



The U.S. Government's Approach to Economic Security

Focus on Campaign Activities

By George E. Katsos

Threats to economic security and their potential effects often disrupt or fracture societies. For nations, economic security perpetuates stability and underpins national institutions that provide and maintain it. For populations, economic security involves

consistent access to employment opportunities, personal assets, and assured income. While human ambitions can inflame pressures on economic security, oppressive government practices can lead to job loss, unemployment, persistent poverty, and lack of access to income. Moreover, living conditions worsened by instability and political uncertainty can elevate fears and hopelessness. These circumstances can engender civilians to consider desper-

ate measures, which frequently include uprooting from their established communities in search of a better standard of living. As these issues overwhelm institutional capacities and disturb regional norms, the demand for intervention from security provider nations such as the United States is expected to not only continue but also increase.

To compare present day distinctions of economic security, descriptions and definitions are presented from both U.S.

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Government (USG) and non-USG organizational documentation. In 2017, the National Security Strategy described economic security as an element of national security and stated that economic vitality, growth, and prosperity are absolutely necessary for American power and influence.¹ The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) economic security perspective is based on the increasing dependence on the flow of goods, services, people, capital, information, and technology across borders.² The Department of Defense (DOD) defines *economic security* as the ability to protect or advance U.S. economic interests, shape international interests to American liking, and possess material resources to fend off non-economic challenges.³ The United Nations (UN) focuses on an assured basic income, while the International Committee of the Red Cross defines economic security as the ability of individuals, households, or communities to cover their essential needs sustainably and with dignity.⁴ For purposes here, economic security includes the aforementioned but focuses on USG commitments and stabilization efforts. This analysis is based on research and informal discussions and is categorized into the following sections: legislation, international engagement, executive branch strategy and activities, and military campaign activities in support of economic security efforts.

Legislation

Per the Constitution, Congress has authority over Federal financial and budgetary matters. Its exclusive power to appropriate funds and regulate commerce allows it to pass revenue and related crisis-mitigation legislation when the country is under considerable economic pressure. The Constitution also provided Congress with authority to establish a monetary system of paper currency that at the time was based on precious metals (gold and silver). Today, the U.S. Government practices stabilization abroad in many areas and protects American citizens from economic shocks stateside. From American independence to World War I, Congress generated revenue through taxes, tariffs,

and customs duties.⁵ Between world wars, Congress created the Federal Reserve System to supervise, regulate, maintain, and stabilize the financial system; produced reforms to recover from an economic depression; and enacted trade restrictions on Japan in response to its aggressive expansion in Asia. Postwar, Congress established an economic advisory council, foreign assistance and financial assistance organizations (for example, the U.S. Trade and Development Agency and Overseas Private Investment Corporation), and a special trade representative to conduct U.S. trade negotiations.⁶ Between 1963 and 1971, the United States lifted itself off the gold standard and from silver certificates.⁷ Further legislation attempts were to eliminate poverty, expand educational opportunities, increase the safety net for the poor and unemployed, and tend to the health and financial needs of the elderly.⁸

International Engagement

The U.S. Government works within established international economic agreements developed by political entities of similar interest. From one end of the economic security spectrum, the United States identifies and cooperates with some countries on a “most favored nation” or “permanent normal economic relation” status. Toward the opposite end, activities within a cooperative environment can become more competitive with tariffs, financial/import/export restrictions, organized boycotts, asset freezing, economic sanctions, trade/technology/travel bans, embargoes, no-fly/no-drive zones, and blockades and can deteriorate into conflict. After World War I, the League of Nations was created to assist in mitigating future conflict, but by the end of World War II, the League was replaced by the UN, which also supported economic development efforts, job creation, and poverty elimination. The UN Monetary and Financial Conference, also known as the Bretton Woods Agreement, subsequently established an international monetary system tied to gold that provided international

economic stability.⁹ Organizations created by the end of post–World War II included the International Monetary Fund, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), World Bank Group (the IBRD and International Development Association are better known as the World Bank), and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade that later transitioned into the World Trade Organization.¹⁰ Furthermore, global summits (for example, the G-8) were created to resolve differences between wealthy nations regarding economic decisionmaking. The UN also created the UN Development Programme to help manage organizational economic development efforts and established exclusive economic zones (EEZ) at sea where nations can explore and use marine resources for economic purposes.¹¹

The Executive Branch

Economic security underpins national security and is the foundation for national power capabilities. The President signs the National Security Strategy, which articulates overarching strategic policy goals and national power direction on matters related to economic security. Subsequently, executive branch departments produce organizational strategies and plans in support of the strategy. The President can also issue policy direction through executive orders. Such orders included a response to the pre–World War II economic depression and the creation of the National Economic Council to coordinate and advise the President on economic policymaking.¹² Executive orders issued specifically for national security purposes are called Presidential directives. To better review a breakdown of USG economic security efforts, the following overview captures them in three cascading categories: significant, additional, and remaining.

Significant Efforts. Two organizations that lead USG efforts in foreign policy and economic assistance are the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). While State manages foreign affairs



Visit, board, search, and seizure team from USS *Halsey* approaches two Yemeni dhows intercepted during routine maritime security operations, Gulf of Aden, February 5, 2012 (U.S. Navy/Krishna M. Jackson)

for the President, USAID integrates economic development and disaster assistance expertise to implement abroad. Both organizations are structured under the Secretary of State and follow guidance outlined in strategic documents that include economic reforms, combating corruption, building markets for U.S. goods and services, and assisting other nations in crisis, including those disrupted by natural disasters. Through diplomacy and assistance, both State and USAID provide a competitive forward-deployed political capability that can achieve national economic security objectives.¹³ State also implements diplomatic pressure through its Defense Trade Controls Directorate.

Two other departments that play significant roles in achieving USG economic security objectives are the Department of the Treasury and Department of Commerce. Treasury activities are meant to preserve confidence in the U.S. economic system. Informed by its own in-house intelligence expertise and its Office of Foreign Assets Control,

Treasury cuts the lines of terrorist financial support, fights financial crime, enforces economic sanctions against rogue nations, and combats financial support tied to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation.¹⁴ Abroad, Treasury assists multilateral development banks, strengthens relationships with trading partners, and negotiates trade agreements that benefit the United States. At home, Treasury identifies social safety programs to help protect American citizens from negative economic shocks as well as manages government revenues, produces currency and coinage, collects taxes, pays government bills, and supervises banks.¹⁵

Commerce strengthens the Nation's digital economy and promotes job creation and improved living standards by creating a domestic infrastructure that encourages economic growth, technological competitiveness, and sustainable development. As the coordinating agency for the National Disaster Recovery Framework's Economic Recovery Support Function, Commerce leads efforts that support the return of economic

and business activities (including agricultural) to health and develops economic opportunities that are sustainable and economically viable.¹⁶ Furthermore, Commerce's Census Bureau captures and releases poverty statistics in the United States, the International Trade Administration promotes U.S. exports of nonagricultural services and goods, and the Economic Development Administration provides grants and technical assistance to economically distressed communities.¹⁷

Additional Efforts. Other departments make substantial contributions to USG economic security efforts. The Department of Homeland Security identifies vulnerabilities to U.S. economic security, collaborates to secure global systems, collects customs revenue, enforces U.S. law, and provides domestic economic security and stability through coordination mechanisms managed by its Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).¹⁸ Furthermore, Homeland Security administers the Coast Guard and U.S. Customs and Border Protection,

which facilitate the legitimate use of waterways subject to U.S. jurisdiction—including the EEZ—and monitor border crossings, respectively.¹⁹ The Department of Justice and its Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) promote economic security by upholding and reinforcing legal paradigms that support growth and recovery by investigating and prosecuting economic crimes.²⁰ DOD supports USG economic security efforts primarily through its military workforce.²¹ Besides providing physical security, DOD assists to disrupt and prevent predatory economic practices, provides assistance in all kinds of environments, and rebuilds and sustains economic infrastructure disrupted by instability and conflict.

Remaining Efforts. Remaining efforts include the Department of Energy's support of technologies to create jobs and growth of the national economy, the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Promise Zones initiative to drive the revitalization of high-poverty communities, and the Departments of Education and Agriculture's focus on helping find solutions to alleviate conditions that reinforce the prevalence of high-poverty neighborhoods and persistent poverty.²² Additionally, the Department of Transportation assures the accessibility and health of Federal thoroughfares on land and water (roads, bridges, rail).

As USG entities continue to develop plans that include support of national economic security policy objectives, the government is uncertain how it will react to international economic system disruption, complete collapse, or aggressive competitor measures within the global economy. Free of concerns from Western democracies, some foreign governments and entities take aggressive stances in defining themselves and pursuing their own political dominance. In 1948, the Soviet Union conducted a yearlong land blockade of Berlin that prevented food, commerce, and other resources from flowing into the city in an effort to disrupt and deter U.S. and Allied influence in the region. In 1973, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries established an oil embargo in response to

policies in support of Israel during the Arab-Israeli conflict, significantly impacting economies dependent on the natural resource. In 2006 and 2009, the Russian Federation shut off natural gas support to Ukraine to coerce higher payments and influence behavior of others dependent on its Cold War-era prepositioned pipeline systems.²³ In Asia in 2016, China tried to establish an air defense identification zone (no-fly zone) over the South China Sea to protect its economic benefits by controlling the region.²⁴ Last year the Russian Federation published its first economic security strategy in over 20 years to monitor and assess its domestic economic security and provide a warning to other nations that it will neutralize both internal and external threats related to the competitive advantages of developed countries.²⁵ Most recently, the U.S. and Chinese governments elevated threats and actions against each other on trade tariffs, taxes and duties, and investment restrictions. Issues similar to and such as these can ignite concerted USG diplomatic action and even DOD workforce employment.

Military Campaign Activities

Threats that national economies encounter may likely involve a response from security institutions such as DOD. In support of USG activities, combatant commanders and their staffs integrate economic considerations into plans, preparation, training, and missions to influence adversarial behavior, maintain order, prepare for relief, or attempt to mitigate issues impacting local and regional stability, such as poverty and unemployment. However, economic considerations may not always be feasible during implementation due to competing operational interests that a commander must assess, such as the inherent right of self-defense and combat. To socialize the DOD economic security role, discussions and implications appear in joint doctrine.²⁶ While many terms can be used to describe DOD economic security efforts (investments, deployments, operations), this discussion refers to them as *campaign activities*.

DOD campaign activities support USG contributions to international, regional, and national approaches that can create secure operational areas where economic activity can thrive and adversarial behavior can be influenced to be more in harmony with local population needs and U.S. vital interests. At the international level, DOD supports USG peacekeeping efforts to stabilize nations and their economies through force contributions and individual expertise. These efforts involve cooperation with other nations and entities. At the regional level, DOD supports USG cooperation efforts with entities such as the National Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with force contributions and individual expertise. In support of domestic efforts, combatant commanders conduct homeland defense missions, offer defense support (as well as training and exercises) to civil authorities, and participate in special events and public engagement that can generate confidence in the U.S. economic structure. The following two sections articulate some of the ways that combatant commanders can support USG efforts to apply and relieve economic pressure in potential operational areas.

Enforcement. DOD campaign activities can apply pressure on physical and virtual freedom of movement (divert, disrupt, delay, destroy) through land, sea, air, space, and cyberspace in order to assist in upholding international, regional, or USG economic restrictions into or out of a nation or specified area. Combatant commanders enforce diplomatic policies and political decisions to control access to areas of interest defined by the President. This includes enforcing strong diplomatic measures such as embargoes (banning or blocking the flow of trade or personnel), economic sanctions (specific economic penalties), no-fly/no-drive zones, and other control methods (freezing of assets).²⁷ For example, a blockade at sea monitors, intercepts, and enforces the stop of flow of commerce or opposition force movement. In support of plans, mandates, or orders, a geographic combatant commander's maritime interception capability can establish a barrier that authorizes armed boarding parties

to visit merchant ships, examine documents and cargo, search for evidence of contraband including WMDs, divert vessels failing to comply with guidelines set forth by a sanctioning body or nation, seize suspect vessels and their cargo that refuse to divert, and destroy vessels and cargo if necessary.²⁸ Historical examples include the 1862 Union unilateral naval blockade of Confederate territory during the American Civil War to deter foreign assistance and trade, the 1962 unilateral U.S. naval blockade (politically labeled a “quarantine”) established to deter Russia from delivering offensive weapons to Cuba, the 1990 U.S. contribution to a coalition naval blockade (politically labeled an “interdiction”) to enforce a UN international embargo against Iraq, and the 1992 U.S.-supported NATO naval blockade authorized by the United Nations to deter international water shipments to the former Yugoslavia.

On land, similar campaign activities involve blocking movements or checkpoints. In 1990, U.S. troops under U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), in support of an allied coalition, created a land defense of Saudi Arabia to deter Iraqi ground expansion from occupied Kuwait. Other campaign activities support no-fly/no-drive zones and block or control the flow of traffic on the ground and in the air. In 1990, USCENTCOM supported UN-mandated no-fly/no-drive zones to protect civilian populations in Iraq.²⁹ In 2011, U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) supported a UN-authorized no-fly zone over Libya to prevent government forces from approaching rebel strongholds and transitioned it to NATO management.³⁰

Other campaign activities conducted with interagency personnel develop evidentiary records against terrorist and criminal networks through their finances. For example, combatant commanders cooperate with agencies like Homeland Security and the FBI to share threat information on corruption and malicious cyber activities.³¹ Recently, DOD cooperation with Justice and Treasury led to freezing assets of one Iranian entity and 10 Iranian individuals for significant malicious cyber-enabled activities.³² In

U.S. Pacific Command, DOD personnel partnered with Treasury analysts to identify terrorist support networks and their finances in Southeast Asia. In USAFRICOM, DOD personnel worked with Treasury analysts in efforts to counter terrorism, drug activities, and threat networks and their financial support.³³ Combatant commands also conduct campaign activities in defense of the homeland and USG interests, to include illegal WMD acquisition and cyber attacks of significant consequence that can produce serious economic impact on the United States.³⁴

Assistance. DOD campaign activities can relieve pressure on unstable economies and host-nation governments, their populations, and uprooted civilians. Civilian-military cooperation can increase the role of economic development in advancing national security priorities along with defense and diplomacy.³⁵ Civilian entities such as State or USAID normally have the USG lead responsibility, but combatant commands may render support to efforts, such as the restoration of functioning economic production and distribution (restoring employment opportunities, initiating market reform, mobilizing domestic and foreign investment, supervising monetary reform, and rebuilding public structures). Assisting USAID in conflict prevention, combatant commanders support USG stabilization and reconstruction efforts, development and cooperation efforts, and hazard response and relief to break cycles of violence abroad caused by unemployment and poverty. Campaign activities in support of USG stabilization and reconstruction efforts are small-scale and short-term projects designed to promote stability on the ground. Through the provisions of special operations forces training, civil-military interaction, and Provincial Reconstruction Team oversight like those conducted in Afghanistan and Iraq, combatant command personnel monitor and partake in economic stability tasks as well as identify the most effective transition of military activities into civilian economic efforts.³⁶

Campaign activities can include establishing secure economic zones where

civilians are able to conduct commerce and business activity as well as be available as local labor for quick impact projects. In Afghanistan and Haiti, the United States participated in economic reconstruction efforts where DOD provided funding that focused on local production, consumption, and export of goods.³⁷ For assistance, combatant commanders can coordinate early with partners and stakeholders to request flexible and immediate funding for work initiatives similar to the USCENTCOM Commander’s Emergency Response Program utilized in Afghanistan and Iraq that quickly implemented postconflict stabilization and reconstruction programs.

Combatant commanders and their forces also address underlying economic drivers of conflict by assisting in assuring access to basic income and employment and, when necessary, providing government-financed social safety nets, agriculture and economy diversification, and reconstruction protection of critical economic infrastructure. Furthermore, combatant commands assist in critical infrastructure program implementation via the Army Corps of Engineers and naval construction battalions to bolster economic stabilization and rebuild facilities such as sea and airport dual-use infrastructure. Combatant commands also support USG restoration programs of revenue-earning thoroughfares (land, water) and enterprises (for example, Iraq oil and Guinea aluminum ore mining) to accelerate economic recovery as well as provide assistance to develop monetary policy and a central bank system.³⁸

Larger scale and longer term projects are designed to promote strategic objectives and partnerships.³⁹ Combatant commanders support these development and cooperation efforts to build partner capacity and host-nation economic security. Normally, these activities are conducted by USAID; however, campaign activities socialized with Chief of Mission and other country managers may be necessary when conditions restrict civilian movement or when civilian agencies have not yet arrived in the area. USAFRICOM personnel presently engage with partners and organizations through security

cooperation to develop self-sustaining capabilities for their own EEZ maintenance. Through civil affairs teams (and even coordination agencies such as USAID and FEMA), U.S. Special Operations Command provides on-the-ground observations of economic security threats in real time and mitigates issues that can exacerbate unemployment, poverty, and prolonged periods of recovery.⁴⁰

Economic security can stabilize nations and regions and lead to building and improving community relationships, lessening criminal influences on vulnerable populations, and decreasing diplomatic problems that question the legitimacy of good governance. But it can also converge or conflict with other nations in pursuit of their own economic or vital national interests. As such, U.S. policies and presence abroad may in the future generate the very challenges that the U.S. Government and combatant commanders need to alleviate. Regardless, the application and relief of USG pressure on national economies and organization finances will continue to perpetuate DOD involvement in the years to come. JFQ

Notes

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³ C.R. Neu and Charles Wolf, Jr., *The Economic Dimensions of National Security* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1994), vi, 69–78.

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⁵ Sheila R. Ronis, ed., *Economic Security: Neglected Dimension of National Security?* (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2011), 18.

⁶ *Federal Reserve Act*, Pub. L. 63-43, 12 U.S. Code § 221 to 522, ch. 6, 38 Stat. 251, 63rd Cong., 2nd sess., December 23, 1913; *The Employment Act of 1946*, Pub. L. 79-304, Stat. 380, 79th Cong., 2nd sess., February 20, 1946; *Presidential Council of Economic Advisers*, Pub. L. 88-36, 77 Stat. 54; *The Economic Stabilization Act of 1970*, Pub. L. 91-379, 84 Stat. 799, enacted August 15, 1970, formerly codified at 12 U.S. Code § 1904; *Foreign Assistance Act of 1961*, Pub. L. 87-195, 87th Cong., 1st sess., September 4, 1961; *Foreign Assistance Act of 1961*, Pub. L. 87-195, 22 U.S. Code § 2421, ch. 282, 67 Stat. 230, as amended 1961; *Foreign Assistance Act of 1961*, Pub. L. 87-195, as amended 1969; *Trade Expansion Act of 1962*, Pub. L. 87-794, 19 U.S. Code § 1801, 76 Stat. 872, enacted October 11, 1962; *Small Business Act*, currently codified at 15 U.S. Code, ch. 14A.

⁷ *The Economic Stabilization Act of 1970*.

⁸ *The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964*, Pub. L. 88-452, 1981 U.S. Code § 1996b, 88th Cong., 2nd sess., August 20, 1964.

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¹⁸ *Fiscal Years 2014–2018 Strategic Plan* (Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, 2014), 13, 21–22, available at <www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/FY14-18%20Strategic%20Plan.PDF>; *Department of Homeland Security Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2012–2016* (Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, February 2012), 19, available at <www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/DHS%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>; “National Disaster Recovery Framework.”

¹⁹ “Maritime Law Enforcement Program,” U.S. Coast Guard, available at <www.overview.uscg.mil/Missions/Maritime_Law/>. The United States is not a party to the law but does observe its intent prescribed by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to inland waters to ensure the U.S. exclusive economic zone integrity.

²⁰ *United States Department of Justice Fiscal Years 2014–2018 Strategic Plan* (Washington, DC: Department of Justice, 2014), 21, 30–31, available at <www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/jmd/legacy/2014/02/28/doj-fy-2014-2018-strategic-plan.pdf>.

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²⁵ Multiple Russian, Chinese, and Indian media outlet sources, 2017.

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²⁸ *Ibid.*

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JP 3-09, *Joint Fire Support*

JP 3-09.3, *Close Air Support*

JP 3-16, *Multinational Operations*

JP 3-30, *Command and Control of Joint Air Operations*

JP 3-40, *Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction*

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JP 3-07.4, *Counterdrug Operations*

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JP 3-17, *Air Mobility Operations*

JP 3-28, *Defense Support of Civil Authorities*

JP 3-29, *Foreign Humanitarian Assistance*

JP 3-32, *Command and Control for Joint Maritime Operations*

JP 3-57, *Civil-Military Operations*

JP 3-60, *Joint Targeting*

JP 4-0, *Joint Logistics*

JP 4-04, *Joint Contingency Basing*

JP 4-09, *Distribution Operations*

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³⁵ *USAID Policy on Cooperation with the Department of Defense* (Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development, June 2015), available at <www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAIDPolicy-CooperationDoD.pdf>.

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