

## Iraq: Options for U.S. Policy

Jun 1, 1993



In-Depth Reports

**T**he Clinton administration inherited a flawed Iraq policy from the Bush administration, but, in formulating a new policy, it has failed to accurately define those flaws. Its emphasis on "depersonalizing" the conflict with Iraq by shifting the focus from Saddam Hussein to Baghdad's compliance with relevant UN resolutions may mean that the Clinton administration will eventually, if reluctantly, come to terms with Saddam's dogged hold on power and accept a diluted form of Iraqi compliance with the resolutions. Although that may be far from the administration's intent, the present formulation of U.S. policy may weaken the coalition and lead to that result nonetheless.

The Clinton administration has stated that it will enforce all UN resolutions, including Resolution 687, which, inter alia, provides for stripping Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, and Resolution 688, which demands that Baghdad cease to repress its population. Baghdad's campaign against the Marsh Arabs in the south, modeled on the genocidal "Anfal" campaign against the Kurds in the late 1980s, constitutes a major violation of Resolution 688. At the same time, northern Iraq is under an internal embargo whose greatest effect is to deny the population desperately needed fuel supplies.

The Clinton administration needs to develop a strategy for implementing its declared policy. As the enforcement of Resolution 688 is tantamount to Saddam Hussein's overthrow, meaningful enforcement of all relevant UN resolutions would aim at the fall of the present regime in Baghdad. Such a strategy would entail a variety of political and military measures, including: the indictment of Saddam and his entourage for war crimes and crimes against humanity; increased support and recognition of the umbrella opposition group, the Iraqi National Congress; the establishment of a safe haven zone in southern Iraq; the lifting of sanctions on those areas of Iraq not controlled by Saddam Hussein. The governing idea would be to promote Saddam's fall through the unraveling of his control over both ends of the country.

Any U.S. military action should aim at significantly weakening Saddam's base of support, especially his internal security forces, the Republican Guards, and sites in the rural Sunni areas north of Baghdad that are home to Saddam's loyalists, the backbone of the regime.

Even in the absence of such assertive measures, it is still necessary to create a more stable basis for ensuring the security of northern Iraq. The agreement with Turkey under which coalition aircraft protect the Kurdish safe haven is subject to semi-annual renewal. Given the vagaries of any parliamentary system, there may come a time when that agreement will not be renewed. The failure to address the humanitarian crisis in northern Iraq, which grows more acute each winter and is exacerbated by the two embargoes imposed on the region, by the UN and by Baghdad, could increase serious social tensions in Iraqi Kurdistan, leaving the Kurds with no choice but to negotiate the best possible deal with Baghdad. Such an outcome would, in practice, be akin to America's 1975 betrayal of the Kurds, despite the Clinton administration's best intentions.

## RECOMMENDED



BRIEF ANALYSIS

### [Tracking Anti-U.S. Strikes in Iraq and Syria During the Gaza Crisis](#)

May 4, 2024



Michael Knights,  
Amir al-Kaabi,  
Hamdi Malik

[\(/policy-analysis/tracking-anti-us-strikes-iraq-and-syria-during-gaza-crisis\)](#)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

### [Is Kataib Hezbollah Behind the Saraya al-Ashtar Claimed Attack on Israel?](#)

May 4, 2024



Michael Knights,  
Amir al-Kaabi,  
Hamdi Malik

[\(/policy-analysis/kataib-hezbollah-behind-saraya-al-ashtar-claimed-attack-israel\)](#)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

### [Nuclear Agency Chief Visits Iran: Expectations and Next Steps](#)

May 3, 2024



Simon Henderson

[\(/policy-analysis/nuclear-agency-chief-visits-iran-expectations-and-next-steps\)](#)

## TOPICS

[Military & Security \(/policy-analysis/military-security\)](#)

[Proliferation \(/policy-analysis/proliferation\)](#)

[U.S. Policy \(/policy-analysis/us-policy\)](#)

## REGIONS & COUNTRIES

[Iraq \(/policy-analysis/iraq\)](#)