

Iraq Strategy Review:

Options for U.S. Policy

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Iraq has been a continuing problem for U.S. policy, as was brought home during the November 1997-February 1998 crisis. Whereas much dissatisfaction was heard about the current policy, the popular debate exposed the difficulties with alternative courses of action. The challenge posed by Iraq for U.S. policy has some enduring elements, but it has also changed rather significantly in the last two years. The aim of this study is to flesh out that policy debate by presenting the detailed case for each of the policy alternatives.

This study details the choices the United States faces regarding Iraq. To that end, the authors have accented the differences among five policy options they present.

- Broad Containment -- the existing U.S. policy -- could be revitalized to keep in place the full panoply of restrictions on Iraq.
- Narrow Containment would acknowledge that the current broader range of constraints on Iraq cannot be sustained, and thus focus on restricting Iraqi military capabilities.
- Undermining Saddam's regime would involve supporting the Iraqi opposition to weaken if not destabilize Saddam's rule to the point that he is ousted, whether by assassination-cum-coup or, less plausibly, by the opposition coming to power. Alternatively, the United States might consider an explicit policy of overthrowing Saddam, replacing him with a pluralist, pro-Western opposition.
- Deterrence would largely limit itself to preventing Iraqi use of force, without the current level of emphasis on restricting Iraqi military capabilities.
- Invasion and Occupation would be the most ambitious U.S. option. It is realistic only in response to a significant Iraqi provocation, and only if the operation enjoyed strong congressional and U.S. public support, active cooperation from key regional allies, and at least tolerance from the broader international community.

The choice among options is not necessarily so stark: Some combinations of elements from the five policies are quite possible.

This study is not the place to analyze how great is the Saddam threat, how resilient is his regime, how significant is the Saddam quandry relative to other problems, or how important is the breadth of international support. This is a descriptive rather than prescriptive study; its purpose is to analyze the actions required for and the implications of each policy option regarding Iraq. Every author approached his chapter in that spirit, presenting the best case for the respective policy, regardless of his own opinion on the matter.

- **181 Pages**

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