.

Objective of the study:

The objective of the study is to thoroughly analyze the influence of wealth on the political system of Iraq. It also examines the role of financial resources in shaping political outcomes, impacting governance, and enhancing corruption. It also provides empirical evidence on the link between the wealth and political instability in Iraq.

Research Questions:

1. How has the economic status affected the decision-making processes of the political elites in Iraq since 2003?
2. To what extent did the wealth concentration contribute to the political corruption in Iraq?

Literature Review:

Previous literature shows that wealth plays an important role in organizing political systems. A study was conducted in middle east showing that wealth concentration among elites can undermine democratic processes. The finding of the study suggests a rise in political parties that rely on financial resources to gain support, further entrenching elites in power [10].

Similarly, another study shows that since 2003, Iraq's economy has been facing severe economic crises. As its foreign reserves were depleted it had become a major debtor country. The study states that due to chronic depreciation in the Iraqi currency, the infrastructure in many important areas of the economy suffered. All these were because of hyperinflation and the rising unemployment. The finding of the study suggests that the gross domestic product (GDP) which is measured in nominal dollars dropped to 343\$ from 4219\$ moving from the 1980s to the 1990s. The combination of hyperinflation along currency devaluation is the main cause of smuggling and black market dealing. The study also revealed that corruption has spread everywhere after 1996. It is of great importance to understand the theme of corruption. The article focuses on the transition of Iraq after the death of Saddam Hussein [11].

Another study indicates a significant challenge in Iraq, the study shows that the influx of financial resources has aggravated the issues related to the economy. Many reports from organizations such as Transparency International highlighted the way how concentration of wealth in the hands of political elites led to the misuse of national resources. All those factors have an impact on the effectiveness of the Iraqi governance [12].

Moreover, another study highlights the wealth inequality that has created divisions in society as well as fueling social instability. The study discusses the relationship between income inequality, political instability as well as the erosion of the trust in the democratic institutions.

Methods

The current study employs the mixed-method approach including qualitative and the quantitative data analysis. Quantitative data analysis was done through the survey by using a questionnaire to gauge public perception of wealth's influence on Iraq's political system. whereas Interviews with the political experts and local leaders were conducted for qualitative data analysis. For quantitative data collection, a sample size of 50 was enrolled in the study. Whereas only fifteen participants were involved in the qualitative data collection. The questionnaire consists of five sections. The first section includes participant's demographics followed by a general perception of wealth. The third and fourth sections were related to the "wealth, corruption and governance" and

social and economic impacts respectively. The last section contains questions related to the future. The five-point Likert Scale was used to assess the opinions such as transparency, corruption, and the role of wealth in Iraq's political system. the questions that were asked in the interview were related to the personal experience and perception regarding the impact of the financial resources on governance. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis was used in quantitative data analysis to identify the correlation between various variables. While thematic analysis was used in qualitative data analysis to identify the recurring themes regarding the influence of wealth.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Results of Descriptive Statistics

Statement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	50	2.00	5.00	3.4400	.57711
Gender	50	1.00	2.00	1.1800	.38809
Occupation	50	1.00	5.00	2.5200	1.12920
impact of wealth in shaping Iraq's post-2003 political system.	50	1.00	3.00	2.0600	.71171
use of financial resources by political parties to operate and gain support.	50	1.00	3.00	2.4000	.69985
Wealth has led to increased political corruption in Iraq since 2003.	50	1.00	5.00	2.6000	.90351
The concentration of wealth among a few elites has undermined Iraq's democratic processes.	50	1.00	5.00	2.6600	.89466
The political elites in Iraq use wealth to maintain power and influence over government decisions.	50	1.00	5.00	3.0800	.98644
The influence of wealthy individuals or groups has negatively affected the effectiveness of Iraq's governance.	50	2.00	5.00	3.6000	.80812
There is a lack of transparency in the allocation of national resources (e.g., oil revenues, contracts) due to the influence of wealth.	50	1.00	5.00	3.2200	1.07457
Wealthy individuals or political groups have used their financial resources to manipulate Iraq's elections.	50	2.00	5.00	3.9800	.86873
Wealth inequality has caused greater social tensions and divisions in Iraq.	50	3.00	5.00	3.9400	.61974
The concentration of wealth in certain regions or sectors has led to social instability in Iraq.	50	1.00	4.00	2.1800	.89648
Wealthy elites have used their power to influence Iraq's foreign policy and international relations.	50	2.00	5.00	3.8800	.65900
The influence of wealth in Iraq's political system will increase in the coming years.	50	1.00	4.00	2.7800	.91003

Reforms should be made to limit the role of wealth in Iraq's political decision-making processes.	50	1.00	3.00	2.1600	.71027
Iraq's political system can become more transparent and equitable by reducing the influence of wealth.	50	1.00	4.00	2.9600	.66884
The media and civil society organizations play a strong role in counteracting the influence of wealth in Iraq's political process.	50	1.00	5.00	2.4200	.78480
The most important factor for creating a fair political system in Iraq is reducing the influence of wealthy elites.	50	1.00	4.00	1.9000	.58029
Valid N (listwise)	50				

The above table provides a comprehensive review of the participants' views on the influence of wealth. The mean values suggest a consensus about wealth. The impact of wealth in Iraq's political system is perceived moderately with a mean of 2.06, a higher agreement on issues such as the use of financial resources by the political parties was seen with a mean of 2.4. whereas a mean of 3.6 indicates the negative effects of wealth on governance. Participants agreed that wealth has increased the rate of political corruption as shown by a mean of 2.6. the data also highlights the major concerns about social inequality. Moreover, the data suggests that participants are optimistic about potential reforms to reduce its impact as shown by the reform mean of 2.16. The overall results show that wealth concentration has serious implications for Iraq's political stability, governance, and social equity.

The above table shows that wealth plays an important role in Iraq's political system. Most of the respondents agreed with the statement as shown by 72%. Political parties majorly depend on the financial resources to operate. About 48% of the participants agreed while 52% were neutral in this perception. Moreover, widespread recognition in terms of political corruption was given by the 50% of the participants. The concentration of wealth is a key factor in political elites maintaining power and influence. About 30% of participants state that it negatively affects governance. Moreover, transparency in the allocation of national resources was seen by 28% of the participants. Wealth equality is viewed to be a major concern of social tension. About 62% agreed with the statement. While the majority of them believe that economic influence on Iraq's foreign policy. The media and civil society are shown to play a key role in counteracting wealth's influence. Ultimately, many respondents believe that reducing the influence of wealthy elites is an important step towards creating a fair political system in Iraq.

Table 2. Result of Frequency evaluation

Questions:	Strongly agreed	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Impact of wealth in shaping Iraq's post-2003 political system.	22.0	72.0	36.0	
use of financial resources by political parties to operate and gain support.	12.0	48.0	52.0	
Wealth has led to increased political corruption in Iraq since 2003.	4	50	34	6
The concentration of wealth among a few elites has undermined Iraq's democratic processes.	2	52	28	14
The political elites in Iraq use wealth to maintain power and influence over government decisions.	2	30	34	26
The influence of wealthy individuals or groups has negatively affected the effectiveness of Iraq's governance.		10	30	50
There is a lack of transparency in the allocation of national resources (e.g., oil revenues, contracts) due to the influence of wealth.	2	28	30	26
Wealthy individuals or political groups have used their financial resources to manipulate Iraq's elections.		6	20	44
Wealth inequality has caused greater social tensions and divisions in Iraq.			22	62
The concentration of wealth in certain regions or sectors has led to social instability in Iraq.	26	36	32	6
Wealthy elites have used their power to influence Iraq's foreign policy and international relations.		2	22	62
The influence of wealth in Iraq's political system will increase in the coming years.	6	36	32	26
Reforms should be made to limit the role of wealth in Iraq's political decision-making processes.	18	48	34	
Iraq's political system can become more transparent and equitable by reducing the influence of wealth.	2	18	62	18
The media and civil society organizations play a strong role in counteracting the influence of wealth in Iraq's political process.	8	50	36	4
The most important factor for creating a fair political system in Iraq is reducing the influence of wealthy elites.	20	72	6	2

Table 3. Results of Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.686 ^a	.471	.215	.80064

The model summary shows that the R-value of 0.686 suggests a moderate to strong positive correlation between the predictor variables and the outcome. The R square value of 0.471 shows a mean of 47.1%. The Adjusted R square value of 0.215 shows that, about 21.5 of the variance is explained. The standard error of the estimate is 0.80064 which indicates the average distance suggesting a reasonable precision in the predictors.

Table 4. Result of ANOVA (Regression Analysis)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	18.846	16	1.178	1.838	.068 ^b
	Residual	21.154	33	.641		
	Total	40.000	49			

The ANOVA results show an F value of +1.83 and a p-value of 0.068, at a conventional 0.05 significance level. The current model is not statistically significant. This shows that the independent variable in the model does not predict the dependent variable. The sum of square values indicates the variation in the data, with the regression sum of squares being 18.846. it represents the level of variance explained by the model.

Table 5. Results of Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.316	2.187		.602	.551
Occupation	-.061	.126	-.076	-.486	.630
Impact of Wealth in shaping Iraq's post-2003 political system.	-.153	.216	-.121	-.710	.482
Use of financial resources by political parties to operate and gain support.	.251	.206	.194	1.217	.232
The concentration of wealth among a few elites has undermined Iraq's democratic processes.	-.260	.154	-.257	-1.689	.101
use of wealth by political elites to maintain power and influence over government decisions.	.196	.133	.214	1.475	.150
The influence of wealthy individuals or groups has negatively affected the effectiveness of Iraq's governance.	.302	.171	.270	1.773	.085

There is a lack of transparency in the allocation of national resources (e.g., oil revenues, contracts) due to the influence of wealth.	.333	.159	.396	2.087	.045
Wealthy individuals or political groups have used their financial resources to manipulate Iraq's elections.	-.227	.175	-.219	-1.299	.203
Wealth inequality has caused greater social tensions and divisions in Iraq.	.021	.230	.014	.091	.928
The concentration of wealth in certain regions or sectors has led to social instability in Iraq.	-.137	.145	-.136	-.945	.352
Wealthy elites have used their power to influence Iraq's foreign policy and international relations.	-.013	.271	-.010	-.048	.962
The influence of wealth in Iraq's political system will increase in the coming years.	-.176	.193	-.178	-.913	.368
Reforms should be made to limit the role of wealth in Iraq's political decision-making processes.	.423	.213	.333	1.990	.055
Iraq's political system can become more transparent and equitable by reducing the influence of wealth.	.303	.237	.224	1.277	.210
The media and civil society organizations play a strong role in counteracting the influence of wealth in Iraq's political process.	.088	.174	.076	.504	.618
The most important factor for creating a fair political system in Iraq is reducing the influence of wealthy elites.	-.674	.239	-.433	-2.816	.008

**Dependent Variable: Wealth has led to increased political corruption in Iraq since 2003.*

The above table shows that some variables do not show significant effects as shown by high p-value for example wealth inequality, occupation, media and civil society organization, and the concentration of wealth in certain regions. However, the variable shows a statistically significant positive effect as shown by a p-value of 0.045. it implies that transparency issues are the key factor in shaping Iraq's political system. Moreover, the most important factor for creating a fair political system in Iraq is reducing the influence of wealthy elites showing a p-value of 0.008, which indicates a significant negative relationship. The variable "reforms should be made to limit the role of wealth in Iraq's political decision-making processes" shows a p-value of 0.055, which is marginally significant. It indicates a moderate inclination towards supporting reforms. Overall, reducing the influence of wealth on Iraq's political processes emerges

as a key focus.

Table 6. Results of Thematic Analysis

Theme	Sub-Theme	Comments	No. of Participants Mentioned
Wealth and Political Power Consolidation	Political Elites' Power Retention	Political families use wealth to keep themselves in power.	12
	Influence over Political Parties	Wealth is the backbone of political parties; without it, no party can survive in Iraq.	10
Corruption and Governance Issues	Corruption in Government Contracts	The concentration of wealth allows elites to control government contracts and bypass regulations.	13
	Lack of Accountability	We don't know where the money is going. There's no transparency in the use of national resources.	11
Wealth Inequality and Social Tensions	Social Division and Resentment	The wealth gap has created anger. The poor feel left out of the system.	10
	Ethnic and Sectarian Divide	In regions where the rich are concentrated, there is an increase in sectarian conflicts.	8
Political Manipulation and Influence	Wealth's Role in Election Manipulation	Wealthy politicians use money to buy votes and manipulate public opinion.	9
	Influence on Political Decisions	Money allows elites to influence decisions in their favor, even within parliament.	7
Transparency and Accountability	Erosion of Public Trust	There's no oversight. The lack of transparency means the public loses trust in the government.	10
	Opaque Resource Allocation	National resources, like oil, are mismanaged because of the powerful influence of the wealthy.	9
Impact of Wealth on Iraq's Foreign Policy	Influence on International Relations	The wealth of elites is used to make deals with foreign countries that benefit their interests.	5

The examination of the analysis shows that the wealth focus in Iraq is an important factor in contributing to corruption in politics, government tasks, and social volatility. The popularity of representatives supports altering the political power and recognizing the significance of opaque behavior in allocating resources. Besides these, some issues in the regression model alarm over statistical importance; the values suggest that reducing the power of wealthy substitutes could lead to a more opaque and standard political system in Iraq. The thematic analysis emphasizes the conception that wealth plays an important role in shaping the political trail of Iraq.

Discussion

This research underscores the inclusive control of wealth in the political system of Iraq in the post-2003 era, on the whole, political corruption, embedded power within the privileged circle, and deteriorating government structures [13]. This conclusion suggests that financial resources have an important role in determining the political dynamics of a country, allowing different groups to unite their control authority while compiling others. This survey data shows that a considerable majority of contributors distinguish their wealth as a major factor in determining political outcomes [14]. Political parties develop their networks and secure their positions, and they depend on financial resources to maintain their procedures. Where dishonesty adds on, social inequalities get deeper, and political management is more and more increased by economic welfare rather than elected values, this trust in wealth has an impact on the environment. However, the research highlights dread concerning the precision and liability of fiscal resources within the following scheme. Many people expressed their dissatisfaction over the dense mechanism leading to the stipend of prosperity and resources, mentioning these issues as primary hurdles to the domination. Further corroding trust in the government and its ability to address the concerns of citizens effectively, the observation that wealth facilitates the political elites to influence institutions and policies for personal gain has led to more disappointment among the public. Regression analysis is complete as a part of a study that shows the focus of wealth among political leaders and their intentional use of financial authority, applying measurable effects on its outcomes or results in conclusions. However, the numerical representation did not compete with the importance, suggesting the additional factors may also be engaged in recreation in manipulating the case that wealth plays an important role in measuring the political realities, with people over and over again nominating the lack of responsibility mechanisms as a main hindrance to change [15].

Conclusion

This study concludes that the popular conditions highlight the emergency need for universal improvement at limitations that have a vast impact on wealth in the political area of Iraq. Dealing with such issues as reasonable resource distribution, increasing precision, and highly maintaining anti-corruption measures also contributes to the development of a more immediate and self-governing network of supremacy. Eventually, developing a political system that prioritizes responsibility over economic supremacy is important for improving long-term stability and community belief or self-determination in Iraq. Underscoring, the urgency of implementing the targeted reforms, to control the

unbalanced impact on it.

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