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THE FUTURE OF IRAQ

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PREFACE

When the U.S.-led allied forces liberated Kuwait after six weeks of devastating air attacks and only one hundred hours of ground combat, few had any serious doubt that Saddam Hussein's days were numbered. Reports from the Allied command indicated that his fearsome army was decimated, his command and control capability severely reduced, and massive Kurdish and Shi'i rebellions were gaining ground in both northern and southern Iraq. Just three weeks later, however, the situation had taken a turn in favor of Saddam's regime: the Shi'i rebellion in the south was crushed, and regime forces retook the key Kurdish city of Kirkuk, occupied much of Iraqi Kurdistan, and sent two million refugees fleeing to the Turkish and Iranian border. Saddam appeared as much in control of Iraq as ever.

The U.S. administration had avoided making the removal of Saddam's regime an overt objective of U.S. policy. Was the Bush administration really concerned to avoid interfering in Iraq's affairs, or did it fear the potentially destabilizing effects of either a Kurdish or Shi'i success? What or who did the administration want to replace Saddam—a military dictatorship, possibly, or a new Ba'ath leadership? In this Policy Paper, Laurie Mylroie explores the future of the Iraqi regime and the possible options for a new leadership to succeed Saddam.

Throughout the Gulf crisis, Laurie Mylroie has masterfully explained the complex history of Iraqi politics to a broad audience of citizens and policymakers alike. This

paper provides a rich, contextual analysis of Iraq's past, present and possible future. Beginning with the existing institutions of political power in Iraq, Dr. Mylroie examines the instruments by which Saddam Hussein has maintained his dictatorship—the internal security forces, his loyal Takriti clan, the Ba'ath party, and the army. Most of these institutions remain functional after the Gulf war, but it is unclear whether any of them can provide the basis for a stable regime in Iraq, at peace with its neighbors.

In addition to the official sources of political power in Iraq, there also exist myriad opposition groups eager for an historic opportunity to rid themselves of Ba'athist rule. These groups, their ideologies and leaders, are also treated at length.

Finally Dr. Mylroie analyzes U.S. policy toward Iraq since the end of the Gulf war—what it was trying to accomplish, and where it may have failed. The paper offers two options for U.S. policy toward post-war Iraq that may help to bring the egregious regime of Saddam Hussein to an end.

As the U.S. struggles between its desire to see Saddam gone, and its fear of a Vietnam-style "quagmire," we are pleased to present Dr. Mylroie's timely and thorough analysis of the difficult issues that surround the future of post-war Iraq. Dr. Mylroie presents us with a guide to understanding the complexities of this ethnically-divided society, reeling under the burdens of war, ideological struggle and dictatorship.

Barbi Weinberg
President
June 1991

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Operation Desert Storm may well go down in history as America's most successful military operation. The unexpected speed of Kuwait's liberation, the small number of allied casualties, and the astonishingly high kill ratios of enemy tanks and aircraft destroyed to allied equipment lost are all hallmarks of the war. Nor are the gains of Operation Desert Storm small. Had Iraqi forces remained in Kuwait, Baghdad would have controlled 20 percent of the world's oil reserves, and cast an intimidating shadow over Saudi Arabia's 20 percent of world oil. Baghdad's seemingly insane efforts to accumulate weapons of mass destruction have been set back, and Saddam Hussein has failed in his bid to mobilize the Arab peoples around a militaristic anti-Westernism.

Even so one may ask whether the political achievements of this war will prove to be of the same magnitude as its military triumphs. How will Desert Storm appear a year from now? What if Saddam Hussein remains in power, unpunished and unrepentant? What if the reconstruction of Kuwait proceeds slowly, the oil fields still burn, and the sheikhdom is politically troubled, torn between a ruling family seeking to maintain its pre-war privileges and a restive population demanding political rights it feels it has earned by organizing, enduring, and resisting the Iraqi occupation? Will Saddam Hussein's bloody repression of the Kurdish and Shi'i revolts, conducted while the United States Air Force controlled the skies of Iraq, become a more vivid and lasting image than the liberation of Kuwait? Will the tremendous military

achievements of Desert Storm in the end dissipate in the sands of the Middle East?

At the heart of these ambiguities lies Saddam Hussein's continued presence as ruler of Iraq. The American administration maintains the position that Saddam Hussein should be removed from power. Such an outcome seems necessary to any fully satisfactory conclusion of this war. Surely, if "war crimes" has any meaning, Saddam Hussein is a criminal and outlaw. But who, or what, would replace him? That question generates immediate unease and second thoughts. It is argued by some that there are developments possible in Iraq's future worse than Saddam Hussein, above all the prospect of instability. Yet even if it were conceded that accepting Saddam Hussein was the price of stability, would Iraq under Saddam Hussein be "stable"?

The first section of this policy paper examines the institutions that maintain Saddam's regime in power. Can any of those institutions serve as the basis for a new government in Iraq that would neither be aggressive toward its neighbors nor so repressive toward its own population that its human rights record would make it nearly intolerable for the United States to deal with? Indeed, contrary to the conventional wisdom of *realpolitik,* how a government treats its own population is not easily separable from how it treats its neighbors. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was very much the product of the country's domestic system. First, as a matter of political culture, the regime deals with the country's tremendous internal tensions by directing them outward, in external aggression. Second, in terms of government structure, in a less authoritarian system, Saddam Hussein would likely have received the advice that he was headed on a disastrous course. Finally, Saddam Hussein's repression of Iraq's Shi'i and Kurdish populations created a tremendous refugee problem for Turkey and Iran, precipitated an American reintervention in Iraq, and has raised tensions along the Iranian-Iraqi border. Once again, Iraq's internal tensions had spilled over its boundaries.

The paper's second section explores the Iraqi polity, both how it has evolved historically and the impact that twenty years of Ba'athist rule have had on the country. It also considers the nature of the considerable Iraqi population in exile, its relationship to the population inside Iraq, and the

prospects for new leadership arising from the exile community.

The politics of Iraq are dominated by the country's sectarian problem. While Shi'i Arabs and Kurds, who are largely Sunni, constitute 75 percent of the population, Iraq is ruled by the 20 percent of the population that is Sunni Arab. In fact, the regime's base does not extend even that far, as it is Saddam and his family circle that actually run Iraq, with backing from the clans around his hometown of Takrit, which lies in the Sunni Arab triangle between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers north of Baghdad. That two decades of authoritarian Ba'athist rule have exacerbated, rather than ameliorated, Iraq's sectarian problem was vividly and painfully demonstrated by the revolts against the regime in March 1991, the most widespread in Iraq's modern history.

Authoritarian governments everywhere are under siege. The Arabs' military regimes, essentially a product of the 1950s, are no exception. For two decades Iraq's Ba'athist government has pursued a relentless modernization program, fueled by immense oil wealth, and in the process has changed the Iraqi population, which has grown more educated and more middle class. It has also forced the Iraqi people to bear tremendous burdens–twenty years of harsh authoritarian rule, eight years' war with Iran, an even more destructive war with the United States, and the country's bloodiest civil strife ever. With Iraq standing at this historical juncture, does it still make sense to think that there is no alternative to Saddam Hussein better than another version of Sunni minority rule? Though the Bush administration has placed its hopes in a palace coup, does it still make sense to look to the army to govern Iraq?

The third section analyzes U.S. policy toward the question of a future government in Iraq. It then presents an alternative approach toward the future of Iraq. None of the future scenarios for Iraq is especially hopeful, and all potential courses are fraught with uncertainties and risks. The question is which course is likely to be least bad.

I THE INSTITUTIONAL BASES OF THE IRAQI REGIME

This section seeks to answer two questions. First, what are the institutions by which Saddam Hussein rules Iraq? And second, can any of them provide the basis for a future government in Iraq that is neither belligerent to its neighbors nor so abysmally abusive of its own population's human rights that the United States cannot deal with it.

THE RULING FAMILY AND THE SECURITY SERVICES

Iraq is ruled by a narrowly-based elite, linked by family and clan ties. Power lies with Saddam Hussein, supported by his close relatives, who hold the key positions. They are backed more broadly by Sunni Arab clans from the region north of Baghdad between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Saddam's home town of Takrit lies in that area and constitutes the center of the regime's power base.

The ruling inner family core consist of three kinship groups: 1) Saddam's three step-brothers, Barzan, Sabawi, and Wathban, the sons of his step-father, Ibrahim Hassan; 2) Saddam's paternal cousins, the nephews of his father, Hussein al-Majid, most notably Hussein Kamil al-Majid, who is also

Saddam's son-in-law[1] and Ali Hassan al-Majid; 3) Saddam's maternal relatives, including his mother's brother and father-in-law, Khayrallah Tulfah; his wife and cousin, Sajida; and her brother, Adnan, Defense Minister until 1989, when he died in a helicopter crash believed to have been arranged by Saddam Hussein.

The family exercises power through its control of competing security services. The principal services are 1) the *Mukhabarat,* or General Intelligence, responsible for both external and internal affairs, and headed, since the end of 1989, by Saddam's middle half-brother, Sabawi Ibrahim al-Takriti; 2) *Amn al-Amm,* or General Security, primarily responsible for internal affairs, and most reliably reported to be headed since the end of 1989 by Saddam's youngest half-brother, Wathban; 3) *Amn al-Khass,* or Special Security, which is directly attached to Saddam Hussein's office.

Special Security was the original base of Saddam's son-in-law, Hussein Kamil al-Majid, before Saddam also charged him with responsibility for developing Iraq's indigenous military capacity. He held the post of Minister of Military Industries until April 6, 1991, when he was appointed Defense Minister. Hussein Kamil continues to oversee Special Security, while Saddam's younger son, Qusay, exercises operational command over the security force. Special Security played a key role in the occupation of Kuwait and it was responsible for organizing the destruction of Kuwait's oil fields and setting the wells on fire. Special Security also formed the execution squads to deter desertions from the army and organized the looting inside Kuwait.

Ali Hassan al-Majid, a paternal cousin to both Saddam and Hussein Kamil, is a particularly brutal figure. He achieved public notoriety with his appointment as security chief of Kurdistan in the mid-1980s, where he implemented an iron-fisted policy of repression that entailed the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Kurds from their mountain villages. He also took part in the decision to use chemical weapons against the Kurds, both in the town of Halabja in March 1988 and again during the regime's offensives against the Kurds in August, immediately after the cease-fire to the

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[1] Like other Arab tribal societies, Iraqis marry their first cousins, creating complex and intimate family ties.

Iran-Iraq war. Two years later Ali Hassan al-Majid was charged with imposing Iraqi authority on the population of Kuwait, and his headquarters in the palatial estate of a member of Kuwait's ruling family served as a torture center. Saddam appointed him Iraq's Interior Minister in early March, 1991, within a week of the outbreak of the Shi'i revolt in the south. His brother, Hisham Hassan al-Majid, was appointed governor of Kurdistan soon afterwards, although when he earlier held the position of governor of Babylon province, he had been dismissed by Saddam for corruption.

The function of the security services is to so terrorize the people that they do not seriously think of challenging the regime. This obviates the need for using armed force on a daily basis, as no government could rule if it had to constantly suppress armed insurrections. The positions of heads of security are so important, sensitive, and crucial to the future of the regime that they are generally reserved for members of Saddam's family. The ruling clique is intimately entwined with the terror apparatus, and both are thoroughly hated and feared by the population. The popular hatred and fear of the security services explains why one principal target in the March 1991 revolts was government files and offices, looted and burned throughout the rebellious regions. Government functionaries subsequently took journalists to those scenes to display the "vandalism," in fact, providing testimony of popular revulsion toward the regime.

THE BA'ATH PARTY

Formally and on the surface, it is not Saddam's clique that rules Iraq, but a political party with a political platform. The Ba'ath, Iraq's ruling party, provides a facade of legitimacy for the murderous rule of Saddam Hussein and his inner circle. The Ba'ath party also provides an institutional and ideological framework which allows the regime to reach far into society. Party membership is required for most government employment; members are obliged to attend frequent party meetings. In addition, government-run associations of the sort common to authoritarian regimes abound, such as trade unions, women's organizations, professional associations, and the like. Though membership in many of them was once mandatory, after the end of the Iran-Iraq war some strictures

were relaxed in an effort to alleviate discontent with the regime's heavy-handed intrusiveness and repression.

The Ba'ath party is widely resented among the Iraqi population. Like communism, Ba'athism is a bankrupt ideology. Properly understood it is an authoritarian, fascist movement whose roots lie in the period between the first and second world wars, when such movements had considerable currency in France, Germany, Italy, and elsewhere. The Ba'ath, meaning "Renaissance," was established by two high school teachers from Damascus, Michel Aflaq and Salah Bitar, who studied together at the Sorbonne between 1928 and 1932. As a student in Paris, Aflaq, who became the party's leading ideologue, was "full of enthusiasm for (Alfred) Rosenberg and Hitler," particularly for the Nazi synthesis of nationalism and socialism.[2] In 1941 Aflaq and Bitar founded "The Society to Help Iraq," to support Rashid Ali's anti-British, pro-Nazi coup in Baghdad that year. The society became the nucleus of the Ba'ath party.[3]

Aflaq's Ba'athism was a highly abstract doctrine, involving a mystical vision of the Arab "nation." The Ba'ath party's slogan is "One Arab Nation with an Eternal Mission" and its credo is "Unity, Freedom, Socialism." Ba'athism never constituted a practical political program, but rather a formula for ultimately unrealizable quasi-fascist dreams, drawing upon a memory of past glory, romantically projected into an imaginary future. In practice it came to be manipulated by coarse, cynical, and brutal elements within Arab societies.

Like the Holy Roman Empire, which was said to be neither Holy, Roman, nor an empire, the Ba'ath regimes are, notwithstanding their slogan, neither unified, free, nor even socialist. The two Ba'athist states, Syria and Iraq, while formally committed to Arab unity, never seriously pursued it, although they are contiguous and face no external impediment to union. Freedom, in the sense of independence

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[2]Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism, A Critical Enquiry*, (New York, St. Martin's, 1990), p. 200; one early Ba'athist, related how, searching in Damascus for a copy of Rosenberg's *Myth of the Twentieth Century*, he found a French abridgement belonging to Aflaq. Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986), p. 148.

[3]*Ibid.* p. 150.

from foreign rule, had been achieved well before the Ba'ath came to power in either Syria or Iraq, while freedom, in the sense of personal liberty, is notably absent in both countries. Finally, socialism has had the same dismal results in the Ba'athist states as elsewhere. Iraq, which has the mineral, agricultural, and human resources to be an extraordinarily rich country, has been bankrupted by Ba'athist rule.[4] So remote is Ba'athist ideology from the reality of life in the Ba'athist states that in the end, almost all that Ba'athism has to offer is a posture of exaggerated hostility to the United States and Israel, a common position for populist movements in the Middle East.[5]

Despite the Ba'ath's claim to speak for the Arab "masses," it has always been a small, narrowly-based movement.[6] In 1963,

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[4]The chief ideologues of Arab nationalism generally failed to articulate a vision of the future that they themselves could feel comfortable with. Bitar broke with the Ba'ath and was assassinated in Europe by Syrian agents. Although Aflaq maintained close ties with Baghdad, he spent most of his later years in Paris, where he died. One of his sons, educated in Paris, went on to graduate study at Boston's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Rashid Ali led the 1941 pro-Nazi coup, but upon his return from exile, he was arrested by Iraq's first "nationalist" government. His daughter settled in London, where she married the son of another famous figure, Sati al-Husri. These are among the most famous names in Arab nationalist lore, but they, or at least their heirs, could not live with their own legacy.

[5]I once asked a high school student in Baghdad about Ba'athist instruction in the schools. He replied that the course in Ba'athism was not important; there were no exams. Students laughed when the instructor appeared in his baggy suit to talk about socialism. However, as my interlocutor explained, when the instructor spoke of liberating Palestine, the students became excited.

[6]In the brief periods of constitutional government in Syria, the Ba'ath did poorly, winning, for example, only 11 percent of the parliamentary seats in the 1954 elections. Four year later the Ba'ath appealed to Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser to unite Syria with Egypt, believing that Nasser would put them in power. Instead, Nasser dissolved all political parties in Damascus, including the Ba'ath, and ran Syria as a province of Egypt. Syria's withdrawal from the union in 1961 left an enduring legacy of mistrust and suspicion between Nasser and the Ba'ath.

when the Ba'ath first seized power in Baghdad it had no more than 1,000 members. In 1968, when the Ba'ath took over once again, its membership was no more than 5,000. On both occasions, the party was obliged to work with non-Ba'athist army elements, testimony to the weakness of the party's position in Iraq as a whole, and even within the narrower circles of Iraq's predominantly Sunni Arab military establishment. Moreover, Ba'athism, tinged with Arab racialism, is anathema to non-Arab elements in the Middle East, including the Kurds, who constitute 20 percent of Iraq's population.

Established along Leninist lines, the Ba'ath party's strength was always its tight, secretive organizational structure, consisting of small cells, with the leaders of each cell organized hierarchically in other cells, extending up to the party's regional command in each Arab country. It was the weakness of all other political institutions in Iraq, rather than the appeal of the Ba'ath, that allowed the party to seize power in 1968. Many others then joined the party for reasons similar to those that led East Europeans to join the communist parties that ruled their countries. Some were moved by opportunism and ambition, but many others just hoped to make their lives easier. The regime's terror apparatus, including the party's security organization, the *Amn al-Hizb*, enforced formal, outward adherence to the official line, even as considerable dissatisfaction with Ba'athist rule persisted.

As events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have demonstrated, such a system can endure for a substantial period of time, but increasingly becomes less effective. Many factors have contributed to the erosion of Ba'athist rule in Iraq, but above all, Ba'athism shares in the world-wide crisis of authoritarianism. While most marked in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, pressures for political liberalization exist in the Arab states as well. The Arabs' only communist government, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, better known as South Yemen, simply disappeared when its rulers finally lost heart last year and opted to merge with far more populous North Yemen; in Algeria, the governing FLN has been obliged to seek avenues for liberalizing its one-party rule; King Hussein has found it necessary to open up Jordan's political system; and Egypt has been experiencing a gradual political relaxation, going back to the 1970s, when Anwar

Sadat, in the wake of Egypt's last war with Israel, began slowly to undo the most repressive features of the regime he inherited from Nasser.

There are also specifically Iraqi reasons for the erosion of Ba'athism, above all the eight years of war with Iran. Ba'athism's unrealistic doctrines could not be sustained in the face of the severe pressures generated by the war. While Ba'athism posits the unity of the Arabs in an unending struggle with Zionism and imperialism, the Arabs were not united behind Iraq in the war. Syria supported Iran, while Iran was the even more fanatically self-professed enemy of both Zionism and imperialism. Meanwhile, the conservative Arab states, which Ba'athism had long damned as feudal, reactionary agents of Zionism and imperialism, became Iraq's close allies. In the end, almost nothing was left of Ba'athism, as a viable, let alone compelling, ideology.

In practical terms the war with Iran raised questions about the party's function in society. The military, not the Ba'ath, were defending the country, while economic hardships resulting from the war put pressure on the Ba'athist regime. The war made the gross inefficiencies in Iraq's socialist economy intolerable. When, in an effort to improve productivity, an attempt was made to privatize some sectors of the economy, individuals with close ties to the ruling elite, including top Ba'athists, benefitted tremendously and disproportionately from Iraq's controlled and limited liberalization, and a small, wealthy private sector emerged. However, the party rank and file, employed largely in the public sector, suffered from the general wartime deterioration in living standards. For example, public sector workers received no salary increase during the eight years' war with Iran, despite an annual inflation rate of over 40 percent.

There is substantial evidence that Saddam Hussein is aware of the Ba'ath party's unpopularity. In Iraq's March 1989 National Assembly elections, Ba'athists won only 40 percent of the seats. Had Saddam desired another result, he could have secured it—in 1984 the party won 75 percent of the assembly representation. But it seems that in 1989 Saddam believed that diminishing the Ba'ath party's role in public life was preferable. Moreover, in July 1990, on the eve of the invasion of Kuwait, the regime promulgated a new constitution and revived it immediately upon the cessation of hostilities with

the United States. While the constitution is unlikely to bring real political reform—as we have seen, Ali Hassan al-Majid was appointed Interior Minister at roughly the same time—the document is revealing as a reflection of Saddam Hussein's opinion as to the viability of the Ba'ath party as an instrument for ruling Iraq. The new constitution essentially disestablishes the Ba'ath, formally reducing it to its actual function—a means of controlling the army and security forces.[7]

Finally, Saddam Hussein's doubts about Ba'athism appeared in the posture he assumed after the invasion of Kuwait. Although the resolutely secular Ba'ath had fought an eight-year war against the Islamic Republic of Iran, Saddam readily appropriated the highly charged religious language of his erstwhile foe in an attempt to mobilize support. The clash between Ba'athism's secularism and Iran's Islamic fundamentalism, supposedly a central feature of the Iran-Iraq war, suddenly disappeared. Saddam apparently believed that Islamic fundamentalism would win him more support than Ba'athism.

Saddam Hussein recognizes that the Ba'ath party can no longer rule Iraq, and that is why he seeks another forum for governing the country. For others to imagine that the Ba'ath Party could govern Iraq would seem to be an error.

THE ARMY AND REPUBLICAN GUARD

After the 1968 Ba'athist coup, Saddam Hussein, and his older cousin, General Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, Iraq's new president, immediately began to place their associates in the army so as to establish control over the military. Their associates were given quick courses, rapid advancements, and important commands. Consequently, until the war with Iran brought a rapid increase in the size of the army, Takritis dominated the Iraqi officer corps, while clan ties and loyalty to the regime were the primary criterion for officers' promotion. However, the promotion of Takritis never eliminated other significant elements within the Iraqi officer corps, particularly

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[7]The Ba'ath party is mentioned only once, in Article 59, which states that all other parties are banned from political activity in the armed forces and the internal security forces.

the officers from Mosul, historically the most prominent group in the army, and like the Takritis, Sunni Arab.

But the rapid expansion of Iraq's army during the war with Iran weakened the traditional Sunni Arab dominance of the army. The imperatives of wartime caused many Shi'a, and even some Kurds, to be promoted to officer rank. It is even reported that when a Takriti, Hussein Rashid, was made Chief of Staff in November 1990, in the middle of the Kuwait crisis, resentment within the officer corps obliged Saddam to appoint a non-Takriti as Defense Minister to replace the elderly Abdul Jabbar Shanshal. Yet Saddam does not even consider the Takriti officers necessarily loyal. A number were reported arrested in April 1990, and tensions have long existed between Saddam and some of them, most notably Lt. General Maher Abdul-Rashid, a prominent figure during the Iran-Iraq war, who disappeared from sight after that war's end.

The relationship between Saddam and his army does not allow for genuine loyalty. Competent officers can become politically vulnerable solely and paradoxically by virtue of their demonstrated talent and leadership. Iraq has a long history of army-led *coups d'etat,* having been the first Arab state to experience a military coup, in 1936. Twelve more coups followed until 1968. In an effort to control the army, Saddam Hussein has imposed a high degree of anonymity on the officers. Army commands are frequently shuffled to prevent officers from developing a loyal following, despite the inefficiencies that result. And when, as during the latter years of the Iran-Iraq war, circumstances obliged Saddam to permit individual commanders to remain at a post for an extended time, or to become prominent, they were removed as soon as the situation allowed. Thus, in the months after the 1988 cease-fire to the war with Iran, hundreds of officers were arrested and many in fact executed.

Those returning from the Kuwaiti front in the spring of 1991 may have expected the same fate, had their services not been required to put down the rebellions that erupted immediately with the war's end. Saddam will continue to be highly suspicious of his officer corps, particularly as the United States and its Arab allies are openly calling for a coup to replace him. The appointment of his cousin Hussein Kamil—who has never held a regular military post—as Defense Minister on April 6, 1991 is the most visible sign of Saddam's

determination to maintain control of the army. The appointment cannot be welcome by the officer corps, and when Saddam feels that he no longer needs the military to handle the popular uprisings, another round of purges can be expected. In fact, it was reported in mid-May that Hussein Rashid had been replaced as Chief of Staff by General Iyad al-Rawi, a former commander of the Republican Guard.

The Republican Guards are more closely bound to the regime than the army. They enjoy substantially better equipment, supplies, training, and salaries three times that of the regular army, and are also accorded more glory and prestige. For example, when Iraq took the offensive during the closing months of the Iran-Iraq war, credit, praise, and medals were lavished on the Republican Guards, prompting protest from Maher Abdul Rashid, the leading army commander in the South.

Originally a praetorian palace guard, the ranks of the Republican Guard expanded during the Iran-Iraq war to allow them to assume a combat role. The first major expansion occurred after 1982, when Iraq was forced on the defensive. The Republican Guards were enlarged again, to unprecedented levels, after Iran's February 1986 seizure of the Fao peninsula. Unlike the army, which more closely reflects the demographic composition of the country, the Republican Guards remain overwhelmingly Sunni. The initial praetorian core of the Guards, linked to the regime, has remained, although the expansion of their ranks has limited the regime's ability to select carefully its personnel and has diluted somewhat their reliability.

Some defections from the Republican Guard occurred during Iraq's war with the allied coalition and in the revolts that followed the war's end. However, the difference between the Republican Guard and the army was shown in their response to the unrest. The Republican Guards were the mainstay of the regime's effort to suppress the revolts, while many army units proved unwilling to fight.

The armed forces—Republican Guards and army—are important to maintaining the regime in power. They are capable of suppressing unrest, or alternatively, of overthrowing the regime. But the armed forces do not sustain the regime in power on a day-to-day basis. Rather, that job falls to the security forces. The pervasive monitoring of the population, the

punishment inflicted on those deemed to have stepped out of line and the appearance of invincibility Saddam Hussein has managed to create have all kept widespread discontent in check. The army, alone, cannot create a sustained atmosphere of terror.

Before the Kurdish and Shi'i revolts, the army was the one institution that retained some respect among the population. However, that may no longer be true after the recent brutal suppression of the civilian population. Only if the population distinguished between the Republican Guard and the army, and only if it was the Republican Guard which was deemed to have committed most of the atrocities in putting down the revolts, would the army avoid being the object of hatred and resentment from the Shi'i and Kurdish elements of the population.

Yet even in the absence of Iraq's recent civil strife, the army could never have ruled alone. Four military coups occurred in the decade between 1958, when the monarchy was overthrown, and 1968, when the Ba'ath seized power for good. And in 1958 the task of ruling Iraq was in some respects easier than at present. Specifically, sectarian tensions were then held in check, as the monarchy had made considerable progress toward national integration, much of which was undone in the subsequent decades of military government, particularly the harsh rule of the Ba'ath.

Thus no institution of the present regime—the Takritis, the security services, the Ba'ath or the military—is likely to provide a stable alternative to Saddam Hussein. There are no easy prospects for Iraq's grave and problematic future.

II THE IRAQI POLITY

Saddam Hussein's harsh rule has effectively succeeded in suppressing all political activity within Iraq, except for that within narrow channels, sanctioned and promoted by the regime. The repression has gone far beyond merely eliminating opposition to Saddam's rule. Except for the most senior members of the ruling circle, all other individuals are kept anonymous. The titles of government officials may appear in the press, but their names rarely do.[1] And when they do, they are either men so close to Saddam that they are indistinguishable from him and extremely unlikely to challenge him, or they are creatures of his rule, technocratic ministers, hired and fired on his whim. Such tight control has made it difficult for any individual to build a political base from which to challenge the regime. Perhaps equally important, it has made it difficult to conceive of an Iraq without Saddam Hussein.

The Ba'ath's reign of terror has left Iraqi society atomized and fragmented. The regime has systematically replaced the ordinary associations and institutions of civil society that existed before 1968 with regimented organizations it could control. The only institution that managed to survive inside

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[1]Now with the disastrous war, names are appearing in the Iraqi media, partly to generate a sense of shared responsibility for the disaster, partly to create a sense that the repression is easing.

Iraq and maintain some independence from the regime has been the Shi'i religious network. However, the price of their modicum of independent existence has been that the clerics adhere to an apolitical line. This was the position of Ayatollah Kho'i, the world's leading Shi'i religious authority, but it did not prevent the regime from kidnapping him during the March 1991 revolts, and even after he was returned to Najaf, placing him under virtual house arrest.

The suppression of civil society and the anonymity imposed on individuals in Iraq has been more severe than in most other contemporary authoritarian regimes. In Eastern Europe, for example, some opponents of the communist regimes continued to live inside their countries. The fall of the Eastern European governments was preceded by a period of public defiance during which they failed to take extremely repressive and bloody measures, and political personalities appeared and were transformed into national figures. In some cases, as in Czechoslovakia, this was a positive phenomenon, as the dissident playwright, Vaclav Havel, emerged to become his country's first freely elected president after the fall of the communist regime. In other cases, like Rumania, it was more problematic, as a figure like Ion Iliescu, managed to hijack the popular revolt, at least temporarily.

Because Saddam Hussein's rule has been more repressive than the Eastern European regimes, there are no such similar figures to constitute the core of a new government in Iraq or to provide a figure to rally around. Those of the stature to pose the remotest challenge to Saddam were killed. Hence, the March 1991 Shi'i revolt was leaderless, while the leaders of the Kurdish revolt came from outside the country. On the other hand, it is also unlikely that any Iliescu-type figure exists in Iraq capable of maintaining the old system if Saddam Hussein were removed.

Thus, Iraq differs from Eastern Europe in three significant ways. First, the sectarian question is even stronger in Iraq, having been much exacerbated by two decades of harsh Ba'athist rule, which has left a bitter legacy of hatred and mistrust between the regime and the Shi'a and Kurds. In Rumania, for example, the army sided with the people against Nicolae Ceausescu and the security forces, and the army and people prevailed. While the Iraqi armed forces probably feel the same hatred toward Saddam Hussein as Rumania's army

did toward Ceausescu, partly because of Iraq's sectarian problem, enough of Saddam's forces remained sufficiently loyal to allow him to put down the popular revolts.

Secondly, because of the harsh suppression, there exists an armed opposition to the regime, making the situation more complicated and dangerous. Third, Saddam is ready and able to take extremely bloody measures to suppress the opposition, as he has recently demonstrated.

SECTARIANISM IN IRAQ: SUNNI ARABS

Sunni Arabs constitute only 20 percent of the Iraqi population. The overwhelming majority of the people, 75 percent, are Shi'i and Kurds, while 5 percent are various Christian denominations and other small minorities. Yet Sunni Arabs rule Iraq. Beyond the issues of fairness and representation, an inflexible sectarian political system helps explain the belligerence of the regime. Internal tensions are channelled outward in external aggression toward neighboring states, Israel, and the West.

In important respects Saddam Hussein's rule reflects a continuation of political forces established during the period of Ottoman rule over Iraq. The Sunni Ottoman Turks, who ruled Iraq from the sixteenth century until the early part of this century, governed Iraq through a class of bureaucrats drawn from the local Sunni population, or, more frequently, from non-Arab Sunni elements within the empire. With the Ottoman defeat in World War I and the ensuing division of the empire between the victorious allies, a League of Nations mandate for British rule over Iraq was announced in 1920. That soon sparked a widespread revolt against the idea of foreign, i.e. Christian, rule, and the British were moved to try to find an Arab figure who could rule Iraq in cooperation with them. They fixed on the Emir Faisal, a prince from the ruling family of the Hejaz, in what is now southwestern Saudi Arabia.

Faisal had fought alongside T.E. Lawrence in the British-sponsored Arab revolt against Turkish rule during World War I. As the conflicting promises of the World War I allies were sorted out, Faisal was first slated to be ruler of Syria. He was somewhat familiar with Damascus, which he had visited frequently, travelling between the Hejaz, where he lived, and

Istanbul, where he served in the Ottoman parliament. In fact a Syrian national congress, meeting in Damascus in March 1920, proclaimed Faisal as King of Syria. But as France began to assert its claim on the post-war Middle East, French troops drove Faisal from Damascus. Britain's need for an Arab ruler in Baghdad coincided with Faisal's loss of Syria and it suited both that he be compensated with the newly-created crown of Iraq.

However, Faisal had never been to Iraq before. The only Iraqis familiar with him were army officers he had known in Istanbul or from the Arab revolt. None of the Iraqi Shi'a, who formed the majority of the population, served in the Ottoman army or numbered among Faisal's companions. Furthermore, another element of the Iraqi polity, the Kurds, who constituted 20 percent of Iraq's population had initially been promised by the allies the prospect of a Kurdish state of their own. Thus, Iraq's new king and his entourage of army officers began their rule with a weak base in the country.

Although as king, Faisal sought to incorporate the Shi'a into Iraq's political life, the army officers actively tried to thwart his efforts to promote national integration, seeking to keep the army Sunni, while portraying it as the embodiment of the Iraqi and Arab nation. Three elements merged in the formation of the Iraqi polity—Sunni control over Iraq, the exaltation of the army, and a strident nationalist ideology. It was a recipe for fascism, given its sharpest expression by Sami Shawkat, Director General of Iraq's Education Ministry in 1938, who proclaimed then, "If we do not want death under the hooves of the horses and the boots of foreign armies, it is our duty to perfect the profession of death, the profession of the army, the sacred military profession."[2]

Today, Iraq's Ba'athist regime reflects a continuation of that sentiment, with its oversized army, its dedication of tremendous resources to the acquisition of exotic weapons, and its militaristic rhetoric, of which Saddam's defiant, though by no means exceptional call to the "mother of all battles," has proved the most memorable. The triangular relationship between Sunni political domination, Sunni control of the

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[2]Sami Shawkat, "The Profession of Death," in Sylvia Haim, (ed.) *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962, 1976.)

armed forces, and Iraqi militarism that emerged early in the monarchy and found expression in a rabid anti-Western Arab nationalism continues to plague the country. The idea that Sunni Arab military rule over Iraq is the best that can be hoped for is highly problematic.

SHI'I ARABS

Shi'a constitute 55 percent of Iraq's population. They are concentrated in southern Iraq, but also form the majority in the capital city of Baghdad. Events early in Iraq's modern history played a critical role in fixing the relation between the Shi'i clergy and the state, causing them to adopt a quietist position of non-involvement in politics until 1958, when the Iraqi monarchy was overthrown and Iraqi politics became tumultuous.

Early in this century, the Shi'i clerics were strong opponents of the British presence in the region. During World War I they supported the Ottomans against Britain on Islamic grounds, opposed British rule in Iraq after the war's end, and played a prominent role in the 1920 uprising that led Britain to install the Emir Faisal in Iraq. Even then, the Shi'i establishment continued its opposition to the new government until, in 1923, the government began deporting the most vocal clerics. Several religious leaders responded by withdrawing to Iran, expecting to spark a revival of the 1920 revolt, but nothing happened. When they sought to go back to Iraq the next year, their return was made conditional on the renunciation of any role in politics. After that, and for the next forty years, Iraq's Shi'i clergy essentially reverted to an established tradition in Shi'i Islam, dominant during the four centuries of Sunni Ottoman rule, in which all politics are held to be corrupt in the absence of the appearance of a messianic figure, and hence to be shunned.

With the passage of time, Iraq's Shi'a became reconciled to Faisal's government, increasingly participating in and cooperating with it. The Shi'a constituted a disproportionately high percentage of Iraq's poor, and the country's poverty early in the century was fearsome. But the Shi'i elite, who had been denied access to political and military positions under the Ottomans, were an important element among Iraq's

commercial and educational elite.[3] Under the monarchy, young men were encouraged to enter Iraq's new secular schools established under British administration, while the commercial class quickly assimilated modern business practices and the habits and perspectives underlying them.

By the late forties, after two decades of Hashemite rule, Shi'i society had come to enjoy a renaissance, driven by the country's economic growth and their own commercial and financial achievements. These translated into political stature, and in 1947 Iraq saw its first Shi'i prime minister, Salih Jabr, later head of the Umma party. Three more Shi'i figures served as head of government in the decade before the overthrow of the monarchy.

However, the military coup in 1958, and the three more that followed until 1968, reversed the process of Shi'i integration into the Iraqi state.[4] Under the Sunni military governments that ruled in the decades after 1958, there was only one Shi'i prime minister before Saddam Hussein appointed Sa'dun Hammadi to the post in March 1991.

The turmoil in Iraqi politics after World War II, and particularly after 1958, drew the Shi'i establishment into a more activist political stance, reversing the previous decades of aloofness from politics. A veritable explosion of ideological movements followed General Abdul Karim Qassim's 1958 military coup. Underground parties, which had been growing in strength after World War II, suddenly flourished in the open. Most prominent among them was the Iraqi Communist Party, whose membership mushroomed after 1958, and whose membership was dominated by the politically, and often economically, disadvantaged Shi'a.

The Shi'i clerics considered communism an abomination because of its denial of religious belief and they thought little

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[3]The most important element in the commercial elite was the Jewish community. In fact, until after World War I the largest single community in Baghdad was the Jewish community. Sylvia G. Haim, "Aspects of Jewish Life in Baghdad under the Monarchy," *Middle Eastern Studies,* May 1976.

[4]Chibli Mallat, "Iraq," in Shireen T. Hunter (ed.) *The Politics of Islamic Revivalism, Diversity and Unity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.)

better of Ba'athism. Repeatedly in the 1950s, British officials and the Iraqi monarchy turned to them to pronounce against communism and other forms of nationalist agitation, which they did. Moreover, the clerics responded to the growth of the communist party among their constituency with an effort to promote a competitive vision of Shi'ism which would also be responsive to popular needs. They formed an organization called, al-Dawa, "the call," in 1957 in Najaf, originally to provide religious guidance.[5] It soon acquired a social-cultural dimension, then a political dimension. It even received backing from the Shah of Iran, who supported the organization during the 1960s in the course of his rivalry with Iraq's military governments. In the 1980s al-Dawa was to achieve notoriety as a virulently anti-Western terrorist organization, but its origins lay in a very different orientation.

In fact as long as the military governments in Baghdad were not terribly unreasonable, Iraq's clerical establishment remained generally conservative.[6] The leading Shi'i religious figure between 1961 and 1970, the Grand Ayatollah, Sayyid Muhsin al-Hakim, espoused no doctrine of Islamic government nor did he propound any anti-Western ideology and was the leading figure to pronounce against communism. In 1960, after the Communists and their supporters committed bloody riots in northern Iraq and looked to become the dominant force in Iraqi politics, Sayyid Muhsin denounced communism in a *fatwa*, or religious edict, condemning it as blasphemy and atheism, thus contributing to the Communists' subsequent decline.

In the 1960s, cultural, social, and political activities among the Shi'a grew. *Hussayniyahs*—meeting places where men gathered nightly for political talk, poetry readings, socializing, and religious ceremonies—flourished. Mahdi al-Hakim, the son of the Grand Ayatollah and a co-founder of al-Dawa, could regularly command an audience of five thousand who gathered in the open air in the summer on such occasions. Liberal elements established their own associations, such as

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[5]Al-Dawa's founders were Sayyid Mahdi al-Hakim and Sahib al-Dalhili, according to an Iraqi present at the time.

[6]See Chibli Mallet, "Religious Militancy in Contemporary Iraq," *Third World Quarterly*, April 1988.

the University of Kufah Organization, a Shi'i intellectual society.

When the Ba'ath took power in 1968 they immediately identified the Shi'i organizations as a threat. At the time the Ba'ath had less than 5,000 members, fewer than the audience Sayyid Mahdi could regularly command. Acutely conscious of their narrow base and the fact that they had been quickly ousted when they had seized power five years before, the Ba'ath were determined not to let that happen again.

Soon after their 1968 coup, the Ba'ath began a campaign of harsh repression against the Shi'a, eliminating moderate, liberal, and secular organizations among them.[7] This soon undid the previous integration of the Shi'a into Iraqi society. Shi'i political activity grew increasingly limited to clerical circles, as the men of religion enjoyed some modicum of immunity from the state. The severity of the regime's repression and the impossibility of reconciling with it led to the increasing prominence of younger, more radical clerics, promoting an activist political stance.

The problems posed to the Ba'ath by the Shi'i establishment were amply illustrated by a visit Sayyid Muhsin al-Hakim paid to Baghdad from Najaf in September 1969. Literally thousands flocked to see him. The broad, spontaneous, popular loyalty commanded by the Grand Ayatollah was an implicit threat to the narrowly-based regime, which responded by charging his son, Sayyid Mahdi al-Hakim, with spying for Israel and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. He was sentenced to death *in abstentia,* and fled to Iran. Such actions reflected the Ba'ath's fear of the Shi'a and their institutions. The Ba'ath closed the *Hussayniyahs* and Shi'i merchants were deported; some 20,000 were expelled to Iran in 1969, while an abortive Tehran-backed coup attempt the next year, in which Mahdi al-Hakim participated, was used as an occasion by the regime to execute over 500 prominent Shi'a.

The repression of the Shi'a eased after 1970, as the Ba'ath turned to deal with another major problem for the regime, the Kurds. By 1970, the Kurds, led by Mullah Mustafa Barzani, head of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), controlled large areas of the North. In March of that year, an agreement on

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[7]Ofra Bengio, "Shi'is and Politics in Ba'athi Iraq," *Middle Eastern Studies,* January 1985.

autonomy was reached, which also provided for KDP participation in the Baghdad government. This development redounded to the benefit of all sectors of Iraqi society, as the KDP constituted another source of legitimate authority alongside the Ba'ath. High Kurdish government officials assisted those elements which the Ba'ath tried to suppress, including the Shi'a, while the Kurdish newspaper, published in Arabic in Baghdad, served as a forum for debate and criticism of the government, something which no longer exists in Iraq.

However, the breakdown of Ba'athist-Kurdish relations soon brought a renewed deterioration of Ba'athist-Shi'i relations, and the radicalization of Shi'i politics. Problems between the Ba'ath and the KDP soon resumed, as disagreement on procedures for implementing the autonomy agreement arose. Tensions grew after 1972, when the signing of a Soviet-Iraqi Friendship Treaty caused Washington to start supporting the Kurds. Finally, in early 1974, open warfare erupted as the regime unilaterally imposed its version of autonomy on the North and began an intensified military drive to suppress the Kurds.

The regime feared that the renewal of war with the Kurds would in turn cause problems with the Shi'a, since the Kurds and Shi'a enjoyed good relations, while the Shah, leader of Shi'i Iran, backed the Kurds against the regime. And in fact the renewal of the Kurdish war did cause problems between Baghdad and the Shi'a. Some Shi'i soldiers hesitated to accept government orders to fight the Kurds and sought a judgment from their clerics, asking, "If I die fighting the Kurds, am I a *shahid*, a martyr, or will I be condemned to hell for killing Muslims?" The answer from the disciples of Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Sadr was, "You would not be a *shahid*." As a result of this position, over two dozen clerics were arrested and five were executed. Al-Sadr's life was threatened and there was talk of arresting him, although nothing happened to him then.

Baqir al-Sadr was a relatively young, activist cleric, a cousin of Lebanon's Musa al-Sadr.[8] He had sought to formulate a Shi'i

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[8]Musa al-Sadr began the political revival of Lebanon's Shi'i community. In 1978 he disappeared on a trip to Libya, and is believed to have been assassinated by PLO elements, who saw his position as a threat to their

approach to the modern world, "neither East nor West," and he became closely associated with al-Dawa, serving as its spiritual guide.

The 1974 execution of the clerics marked a turning point in the political activity of Iraq's Shi'a. Increasingly, it developed along the lines of secret organizations, from which the middle and professional classes were excluded, while their own institutions had been quashed by the regime. The activist clergy in Najaf and Karbala came to assume a dominant voice, and conspiracy, secret cells, terrorism and extremism followed. Al-Dawa grew larger, more exclusively political, and more tightly organized, as Shi'i discontent with the regime grew.

In February 1977, during the solemn holiday of Ashura, which marks the seventh century martyrdom of Hussein, grandson of the prophet Mohammed, large demonstrations took place. Tens of thousands of Shi'a gathered in Najaf and Karbala, denouncing the regime and demanding its overthrow. Helicopter gunships were used to suppress the protestors, at least eight people were executed and over 100 imprisoned. Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim, another son of Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim, was among those sentenced to life imprisonment. Typically, the regime also sought to conciliate the Shi'a with modest measures, as it suppressed them. The regime brought more Shi'a into prominent government positions.

Even so, the disturbances triggered an enduring debate within the party leadership over whether a harsher or more conciliatory line should dominate in its dealings with the Shi'i population. The debate came to a head towards the end of the decade, when the outbreak of the Iranian revolution stirred the Iraqi Shi'a, and its success in early 1979 brought renewed unrest to Iraq. The regime arrested Ayatollah Baqir al-Sadr in the spring of 1979 in an attempt to contain the disturbances, but the move backfired spurring more riots in the Shi'i slums of Baghdad, leading the regime to release him.

The unrest precipitated Saddam's decision to take power in July, pushing aside his older cousin and mentor Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr. Saddam had long favored taking a harsher line toward the Shi'a, and he proceeded to crack down sharply.

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own. See Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al-Sadr and the Shi'a of Lebanon* (Cornell University Press, 1986.)

Twenty Shi'a, including religious scholars, were reported executed in 1979 and sixty more were executed in the spring of 1980. As tensions grew between the Ba'athist government in Baghdad and the fundamentalist government in Tehran, an attempt was made in early April 1980 on the life of Tariq Aziz, then Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister, followed by another attack two weeks later on Latif Nusayyif Jassim, Minister of Information. The regime responded by making membership in al-Dawa retroactively punishable by death and large scale arrests and deportations of Shi'a were ordered. Some 50,000 Iraqis were expelled to Iran in the following months, and Baqir al-Sadr was executed, along with his sister.[9]

As the regime suppressed the Shi'a, it again sought simultaneously to conciliate them. Ever since 1958, when General Qassim dissolved Iraq's parliament, Iraq had had no elected legislative body, despite his promise to re-institute one, a promise repeated by all subsequent governments. Finally, in June 1980, elections were finally held for the National Assembly promised in the "provisional" Ba'athist constitution of 1970. Forty percent of the elected delegates were Shi'i, presumably an outcome desired by the regime.[10] Money was poured into providing basic amenities such as paved roads and sewers for the areas in which there had been major riots, like *Medinat Al-Thawra,* City of the Revolution, and which although conditions there remained slum-like, was renamed *Medinat al-Saddam,* Saddam City.

The regime's conciliatory gestures included the pardon of Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim, who had been sentenced to life imprisonment after the 1977 riots. He promptly fled to Tehran. Although radical Shi'i organizations were to be effectively suppressed within Iraq, they would flourish in exile under the sponsorship of Iran's revolutionary regime. Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim came to head the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic

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[9]The charge that al-Dawa was behind the assassination attempts came from the Iraqi regime. Some claim that al-Dawa was not responsible, but that the regime, seeking an excuse for the execution of Baqir al-Sadr, found it convenient to blame the organization with which he was associated.

[10]Amatzia Baram, "The June 1980 Elections to the National Assembly," *Orient,* September 1981.

Revolution of Iraq, and is today the most prominent Islamic opposition figure.

Yet inside Iraq, the Shi'a quietly acquiesced in the regime's dominance, even as they harbored great resentment, particularly as the Ba'ath's repression grew unprecedentedly harsh during the years of war with Iran. That resentment was to erupt with tragic consequence following the cessation of hostilities between the United States and Iraq in February 1991. Ba'athist rule has promoted the disintegration, rather than the integration of the Iraqi state. The longer the regime has been in power, the more alienated the Shi'a have become, and the more has brutality been needed to check them.

KURDS

The Kurds are a distinct ethnic group, the fourth largest in the Middle East, after the Arabs, Persians and Turks. They are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim, although there are some Shi'i and even Jewish Kurds. The bulk of Kurdish territory is divided among Turkey, Iran, and Iraq. Some 10 million Kurds live in Turkey, 6 million in Iran and 4 million in Iraq, where they constitute some 20 percent of the population.

Throughout their long history the Kurds have been a tribal society, always dominated by other powers. The origins of Kurdish nationalism, like other Middle Eastern national movements, lie in the late nineteenth century, when small elites within the Ottoman Empire fixed on European notions of political organization. Nationalism in the Middle East was given a big boost by the Turkification of the Ottoman empire after 1908, when the Young Turks took power in Istanbul. Following World War I, when the victorious allies gathered at Versailles to decide the future of the defeated empire, Kurdish representatives were present. The 1920 Treaty of Sevres recognized Kurdish political rights, promising autonomy for the Kurds and independence if the majority of the Kurdish population favored it.

Finally, however, the allies, attempting to maximize their gains from the long, bloody war, ended up imposing humiliating terms on the Ottomans. A Turkish general, Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk), led a national revolt in opposition to the peace treaty, which resulted in the reversal of many treaty provisions and in the founding of modern Turkey. In the

process, he asserted Turkish control over what was to have been a large part of the Kurdish realm, and the Kurds living there were forcefully assimilated into the new state of Turkey.

The other region of Ottoman territory that was to form the Kurdish state lay in Iraq. In 1918 British forces occupied the province of Mosul, although it was still under Ottoman control at the time of the armistice.[11] Britain hoped to take advantage of the region's oil resources, and the area remained in dispute between Britain, which sought to attach it to Iraq, and Turkey. The matter was not decided until 1925, and then by the League of Nations, which remained conscious of the provisions for Kurdish rights in the Treaty of Sevres.

When the League awarded Mosul to Iraq, it stipulated that guarantees be made to the Kurds. When Iraq, still under British mandate, became independent seven years later, the government of the newly independent state committed itself to various measures, including provisions for the use of the Kurdish language and allotting the Kurds a prominent role in administering their territory, as well as important political posts in Baghdad. The League charged the British government with responsibility for insuring that the measures were implemented. The Kurds of Iraq thus have a status in international law not enjoyed by Kurdish populations elsewhere.[12] While the provisions for Kurdish rights have scarcely been honored, they do help explain why Iraq has been the focus of the Kurdish movement.

In 1923, after the Treaty of Sevres was superseded by the new treaty which undid the provision for Kurdish rights, Sheikh Ahmad Barzani and his younger brother Mullah Mustafa renewed the revolt that their elder brother, Abdul Salam, had launched against the Turks before World War I and for which he had been hanged in 1910. The Kurdish revolt in Iraq has continued intermittently since then, led by Mullah Mustafa until the 1970s, and then by his son Massoud in the 1980s.

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[11]Edmund Ghareeb, *The Kurdish Question in Iraq*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981).

[12]See Saad Jawad, *Iraq and the Kurdish Question: 1958-1970*, (London: Ithaca Press, 1981), pp. 10-11.

Mullah Mustafa enjoyed considerable success in the last years of World War II in establishing Kurdish control in Northern Iraq. But the war's end led to his expulsion from Iraq in 1945 and his flight to Iran, where he became a prominent figure in a Soviet-backed Kurdish Republic in Northern Iran. When the Republic collapsed, he was obliged to flee with his men to Iraq, then Turkey, and ultimately to the Soviet Union, where he remained in exile for a decade.

In 1958 Mullah Mustafa was invited to return to Iraq by Baghdad's new military ruler, General Qassim. Despite the warm welcome Qassim accorded the Kurdish leader, within three years Baghdad and the Kurds were once again at odds. Mullah Mustafa began to suspect that Qassim would not meet his demands for Kurdish autonomy, while Qassim came to fear that such demands would lead to Kurdish independence. In 1961 the Kurdish rebellion in northern Iraq began once again, continuing through the overthrow of successive military regimes. Occasional cease-fires were arranged, most notably in 1966, under the fairly conciliatory government of Abdul Rahman Arif. A civilian president who had come to power with his brother's accidental death, Abdul Rahman overrode the army's objections to reconciliation with the Kurds, which was viewed by the military as a repudiation of Arab nationalist principles and as testimony to its own weakness.

However, the 1968 Ba'athist coup undid the reconciliation between Baghdad and the Kurds. Fighting resumed, and, as the Kurds gained the upper hand, an agreement on autonomy was reached in 1970. Typically, Saddam Hussein made concessions in a moment of weakness that he was not prepared to honor when the balance of power shifted. He offered Mullah Mustafa a blank sheet of paper with his signature on the bottom, asking him to fill in the terms. Saddam's offer produced a fifteen-point agreement, which was never satisfactorily implemented.

Tensions between Baghdad and the Kurds soon resumed, intensifying after the February 1972 signing of a Soviet-Iraqi Friendship Treaty, which led the United States to add its backing to Iranian and Israeli support for the Kurds. The Kurdish revolt simmered until open war broke out in March 1974 as the regime finally moved to regain its authority over the Kurdish areas. A year later, in March 1975, Saddam

Hussein and the Shah of Iran reached a sudden agreement in which Iraq conceded to Iran half the Shatt al-Arab, the disputed river border, and Iran dropped its support for the Kurds. Iraqi forces launched a ferocious and decisive drive against them.

The attitude of the Shah and the Nixon administration toward their Kurdish proteges had been a cynical piece of *realpolitik.* Subsequent inquiry by the House Select Committee on Intelligence (the Pike Committee) detailed the American betrayal of the Kurds. The CIA repeatedly discouraged them from negotiating an autonomy agreement with Baghdad, and also discouraged them from launching an all-out offensive. The policy was, according to the report, "that the insurgents simply continue a level of hostilities sufficient to sap the resources of our ally's neighboring country."[13] Five days after the Saddam-Shah accord, Mullah Mustafa wrote Kissinger: "Our movement and our people are being destroyed in an unbelievable way with silence from everyone. We feel, your Excellency, that the United States has a moral and political responsibility toward our people who have committed themselves to your country's policy."[14] However, the Kurdish pleas for humanitarian assistance were ignored by Washington. With the rebellion crushed, Mullah Mustafa went to Iran, found he was closely supervised there, and settled in the United States. In exile he vented his bitterness about events, affirming he would never have trusted the Shah, but had believed that the United States would not betray him. He died in 1979 outside Washington D.C.

The defeat shook the KDP (Kurdish Democratic Party.) However, Mullah Mustafa's son, and long-time companion in arms, Massoud Barzani, soon began to work at rebuilding the party and securing his position within it. When his father died, he accompanied the body back to Iranian Kurdistan for burial and remained there.

The outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war soon followed, and Massoud Barzani took up the fight again. As the tide of war turned against Baghdad, and Iraqi forces retreated from their positions in Iran to the international border in the spring and

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[13]Daniel Schorr, "1975: Background to Betrayal," *The Washington Post,* April 7, 1991.

[14]David Wise, "A People Betrayed," *Los Angeles Times,* April 14, 1991.

summer of 1982, serious unrest began in the north. In 1983, in co-operation with Iranian forces, Massoud Barzani succeeded in securing a base on Iraqi territory, in Hajj Umran, his father's old headquarters. A more brutal phase of the regime's repression of the Kurds soon began. Baghdad rounded up 8,000 KDP supporters, most of them from the large Barzani clan, and dispatched them to a camp in the Western desert.[15] Saddam Hussein's cousin, Ali Hassan al-Majid was placed in charge of the north, and a campaign entailing the systematic destruction of Kurdish villages was begun in areas deemed strategic. The U.S. State Department estimates that some 500,000 people were dislocated.[16] Still, the revolt continued, posing its greatest threat to Baghdad's control of the north in the spring of 1988. In March of that year the regime responded by using chemical weapons against the town of Halabja. The Kurds and their Iranian allies broke off their offensive, and Ayatollah Khomeini's surprise acceptance of a United Nations cease-fire resolution in July led to a cease-fire the next month.

As in 1975, the last occasion of a sudden reconciliation between Iraq and Iran, Baghdad again moved quickly to suppress the Kurds, this time with the experience and weapons developed in eight years' bloody conflict with Iran. The Iraqi army used chemical weapons in its August 1988 offensive against the Kurds. Some 60,000 refugees poured across the Turkish border, while the number of casualties suffered by the Kurds remains unknown. Still, in the summer of 1990, Massoud Barzani began to prepare to reestablish his position inside Iraq. Eight months later, in the aftermath of the Gulf war, he controlled practically all Iraqi Kurdistan. But this moment of triumph was to be brief. At the end of March 1991, as American troops stood by in the South, Saddam Hussein gathered his forces to crush the Kurds and teach them a lesson they would never forget. Over two million people fled in terror for the inhospitable mountains of the Turkish and Iranian frontiers. As in the case of the Shi'a, the continued rule of the Ba'ath has only succeeded in alienating the Kurds.

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[15]Ofra Bengio, "Iraq," *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, 1982-3.

[16]Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Relations, House of Representatives, April 26, 1990. p. 21.

THE REGIME'S IMPACT ON SOCIETY AS A WHOLE

The regime's severe repression has in fact affected all sectors of society. The rank and file of the ruling Sunni are alienated too, particularly the urban middle class. Even officials of the regime suffer from a sense of pervasive repression.

Under the Ba'ath, most of the Iraqi population has become apolitical, in the sense of not expressing opinions hostile to or at variance with the regime, or doing so only with great caution. This, however, is essentially prudence, something quite different from apathy or acceptance of the regime's line. The Ba'ath has never succeeded in establishing itself as the legitimate rulers of Iraq in the eyes of the population. Moreover, the relative silence of the Iraqi population began to change after the August 1988 cease-fire to the Iran-Iraq war.

As the immediate wartime pressures eased, the population looked forward to its "peace dividend"—a secure peace with Iran, a return to Iraq's pre-war prosperity, and "more democracy," by which was meant a loosening of the regime's severe war-time repression. But the regime failed to deliver on those expectations. There was no peace treaty with Iran, only a cease-fire. (Such a treaty might have been impossible while Khomeini lived, and he did not die until June 1989.) There was no prosperity after the cease-fire. Rather, the country's immense debt continued to rise, increasing another $10 billion to some $90 billion in the two years before the invasion of Kuwait, while the value of the Iraqi currency fell another 25 percent in the same period, further eroding living standards. Nor was there any significant loosening of the regime's war-time repression.

The regime was aware of this discontent within the Iraqi population, particularly in the urban areas, and felt obliged to address it. In November 1988, while speaking before a conference of Arab lawyers in Baghdad, Saddam Hussein suddenly announced a new program of democracy for Iraq, including freedom of speech, constitutional reform—Iraq still formally operates under the 1970 "provisional" constitution—and "pluralism," allowing the existence of other parties besides the Ba'ath.

Iraqis greeted Saddam's announcement of reform with great skepticism. However, small measures taken by the regime in the spring of 1989 caused some of that skepticism to erode, including the relative success of non-Ba'athist candidates in the March 1989 elections and a slight relaxation of press restrictions in a few, narrowly delineated areas. However, as months passed and nothing further came of the promises of political reform, Iraqis' immense skepticism returned, as they concluded that the regime was either unable or unwilling to implement meaningful reforms.

Significantly, the permanent constitution Saddam had promised in November 1988 was published in July 1990, on the eve of the invasion of Kuwait. As Saddam knew then that imminent events would return the country to a state of war, its promulgation was one more cynical move. Even so, it revealed the regime's awareness of a strong sentiment in Baghdad for "more democracy." Significantly, in the wake of the disastrous war with the allied coalition, the constitution was immediately revived and heralded as the basis for a new era of political reform in Iraq.

By Middle Eastern standards, the Iraqi people are relatively well-educated, with an adult literacy rate approaching 90 percent.[17] While the majority of the population remains relatively unsophisticated, Iraq's oil wealth and the Ba'ath's relentless modernization programs have helped create a substantial middle class, constituting some 25 percent of the population, concentrated in the major cities.

Probably the strongest sentiment in Iraq today is a longing for relief from the destructive wars Saddam Hussein has brought the country, coupled with a yearning for an easing of the regime's repressiveness, and a desire to return to normalcy. The Iraqi population has suffered a great trauma over many years—two decades of harsh Ba'athist rule; eight years' war with Iran; a terrifically destructive war with the United States; and a widespread revolt, surpassing the dimensions of the 1920 Revolution, the popular uprising against the establishment of British rule in Iraq.

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[17]Ridha Mohammed, "Saddam's Iraq: a Squandered Inheritance," *Financial Times,* April 3, 1991. The Ba'ath instituted a compulsory adult literacy campaign, which it backed up by jail terms for non-participation.

The harshness of life in Iraq over the past two decades would seem to have gone far to deflate the appeal that ideological movements have elsewhere in the Middle East, particularly among Iraq's middle class. Interestingly, throughout the Gulf crisis, the Iraqi population as a whole did not seem to share strongly in the anti-American feelings expressed by the people of other Middle Eastern countries, such as Jordan, Algeria, or Morocco, where pro-Saddam sentiment was strong and vocal. As Washington had not been close to the Iraqi government, there was little resentment in Iraq of the United States for propping up an unpopular regime. Rather, liberal elements inside Iraq looked to the regime's relationship with the United States to limit some of its worst features.

Aspects of that attitude were evident in the Western reporting from Baghdad during the war. American bombing trounced the Iraqi army and destroyed much of the nation's infrastructure, yet the population was not as angry as circumstances would have suggested. There were angry crowds in Amman, but much less so in Baghdad. Unfortunately Western journalists in Baghdad, particularly the highly conspicuous, much-monitored television crews, presented distorted accounts of public opinion in Iraq. Simply put, no sober Iraqi citizen would dare criticize the regime on camera. However, after they were expelled from Baghdad as the uprisings began, journalists explained that Iraqis had expressed much anger against the regime off camera, even complaining that the United States had failed to finish the job and the allied armies had stopped short of Baghdad.[18]

In fact, many Iraqis blamed Saddam for the destruction of their country, or at least they held him more responsible than the United States and hoped that the war would result in the downfall of the regime. The widespread revolts in Iraq that followed the war's end—**by 75 percent of the population**—were tangible proof that Saddam Hussein, not the United States, was the immediate object of blame and hatred. However, popular sentiment in the wake of the revolts and American passivity as those revolts were suppressed is difficult to assess.

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[18]CNN's Christian Amanpour reported this from Amman. One Iraqi was quoted as saying "Why did [U.S. President George] Bush not continue his journey [into Iraq]?" Nora Boustany "Iraqi Troops Reportedly Hang Rebels in Streets," *The Washington Post*, March 13, 1991.

One Iraqi refugee, a doctor who worked in a small town north of Baghdad may have spoken for many others when he explained, "You know, the people there, more than 98 percent wanted to get rid of the regime. They wanted the coalition forces to go all the way. And when they didn't, the Iraqis tried it themselves. When they did, they were pulverized. They got no help. It sort of changed people's feelings about America. It was a revolution being stamped upon."[19]

THE IRAQI POLITY IN EXILE

Although the Ba'athist regime's harsh repression has quashed almost all political activity within Iraq outside narrow government-sanctioned channels, Iraqi politics have always continued among the large community in exile. Nearly 10 percent of the Iraqi population had been forced outside the country, nearly 1.5 million of a total of 18 million. That, of course, was before the March 1991 revolts and their suppression, which made over 2 million more Iraqis refugees.

The traditional currents of Iraqi exile politics no doubt differ from the opinions and sentiment of the population inside Iraq. Opposing Saddam Hussein's murderous and well-entrenched regime was long a quixotic and dangerous venture, since the regime was notorious for striking its foes abroad. Its agents penetrated exile opposition groups and singled out the most capable and talented among opposition figures for assassination, and it took revenge on their relatives remaining inside Iraq when it could not reach them directly. It was, thus, in the nature of the situation that only those of fanatical passions were publicly involved in opposing the Iraqi regime. As a result, the organized Iraqi opposition groups are in all likelihood more ideological than the population living inside Iraq.

Yet the Iraqi opposition encompasses very diverse elements. More importantly, the characteristics of the opposition have been changing since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2. Now that a realistic chance of replacing the regime exists and its ability to assassinate its opponents abroad has been much diminished, many more Iraqis in exile are becoming politically active. Among them, to be sure, are opportunists of

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[19] *The New York Times*, April 24, 1991.

dubious character who suddenly see the chance of power, but they also include intelligent and distinguished individuals who feel that historical circumstances and responsibilities oblige them to write, act, and speak. These are the liberal elements within Iraq's exile polity. Liberals are not wont to put their lives at risk in a hopeless cause, and their appearance ranks among the significant changes in Iraqi exile politics since August 2. They constitute the same largely middle-class elements within the Iraqi population to whom Saddam Hussein seeks to appeal when he promises democratic reform. That Saddam feels obliged to address those concerns, even if only *pro forma*, illustrates that the liberal constituency in Iraq is not insignificant.

The Iraqi exile community may at first appear confusing– some 23 groups convened in Beirut in early March in an opposition congress. However, the Iraqi opposition can be understood relatively simply, when the constituent organizations are grouped according to their basic orientation and splinter groups are excluded. The following is a summary of the Iraqi exile opposition and the personalities within it:

The Shi'i Islamic Opposition

Although some very significant percentage of Iraq's Shi'a are secular, or at least not fundamentalist, the major organized Shi'i opposition groups now are all varieties of Islamic movements.

The Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution of Iraq (SAIRI) is an umbrella organization of Islamic opposition groups based in Tehran and established in November 1982. Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim, SAIRI's head, is the single most important figure among the leaders of the Islamic opposition groups and the only one who might be able to claim to command a following of significant numbers inside Iraq. Born in Najaf in 1943, Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim is the son of Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim, Grand Ayatollah for the Shi'a until his death in 1970. The al-Hakim, an old Arab family of established standing within the Shi'i religious establishment, are descendants of the prophet Mohammed, a point not without significance among traditional elements of society.

Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim has been a long-time opponent of the Ba'athist regime. He was a student of the late Baqir al-

Sadr and was arrested in 1972 and again in 1977, when he was condemned to life imprisonment. Amnestied in 1980, as the government groped for ways to deal with the impact of the Iranian revolution inside Iraq, Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim fled to Tehran, where he has lived since. Saddam Hussein has wreaked terrible vengeance on his family in an effort to force him to abandon his opposition activity. In 1983, 130 members of the Hakim family were arrested and imprisoned; six were executed, including three of Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim's brothers and three of his nephews. In 1985, 10 other members of the Hakim family being held hostage in prison were executed. Another brother, Mahdi al-Hakim, who had been forced to flee Iraq in 1969, was assassinated by Iraqi agents while visiting Khartoum two decades later. Of the eight sons of Muhsin al-Hakim, only three survive, including Mohammed Baqir and his brother 'Abd al-Aziz, who serves as the military commander for his brother's forces. They maintain some 8,000 men under arms and have the potential to increase that number by mobilizing more of the large Iraqi exile community in Iran.

The Supreme Assembly is dependent on Tehran and cannot stray too far from the Iranian line. Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim is considered close to Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. His position has largely echoed Iran's, including a rhetoric of virulent anti-Americanism. However, Tehran recognizes that it must give Hakim and the Supreme Council some leeway, lest it undermine its ability to influence events in Iraq. Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim's anti-Americanism abruptly ended with the devastating U.S. victory over Iraq and the popular uprisings that quickly followed.

While Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim's forces have undertaken violent action against the Iraqi regime, including several attempted assassinations of Saddam Hussein, it is said that the Hakim have not engaged in any terrorism against other Arab states or the West, and this author has no information to the contrary.

Mahmud al-Hashimi was another student of Mohammed Baqir al-Sadr. He is of Iranian origin, and served as spokesman for SAIRI. He lives in Qum and is not now active in politics, but he has retained some religious standing.

Of all the organized Shi'i religious groups, only the Supreme Council, or more precisely Mohammed Baqir al-

Hakim, is considered to have a notable following. The other Islamic organizations are narrowly-based groups, which have engaged in terrorism and which owe their existence largely to Tehran's patronage.

The Al-Dawa movement discussed earlier lost its pre-eminent figure when the regime executed Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Sadr in April 1980. While al-Dawa was once an authentic movement, rooted in Iraqi society, with the loss of its spiritual leader it lost its religious authority and its broad base. The lack of leadership, combined with the Iranian revolution, greatly radicalized the movement. It became a secret society, based on cells and conspiracy, in which members did not even use their real names. With time it even lost its Iraqi focus and, like certain Palestinian elements, became involved in terrorism remote from its proclaimed purposes. Al-Dawa, or elements related to it, was responsible for the destruction of the American and French embassies in Kuwait in 1983 and the hijacking of a Kuwaiti plane several years later. The arrest of those responsible for the embassy bombings became the occasion for the kidnapping of Americans in Lebanon, one aspect of which, and perhaps the least important, was to free one of the al-Dawa prisoners in Kuwait, the brother-in-law of a young Lebanese Shi'i, Imad Mughniyah, who had become involved with extremist elements in Iran.

Al-Dawa is headed by a council, most prominent among whom is Mohammed Mahdi Al-Asafi. Although born in Iraq, he is considered to be of Iranian origin, because his first language is Persian, his parents were Iranian and he maintains close ties with his family in Iran. To the extent that al-Dawa still has currency, it is because of its name and what it once represented for the Iraqi Shi'a and not what it is now. Al-Dawa is, perhaps surprisingly, one of the groups that now receives Saudi support and cooperates with Riyadh.

The Islamic Action Organization was formed in 1979 in Tehran, as a splinter group from al-Dawa. It is headed by a cleric from Karbala, Mohammed Taqi al-Mudarrasi, and his brother Hadi. They too are of Persian origin, nephews of an Iranian cleric, Ayatollah Mohammed Shirazi, who guides and directs them. Islamic Action is extremely militant. It was behind a 1981 coup attempt in Bahrain, and it has a narrow, extremist base.

Liberal Clerics

In addition to the organized Islamic groups, there are Iraqi Shi'i clerics who are not fundamentalists, but what might be called liberals. The most prominent is Sayyid Mohammed Bahr al-Ulum, a man in his early 60s. He was personal secretary to Grand Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim, before being forced to flee Iraq in 1969, at the same time as Ayatollah Muhsin's son, Mahdi. Bahr al-Ulum went to Kuwait, where he served as a judge in the Shi'i courts, and later studied in Egypt, receiving a PhD in Islamic jurisprudence at Cairo University. He settled in London in 1979 to establish and head the city's major Shi'i center.

Sayid Hussein al-Sadr, a cleric in his early 50s, is a cousin of Mohammed Baqir al-Sadr, and also resident in London. He heads another Shi'i center, where he teaches religion. Both he and Bahr al-Ulum are active as Shi'i leaders, with followers and influence among the Shi'i community in Iraq and outside.

Finally, Mustafa Jamal al-Din, a man in his mid-60s, was educated in Najaf. In addition to being a cleric, he is one of the greatest living Arabic poets and now resides in Damascus.

Kurds

Although Mullah Mustafa Barzani, and later his son Massoud, have dominated the Kurdish struggle over the past thirty years, Kurdish politics, like Palestinians politics, are known for their factionalism, which long enabled various governments, including the Ba'ath, to exploit Kurdish rivalries for their own purposes.

There are two main Iraqi Kurdish groups. The Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) is the older and larger. Mullah Mustafa headed the KDP until his death in 1979, and since then Massoud Barzani, 45, has led the organization. The soft-spoken self-effacing Kurdish commander has spent his entire adult life fighting for the Kurdish cause, having left school at the age of 15 to join his father. He came to serve as intelligence chief for the KDP and has been fighting the Ba'ath since they took power. After 20 years in the field against Saddam

Hussein, Barzani commands an unparalleled knowledge of his regime and his army.

The KDP maintains more men under arms than any other group, and they are considered the best-trained and most devoted of the Kurdish forces. It was Massoud Barzani who led the fighting in March 1991 that drove Ba'athist forces from Kurdistan. By contrast, it was not until three weeks into the revolt, that the head of the rival Kurdish organization, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), left Damascus to join the rebels in northern Iraq.

The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan is the second largest Kurdish group, with perhaps half the following of the KDP. The PUK's base is mainly in Sulaymaniya in the northeast, while the base of the KDP is in Irbil and northwestern Iraq. The leader of the PUK, Jalal Talabani, was educated at Baghdad University in the 1950s, where he received a bachelor's degree in law. Talabani was long a rival of Mullah Mustafa Barzani. Having broken with Mullah Mustafa in 1964, he sided with the newly-established Ba'athist regime against the KDP first in the late 1960s, and again when fighting renewed after the failure of the 1970 autonomy agreement. After the Kurdish revolt collapsed in 1975 with the sudden conclusion of the agreement between the Shah and Saddam Hussein, Talabani denounced Mullah Mustafa for having cooperated with the United States and Israel, and cultivated ties with a variety of Arab parties, including Libya, Syria, and the PLO.

Similar difficulties arose between the PUK and the KDP in the 1980s. In 1983 the PUK accepted a cease-fire with the Iraqi regime and talks on autonomy began, continuing until Talabani broke them off in 1985. As part of the negotiations, Saddam deposited a large sum of money, some $12 million, for Talabani in a London bank. When the agreement broke down, Baghdad claimed the money had been paid in error, was able to manufacture the documentation to "prove" that, and won the case in a British court. Subsequently, the PUK occasionally kidnapped foreigners working in Northern Iraq, partly to embarrass the regime. They were generally held hostage until the companies for which they worked paid a ransom for their release.

The long-standing rivalry between the KDP and PUK began to ease during the latter years of the Iran-Iraq war. The

ferocity of Iraqi repression caused the two to set aside their differences, while Iran encouraged them to coordinate to work more effectively against Iraq, although ultimately Tehran had ambivalent feelings about their cooperation, as Iran did not want to see the Kurds become too independent. In November 1986, the two Kurdish leaders met and agreed to work together, formally establishing in May 1988 the Kurdistan Iraqi Front, which also included the smaller Kurdish parties.

Before the most recent exodus, over 1/4 million Iraqi Kurdish refugees lived in Iran, the consequence of Baghdad's scorched earth policy in Kurdistan. The Iranian-based Iraqi Kurds provide a perpetual source of manpower for the Kurdish guerrilla forces. The main Kurdish bases in Iraq are near the Iranian border, while Iran has been the most important source of foreign support.

Since the mid-1960s until the present day, the KDP has consistently demanded autonomy for the Kurds and a democratic government for Iraq. The PUK has been associated with the demand for "self-determination," implying Kurdish independence, although it too now has adopted the KDP position of autonomy. Some Kurdish elements, particularly intellectuals associated with the PUK, were once leftist. Mullah Mustafa spent 11 years in exile in the Soviet Union, but he never supported socialism and always disliked the Russians. The harsh repression of the Kurds and the decline of communism internationally have rendered left-wing elements among the Kurds marginal.

Islamic fundamentalism is similarly a minor phenomenon among the Kurds. While the Kurds and Shi'a generally have good relations, born of their mutual suffering under the Ba'ath's harsh repression, the Kurds are opposed to Shi'i fundamentalism. They are largely Sunni, and universalistic claims in the name of Islam made by fundamentalists deny the Kurds their identity and national aspirations. Moreover, although heavily dependent on Iran, the Kurds remain wary of Iran's intentions, apprehensive that Tehran seeks to use them for its own ends, and fully aware of the two occasions when Tehran came to sudden agreement with Baghdad, without informing them, and for which they paid a horrific price.

Finally, it is noteworthy that while it is common in the Middle East for a variety of groups to seek to mobilize support

by adopting a posture of exaggerated hostility to the United States, the two main Kurdish groups have not done so. For example, during the air war, when others, like Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim strongly condemned the United States, Massoud Barzani asserted that "the allies have not targeted civilian objectives or residential area . . . We have no villages left to hit so what is happening does not hurt that much."[20]

Communists

The Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) was once a powerful force in Iraq, appealing particularly to non-Sunni Arab elements, the Shi'a and Kurds. Although the Communist Party never succeeded in gaining power, it was the largest underground opposition movement during the last years of the monarchy and became the main support of Iraq's first military dictator, General Abdul Karim Qassim. However, the ICP's power began to decline after March 1959, when bloody riots between Nasserists and Communists revealed the full extent of the ICP's strength and caused others, above all Qassim, to become alarmed. Qassim moved to reduce them, a step which, ironically, left him without a base of support, and helped precipitate his downfall in 1963. The ICP's further decline was much accelerated by the Ba'athist coup that overthrew Qassim, as the Ba'ath immediately launched a harsh purge of the Communists.

When the Ba'ath seized power a second time in 1968, it asked the ICP to join in a National Front government. Remembering its earlier experience with the Ba'ath, the ICP hesitated, but after much Soviet prodding it agreed in 1973 to join such a government. The initial hesitations of the Iraqi Communists were soon to prove fully justified, when in 1978 the Ba'ath began another bloody crackdown. In April and June of that year, hardline communist elements in Afghanistan and South Yemen seized power with Soviet backing. The Ba'ath moved to pre-empt any possibility of the same thing occurring in Iraq and suppressed its own communist partners. The ICP lost much of what remained of its popular base and appeal with the rise in Islamic fundamentalism, precipitated by the Iranian revolution the next year; even so when the Iran-

[20] *The Washington Post*, February 11, 1991.

Iraq war began, the ICP backed Tehran from its exile in Damascus. The international demise of communism in recent years has been one more factor rendering the ICP a marginal force.

Ex-Ba'athists/Arab Nationalists

The Iraqi opposition also includes a number of figures who were once associated with the Ba'athist regime, but broke with it at some point over the years. Numerically, they are a small element within the Iraqi opposition. However, their names arise frequently when the problem of Iraq's future is conceived in terms of who might replace Saddam Hussein. Since they were at one time members of the *ancien regime*, they are the outside candidates who, it is thought, could promote a reformed version of the existing system.

Many are military officers of Sunni Arab background who adhere to tamer versions of the same militaristic ideology that Saddam Hussein draws upon. For example, as the disparate exile groups began to coordinate a response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in the fall of 1990, the ex-Ba'athists and Arab nationalist elements were reluctant to condemn the invasion or to call for Iraq's withdrawal from the sheikhdom, since they saw the Iraqi army as an important part of their constituency and feared such a stand would alienate the army. Arab nationalists and ex-Ba'athists among the opposition also adhere to the line that the Iraqi army protects the Arab "nation" against its enemies, chief of which is deemed to be Israel.

The nationalist exile figures include:

• General Ibrahim Daud was head of the Presidential Guards in 1968, when he was induced by another Arab nationalist officer to join the Ba'ath in the coup that brought them to power, and he became Defense Minister in the new regime. Two weeks later, however, he and his partner were ousted. Daud was out of the country at the time and found refuge in Saudi Arabia, where he has lived in exile since.

• General Hassan al-Naqib served as military attache to Washington between 1958 and 1960 under Qassim. In the late 1960s he was assistant chief of staff and commander of the Iraqi expeditionary force dispatched to Jordan during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Iraqi forces remained in Jordan after the end of the war and even after the Ba'athist coup overthrew the relatively benign Arif government. The new Iraqi regime was

strongly committed ideologically to the Palestinian cause. In September 1970, long-simmering tensions between King Hussein and the PLO erupted into open warfare. Iraq threatened to "take all necessary measures" to protect the Palestinian guerrillas. The prospect of Iraqi intervention on the Palestinian side was Washington's greatest apprehension, but Iraqi forces did nothing in the crisis and Baghdad essentially betrayed its fiery revolutionary claims. General al-Naqib, however, had been among those who wanted to support the PLO. He was subsequently dismissed from the army and sent as ambassador to Europe, before breaking with the regime altogether in 1978, when he went to Beirut to serve as a military adviser to the PLO. After Syria broke with the PLO in 1983, al-Naqib sided with Damascus. He has been based there since, long active in anti-regime activity.

- Talib Shabib was Iraq's Foreign Minister in 1963 under the first Ba'athist regime. He has lived many years in New York, and has joined with General al-Naqib to form the Iraqi Salvation Movement.
- Salah Omar Ali al-Takriti was a member of the Iraqi Ba'ath Party's regional command at the time of the 1968 coup. He was closely involved in the public hanging of 14 Iraqis in Baghdad, 11 of them Jews, in 1969. Along with other high officials of the regime, he exhorted the crowds that were assembled in "Liberation Square" on that occasion. The next year he was made Minister of Culture and Information, presumably on the basis of his performance in Liberation Square. For reasons that are unclear, he left Iraq for Lebanon, but was soon rehabilitated and given ambassadorial posts.

In the early 1980s, Salah al-Takriti served as Iraq's UN ambassador, resigning his position in August 1982, after Iraqi forces were pushed on the defensive in the war with Iran and it looked like Iraq might lose. Al-Takriti began to promote himself as an alternative to Saddam Hussein, advertising his qualifications for ruling Iraq—that he was Sunni, Arab, and from Takrit. Again, after a period of time, he was rehabilitated in some fashion by Saddam Hussein. In August 1990, he headed the London-based international division for Iraqi Airways freight services, an appointment made from Baghdad. Iraqi Freight Services Limited was among those businesses named as Iraqi-front companies by the U.S. Treasury Department on April 1, 1991.

After Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Salah al-Takriti joined with Tahsin Mualla, the doctor who treated Saddam Hussein after he was wounded in a failed Ba'athist coup attempt against General Qassim in 1959, to form the National Accord Committee and al-Takriti became closely connected with Saudi Arabia. According to Iraqi opposition figures, al-Takriti told the Saudis that he could arrange a coup in Baghdad through his contacts in the Iraqi military, and he became the main figure promoted by Saudi Arabia. In early March, a senior Saudi intelligence officer, General Mohammed al-Utaibi, told members of the Damascus-based Iraqi opposition that they had to take al-Takriti and Saad Jabr (discussed below) as equal partners or they would get no support from Saudi Arabia or the U.S. Salah al-Takriti was also one of the principal figures in charge of the Saudi-based radio station, the Voice of Free Iraq, financed by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.[21]

Liberals

Events since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, have led a number of liberal figures to assume a public political role for the first time. With the exception of Sahib al-Hakim, who heads the London-based Human Rights Organization of Iraq, they do not have associations or political parties. That is partly because their public activity is new and partly because they eschew dependence on any of the (illiberal) regimes in the area, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, ordinarily the quickest way to secure the funds and support to form a political organization.

The one exception is Saad Jabr. Saad Jabr is the son of Iraq's first Shi'i prime minister, Salih Jabr, who headed the Umma party under the monarchy. Long a dedicated opponent of Saddam Hussein, Saad Jabr established the New Umma party in London. However, it was generally considered in London that the party's membership was very small. Since August 2, Saad Jabr has received Saudi backing and established the Free Iraq Council. Its base, however, is not regarded to be much bigger than that of the New Umma Party.

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[21] Elaine Sciolino, "Radio Linked to CIA Urges Iraqis to Overthrow Hussein," *The New York Times*, April 16, 1991.

These liberal elements look to the West and have been frustrated, and in their minds, weakened, by American aloofness. That aloofness has been so far-reaching that the highest U.S. decision-makers, have, thus far, steadfastly refused to articulate any preference for a liberal regime in Baghdad. They include: Ahmad Chalabi, Hassan Chalabi, Hani Fuekeiki, Ahmad Haboobi, Laith Kubba, Mohammed Makiya, and Abdul Latif Shawwaf. Many more are active behind the scenes, but fearing retaliation by the regime against their families in Iraq, they assume little public role.

The appearance of liberal elements within the Iraqi opposition is a significant phenomenon. They have always existed in the shadows, but have become public now with the weakening of the regime. Something similar would likely happen inside Iraq if the regime were to fall or its terror apparatus somehow cease to function. The domestic equivalents of these liberal exile figures would likely emerge inside Iraq from among the substantial urban middle class. Iraqi politics, as a result, would look much different than they appear today.

Efforts at coordination among the diverse elements of the Iraqi opposition go back to 1987. Initially, the main stumbling block was a difference of views between the Islamic and non-Islamic groups. In particular, the Islamic groups were unwilling to support the principle of democracy, because from a strictly religious perspective, they are reluctant to endorse the principle of popular sovereignty, which does not, by definition, give primacy to clerical authority. Also, the Islamic groups recognize that in free elections they would probably not prevail. Forty-five percent of Iraq's population—the Kurds and Sunni Arabs—will not vote for Shi'i clerics, while among significant elements within the Shi'i community, particularly the urban middle class, there is little taste for clerical rule.

However, in the period since August 2, the Islamic organizations have relented on their opposition to endorsing democracy. On December 17, 1990, Iraqi opposition groups met in Damascus to form a body for coordinating their efforts, the Joint Action Committee. The committee issued a statement affirming its commitment to Iraq's unity and calling for the overthrow of dictatorship in Iraq, along with the establishment of a provisional government which would call for the election of a constituent assembly and hold elections within two years.

Since August 2, Syria, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, have all sought to use the Iraqi opposition groups to promote their own positions in a future regime in Baghdad. Syria is judged the most clever in dealing with the opposition, because it imposes the least constraints. Damascus, in fact, gave most support for coordination among the Iraqi opposition groups, while Tehran dragged its feet. Saudi Arabia long had little contact with the Iraqi opposition and was largely ignorant of them. In February 1991, for example, the Saudis proposed candidates for an opposition council. Several of their candidates, including a Maj. Gen. Abdul Aziz al-Uquaili, were dead.

The West, and the United States in particular, has overwhelming military dominance in the Gulf and exercises great influence in international councils. When the United States chooses to use its power to shape Iraq's future, influence within the Iraqi opposition shifts toward those who can talk to the West. Yet until March 27, 1991, administration officials at the policy level were prohibited from meeting with members of the Iraqi opposition. As a consequence, they were astonishingly ill-informed about the Iraqi opponents of Saddam Hussein. The more that the United States is willing to become engaged in discussions with the Iraqi opposition and the more that the United States chooses to take an active posture toward the question of Iraq's political future, the stronger Washington's "natural" constituency within the opposition—liberal pro-democratic elements—becomes.

III POSSIBLE OPTIONS FOR IRAQ'S FUTURE

U.S. POSTWAR POLICY

While the administration has consistently maintained that Saddam Hussein "must go," it has not articulated a policy toward a future government in Iraq—what it might look like or how it is to be brought about. Observers have been left to puzzle out what the administration considers a minimally acceptable successor regime; what it considers a desirable regime; and how the fall of Saddam Hussein is to be accomplished.

The formal administration position towards a future Iraqi government has been expressed in elliptical statements by senior officials during the war, and since, to the effect that "no one would weep" if Saddam Hussein were overthrown; that the future of Iraq is up to the "Iraqi people" to decide; that "the Iraqi military and people should take matters into their own hands to force Saddam Hussein the dictator to step aside."

The administration's language was puzzling. The critical question was hardly addressed, let alone answered: How could the Iraqi people, largely unarmed and living under a regime of systemized terror, decide their own future? And when, against the odds, they attempted to do so, as the Kurds and the Shi'a—75 percent of the Iraqi population—rose in revolt

immediately after the cessation of hostilities, the United States offered them little support, despite its overwhelming military superiority in the region.

Because the administration said so little publicly about what it envisaged for Iraq, it is difficult to know what its expectations were. Yet one point seems clear. The administration looked to a coup within the ruling elite to deliver Iraq and the Gulf region from Saddam Hussein. "Our policy is to get rid of Saddam Hussein, not his regime," an NSC aide asserted in early March 1.[1] As *The New York Times* reported then, "The working assumption in Washington is that if Mr. Hussein is toppled, he would likely be replaced by another senior member of his Ba'ath party, probably in conjunction with some element of the Iraqi Army. The Ba'ath party still provides a coherent structure to control Iraq."[2]

Since administration officials would have been understandably reluctant to say openly to the American public that they looked to another military/Ba'athist government in Baghdad, this policy was left unclear. Thus, the administration's persistent formal neutrality seemed illogical. It repeatedly claimed that the U.S. would not interfere in Iraq's internal affairs, as if the most intense aerial bombing campaign in history had not been precisely that. The administration's otherwise puzzling aloofness towards Iraq's future government is best understood in terms of its desire for a coup by the elite. A major drawback to this approach was that there could be no real debate over a deliberately vague policy. Had such a debate taken place, it might well have illuminated the pitfalls ahead and the dangers in exclusively relying on encouraging a coup within the Iraqi elite to remove Saddam Hussein.

Perhaps the best way to understand the administration's operational policy toward a future government of Iraq is to reconstruct the flow of events since the cessation of hostilities, a critical turning point in Iraqi affairs. The following is a synopsis of the period since February 28, 1991. Drawn almost

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[1] *Civil War in Iraq*, A Staff Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, May 1, 1991, p.28.

[2] Thomas L. Friedman, "The Rout Bush Wants," *The New York Times*, February 27, 1991.

entirely from the public record, it is therefore incomplete, as many important points remain unclear, but it nonetheless highlights what can be ascertained about administration policy and points to questions remaining.

Immediately after the cessation of hostilities, disgruntled Iraqi soldiers, returning home from the war, touched off riots in Basra that began on the first of March. The Shi'i rebels sent a written request to allied forces for help in overthrowing Saddam Hussein, as the unrest quickly spread throughout the entire south of Iraq.[3] The head of the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim, issued statements suggesting that elements loyal to him were behind the revolt, and his brother, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, crossed into Iraq with armed men drawn from among the large Iraqi exile community in Iran, who had been constituted into military formations during the Iran-Iraq war. Reliable information about the role of the al-Hakims and Iran in the crisis is not currently available. Estimates appeared in the press that as many as 5,000 Iraqi exiles crossed from Iran to Iraq, although the Hakims complained to Iraqi opposition members in London that Tehran was keeping many men from crossing; and in any event, the rebels were lightly armed.

The unrest in the south soon spread to the Kurdish north as well. The regime had long followed a policy of depopulating much of Kurdistan, moving the Kurdish population from mountain villages into densely populated urban camps. Those in the camps were among the first to rise up. So too were the "*jash*," the mules, Kurdish forces that had previously collaborated with Saddam Hussein's regime. The chief Kurdish guerrilla leader, Massoud Barzani, hesitated, cognizant of the regime's use of chemical weapons against Kurdish rebels two years ago. But between pressure for action from the Kurdish population, a sense that the Shi'a in the South should be supported, and American statements warning the Iraqi regime against the use of chemical weapons and aircraft, Barzani threw his troops into the fray. Within three weeks, almost the entire North had been liberated from Saddam's forces.

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[3]Nora Boustany, "Refugees Tell of Turmoil in Iraq; Troops Recount Allied Onslaught," *The Washington Post*, March 4, 1991.

As the rebellions mounted the administration apparently hoped that they would lead to a coup, and it saw the U.S. presence in southern Iraq as promoting Saddam Hussein's fall. As one official explained after the first week of the revolt, "'We are banking on the military' or Ba'ath leaders 'to pull him out' of power as the unrest worsens."[4]

Two weeks into the revolts, the administration seemed to take a somewhat more forward position toward the uprisings. On March 13, the President, while visiting Canada, cautioned Saddam against using helicopters to suppress the rebellions, saying that doing so would constitute a violation of the provisional cease-fire. The warning was repeated March 16, as President Bush met British Prime Minister John Major in Bermuda. On March 14 and March 24 U.S. heavy armor units reoccupied positions in Southern Iraq in what was seen as an effort to increase pressure on Saddam Hussein.[5] In that period, on March 20 and 22, the U.S. air force shot down two Iraqi airplanes flying in violation of the provisional cease-fire terms and U.S. warnings. On the same day that the second airplane was downed, the most explicit statement of an American intent to use its presence in southern Iraq to promote Saddam Hussein's fall was made. General Colin Powell told reporters that

> U.S. military forces in southern Iraq would seek to maintain pressure on President Saddam Hussein of Iraq "for some months to come" while insurrections whittle away at the Iraqi leader's power . . . "While the entire civilized world was watching," including United States air patrols that forbid the Iraqi air force any use of the skies, Mr. Hussein "has to be a little careful how he goes about suppressing the various insurrections that are taking place."[6]

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[4]Al Kamen and R. Jeffrey Smith, "U.S., Arabs Fear Breakup or Fundamentalist Takeover of Iraq," *The Washington Post*, March 8, 1991.

[5]Douglas Jehl, "U.S. Troops Reoccupy Deepest Iraqi Positions," *Los Angeles Times*, March 15, 1991; Rick Atkinson, "U.S. Tanks Go Deeper into Iraq," *The Washington Post*, March 25.

[6]Patrick E. Tyler, "Powell Says U.S. Will Stay in Iraq 'For Some Months,'" *The New York Times*, March 23, 1991.

At the same time it was also reported that the administration had "not resolved a policy debate over whether it would be better for U.S. forces to stay in Iraq restraining Saddam's ability to suppress the rebellions or withdraw so Iraqi military forces could consolidate control and then possibly challenge Saddam's claim to leadership."[7]

The policy debate within the administration soon abruptly ended. At a March 26 White House meeting it was "decided to let President Saddam Hussein put down rebellions in his country without American intervention."[8] After the meeting, National Security Council Advisor, Brent Scowcroft, and his assistant, Richard Haass, left on a secret trip to Saudi Arabia, whose purpose was subsequently described as high-level consultations on the post-war situation in Iraq. Soon afterwards the Saudi Information Ministry issued orders to the country's newspaper editors to limit coverage of Iraq's internal unrest.[9]

Reflecting on the March 26 decision just taken by the White House, a senior official explained,

> Bush believes "Saddam will quash the rebellions and, after the dust settles, the Ba'ath military establishment and other elites will blame him for not only the death and destruction from the war, but the death and destruction from putting down the rebellion. They will

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[7]Dan Balz and Al Kamen, "U.S. Seen Lacking Policy on Postwar Goals," *The Washington Post,* March 24, 1991.

[8]Andrew Rosenthal, "U.S., Fearing Iraqi Breakup, Is Said to Rule Out Action to Aid Anti-Hussein Rebels," *The New York Times,* March 27, 1991. After March 26, administration officials maintained that shooting down helicopters would have been difficult and have made little difference to the rebels anyway. Even so *The New York Times* of March 26 quoted unnamed officials that the insurgents "just can't deal with the helicopter gunships," while it also reported that officials felt that tracking helicopters was "somewhat more difficult" than fixed wing aircraft, but "expressed confidence they could shoot down helicopters if ordered to do so."

[9]Elaine Sciolino, "Iraq is Left to the Mercy of Saddam Hussein," *The New York Times,* April 7, 1991.

> emerge then and install a new leadership and will make the case it is time for new leaders and a new beginning . . ."
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> But this official expressed his own doubts. "There might not be a coup . . . And then the outright civil war will turn into guerrilla wars in the north by the Kurds and in the south by the Shi'ites . . . and all these thousands and thousands will be dead while we looked on."[10]

On March 28, two days after the key White House decision, Iraqi troops began a "major attack" on Kurdish rebels.[11] Two days later, on March 30, Tehran's official press agency "estimated that more than one million people had been driven from their homes in Northern Iraq."[12] The next day, on March 31, the president left on holiday, while other key White House staffers departed in his wake. As an administration official explained, "It is a somewhat painful acceptance of a certain reality. You manage it in as low-key a way as possible and hope you get through it."[13]

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[10] *The Washington Post,* March 29, 1991. The idea that allowing Saddam to repress the rebellions would promote his overthrow was also suggested by authorities on Iraq in Washington. "Experts on the region such as Phebe Marr of the National Defense University contend that the domestic chaos in Iraq will reduce the likelihood that the military can get rid of Saddam soon. 'The rebellion is strengthening Saddam, not weakening him . . . No military is going to overthrow him while they are fighting a rebellion." Balz and Kamen, March 24, 1991, *ibid.*

Similarly, *The New York Times,* March 21, 1991, wrote "It is important to stabilize the situation in Iraq," said Christine Moss Helms, an Iraq scholar who has advised the White House and Pentagon during the Persian Gulf crisis. "Until the situation is stabilized nobody is going to be able to focus on getting rid of Saddam Hussein."

[11] Youssef Ibrahim, "Iraq, Hitting Hard, Reports Big Gains Against the Kurds," *The New York Times,* March 29, 1991.

[12] "Thousands Flee as Iraqi Troops Shell a Northern Kurdish City." *The New York Times,* March 31, 1991.

[13] Ann Devroy and Al Kamen, "Bush, Aides Keep Quiet on Rebels," *The Washington Post,* April 3, 1991.

Within a week of the March 26 decision, two million Kurds had fled their homes in Northern Iraq. Nearly half fled to the border of an important U.S. ally, Turkey, whose president, Turgot Ozal, had provided critical support to the American war effort and had also been consistently forthcoming toward Iraq's Kurds since the war began. Turkish officials met with Kurdish leaders in early March, before the U.S. was willing to do so and Ozal criticized the March 26 decision not to shoot down Iraqi helicopters as a "big help" to Saddam. Following an appeal April 1 from Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani to the international community to halt the "genocide" against the Kurds, the Turkish and French governments called on the UN Security Council for action.

However, the Security Council was otherwise engaged, still completing work on a complex resolution detailing the final cease-fire terms with Iraq, Resolution 687. The Security Council approved 687 on April 3 and two days later took up and passed, at French initiative, Resolution 688, which condemned Baghdad's repression of its populations. The same day, President Bush ordered a massive airlift of relief supplies to the refugees on the Turkish border. However, it soon became clear that the crisis could not be addressed through an airlift alone and once again Europe took the initiative. British Prime Minister John Major proposed establishing "safe havens" for the Kurds in Northern Iraq, and the European Economic Community endorsed the idea on April 8. Eight days later President Bush announced that the U.S. would join the European allies in implementing such a plan. Significantly, no Arab leader was consulted in the decision, suggesting that the central Arab player, Saudi Arabia, would not have favored it. As the safe havens plan went into effect, the problem facing the administration was how to balance the conflicting pressures of its commitment to insure the Kurds' safety, on the one hand, and its desire to extricate allied troops from Northern Iraq as quickly as possible, on the other. In the meanwhile, the plight of the Shi'a in Southern Iraq has been neglected, and those returning from the south report that their fate has been almost as bad as the Kurds.[14]

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[14]William Drozdiak, "Southern Iraq Lies Devastated," *The Washington Post*, April 30, 1991.

The April 16 decision to establish safe havens in Northern Iraq marked a new phase in U.S. policy. Whether it will prove to have been a turning point toward a new policy or merely a twist in the old remains to be seen. As we have seen, until mid-April, administration policy looked to a coup within Iraq's ruling elite, and the administration seemingly hoped to encourage such a move through the military pressure exerted by the presence of U.S. troops in southern Iraq. However, it pulled back from that policy in late March, partly under the rationale that allowing Saddam to suppress the popular revolts would be more likely to facilitate a coup.

The circumstances surrounding the March 26 decision would seem to merit further inquiry. Until only a few days before, the administration's strategy appeared to be to provide indirect support to the popular revolts through the U.S. presence in southern Iraq, as Colin Powell explained in his March 22 interview. Why, then, did U.S. policy shift to allowing Saddam Hussein to repress the revolts virtually unhindered?

This analysis has centered on one consistent thread in the public record, the administration's focus on promoting a coup within the ruling elite. Other reasons existed for the March 26 decision, including apprehension about the "break-up" of Iraq. Yet it is far from clear that Iraq's territorial integrity was threatened by the revolts. The Kurds repeatedly reaffirmed their commitment to a program of autonomy within a democratic Iraq, while the Shi'a had no separatist agenda. Had the U.S. been prepared to throw its airpower into supporting the revolts, most likely, many Sunni Arab elements would have gone over to what would have looked to be the winning side, and a new government could have been quickly constituted. Besides, it is necessary to ask why Iraq's "territorial integrity" was of such great concern. The readily apparent answer focuses on Iranian influence, the loyalties of Iraq's Shi'a, and the consequences of both for the Shi'a-inhabited, oil-bearing Eastern province of Saudi Arabia.

However, it is far from evident that an Iraqi government more representative of the population is not capable of "balancing" Iran, while whatever pro-Iranian and pro-fundamentalist sentiment exists among Iraq's Shi'a would likely be well contained within a united Iraq. Finally, even if the sentiments of Iraq's Shi'a were judged so questionable as to make support for them a risky policy, why did the

administration also allow Saddam Hussein to loose his forces on the Kurds, once he had largely suppressed the Shi'i revolt? It is highly possible that with American air support, the Kurds in the North could have succeeded in forming an Arab-Kurdish alliance to oust Saddam Hussein.

The desire to avoid a "quagmire" and effect a quick withdrawal from the Gulf has also been widely cited as a factor in the March 26 decision. However, the military establishment's caution, evident from the start of Desert Shield, had been repeatedly overridden by political decision-makers since August 2. Besides, the danger of "entanglement" seemed far from imminent March 26, when the option existed of using American air power to dramatically affect Iraq's internal situation and it raised less risk of entanglement than the actual outcome, in which American troops found themselves in occupation of Northern Iraq. Finally, when the decision to let Saddam repress the revolts was made, the severity of what would follow was apparently insufficiently appreciated. Why was that so, given Saddam Hussein's notorious reputation for brutality?

Misconceptions

In retrospect, U.S. policy toward post-war Iraq appears to have been based on a series of questionable assumptions. First, fixing exclusively on a coup within the ruling elite to remove Saddam Hussein was problematic, inasmuch as it was not clear that the elite had the will and the means to do so. To claim subsequently, as one administration official did, that "the uprisings almost made it inevitable that there would not be a coup" was in effect to blame the victim.[15] While there never was any guaranteed assurance of a coup, the U.S. preference for dealing with Iraq's elite did reduce the viability of other avenues for removing Saddam Hussein. Until the end of March, administration officials outside intelligence circles were prohibited from meeting with members of the Iraqi opposition to Saddam Hussein, even though all other governments which had been major members of the anti-Iraq coalition maintained contacts with Iraqi opposition elements.

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[15] Al Kamen and Ann Devroy, "Saddam's Power Seen Increasing," *The Washington Post*, April 20, 1991.

The administration thus denied itself the opportunity to learn directly from them about Iraq's internal situation and to develop contacts with all segments of Iraqi society. Having foreclosed those avenues of intelligence and influence, the U.S. was scarcely prepared for the popular revolts when they occurred nor was it ready to pursue the option of using its overwhelming air superiority in support of the rebels.[16] Had the U.S. done so, it is unlikely that Saddam would be ruling Iraq today. Furthermore, when it was announced on March 27 that the ban on administration contacts with the Iraqi opposition was lifted, it could not be construed as a change in policy. The announcement came one day after the administration came under heavy criticism for its decision to let Saddam suppress the revolts unhindered and appeared as a cosmetic concession to that criticism. Even so, in light of the previous policy's failure to secure Saddam's removal, it is possible that contacts with the opposition could lead to a policy shift, with the administration dealing more broadly with the Iraqi population.

A second, related, misconception was the failure to appreciate fully the hatred of much of the population for the entire apparatus supporting Saddam's regime, including the Ba'ath Party. Party offices were a principal object of attack by the rebellious populations, which ransacked and destroyed them when it could. The prevailing assumption cited earlier, that "the Ba'ath party still provides a coherent structure to rule Iraq" did not comprehend the degree of terror associated with Ba'athist rule, nor the resentment directed against it. Apparently, the President had been led to believe that the situation in Iraq was like Rumania, where the army joined the people against the dictator and his security forces in a brief revolt to bring Nicolae Ceausescu down, while the basic institutions of the state remained intact.[17]

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[16]It was even reported that key military figures in Iraq contacted the Iraqi opposition in Damascus to learn if the U.S. favored the rebellion, as they considered bringing their forces to the side of the revolt, but the U.S. did not respond. *Civil War in Iraq*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

[17]Elaine Sciolino, "Iraq is Left to the Mercy of Saddam Hussein," *The New York Times*, April 7, 1991; Gerald Seib, "How Miscalculations

The administration also reportedly believed that direct U.S. involvement to remove Saddam Hussein would have been counter-productive, because Saddam could use the prospect of a foreign threat to rally internal enemies to his side.[18] That, however, was also a dubious proposition, overestimating the degree of legitimacy and support that the regime had. Both the Shi'i and the Kurds, who comprise a solid majority of the Iraqi population, appealed to the U.S. for support during their revolts. Would the elite that the administration looked to make the coup have resented U.S. support? That, too, is doubtful. The regime is based on terror, and the perception that Saddam was still strong enough to impose that terror is an important reason why his opponents have not moved against him. These fears were reinforced, when, among Saddam's first moves after the war, he appointed the notorious Ali Hassan al-Majid as Interior Minister and Hussein Kamil as Defense Minister.

More broadly, the administration's fixation on promoting a coup in Iraq reflected a questionable understanding of Arab politics generally. Historically, Arab military governments have, most often, not been very stable, or at least not until after a cycle of bloodletting in coup and countercoup, which produced a sufficiently brutal regime to maintain control. Narrowly based and lacking legitimacy, such regimes have cultivated a routinized posture of exaggerated hostility to the United States and Israel to compensate for their political weakness. That happened in Syria, which experienced 10 successful coups in the 25 years between independence and Hafez al-Assad's seizure of power in 1970, and that also was the case in Iraq, which witnessed four coups in the decade between the fall of the monarchy and 1968, when the Ba'ath took over.

Indeed, at this turning point in Iraqi politics, for the U.S. to seek as its preferred option a military coup reflects a throwback to an earlier period. After World War II, the U.S., new to the Middle East, looked optimistically to Arab colonels as the vanguards of "modernization" and the bulwark against "communism." Within the U.S. policy-making community, the Central Intelligence Agency was most connected with that policy. It played an important role in Syria's first military coup

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Spawned U.S. Policy Toward Postwar Iraq," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 3, 1991.

[18] Seib, *op. cit.*

and was on friendly terms with then-Lt. Colonel Gamal Abdul Nasser before and after he seized power.[19] The CIA's role in bringing the Ba'ath to power in Iraq in 1963 remains unclear. King Hussein charged at the time that the CIA had assisted the Ba'ath, and scholars since have repeated that suspicion.[20] The last time the U.S. was known to have looked with favor on a military coup was 1969 when Moammar Qaddafi overthrew Libya's King Idris.[21] As these examples suggest, the policy of promoting coups has repeatedly proved unsatisfactory, to say the least.

Finally, the extent to which the U.S. relied on Saudi advice about developments in Iraq was questionable. American officials subsequently explained that the Saudi government "seemed confident from its own contacts with Iraqi dissidents that the Iraqi military would turn on Saddam Hussein."[22] The Saudis had little knowledge of Iraq's internal politics and little experience in dealing with the Iraqi opposition. Moreover, their own strong preference for such an outcome would likely color their assessments.

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[19]For the American role in Syria and Egypt see Miles Copeland, *The Game of Nations.* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969); also Shimon Shamir, "The Collapse of Project Alpha," in William Roger Louis and Roger Owen, eds., *Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Consequences.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.)

[20]"Well-informed Iraqi officials, including Ba'athists, have stated to us that the United States Central Intelligence Agency collaborated in the overthrow of Qassim . . . Hashim Jawad, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, told us later that the Iraqi Foreign Ministry had information of complicity between the Ba'ath and the CIA. Edith and E.F. Penrose, *Iraq: International Relations and National Development* (London: E. Benn; Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1978), p. 288. *The Boston Globe,* September 9, 1990, reported that the CIA airlifted weapons to what it considered the "centrist" faction of the Ba'ath in 1963. Bruce Odell, who headed the airlift, even explained that waiting in a Baghdad hotel one day, "I met Saddam Hussein . . . He was with another gentleman. Saddam Hussein was a prominent member of the right-wing faction."

[21]J.B. Kelly, *Arabia, the Gulf, and the West.* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), p. 332.

[22]Seib, *op. cit.*

What If Saddam Remains?

Three months after the war's end, American policy is beginning to emerge from the uncertainty and lack of clarity that characterized the U.S. position following the cessation of hostilities and Saddam Hussein's subsequent suppression of Iraq's popular uprisings. On May 20, 1991 President Bush stated that the U.S. would not agree to lift economic sanctions while Saddam Hussein remains in power. Two days later, the Secretary of State reaffirmed that position before congress, explaining, "We will continue to isolate Saddam Hussein as long as he is in power. . . Left alone, free to reconsolidate his brutal dictatorship and military machine, we know that he will act act to brutalize his own people and to threaten his neighbors."[23]

This renewed clarity in America's stance vis a vis Iraq is to be welcomed, as the previous lack of clarity, encouraging others to believe that Washington was prepared to reconcile itself to Saddam's continued tenure, weakened the anti-Saddam front. This newly formulated America policy recognizes that Saddam Hussein's remaining in power is likely to be a major cause of continued strife and instability in Iraq and the region.[24] Saddam Hussein has a bully's mentality and is extremely sensitive to power and its use. He invaded and occupied Kuwait in the belief that the United States would not use force. When events proved him wrong and the U.S. led a devastating war against Iraq, he capitulated totally, agreeing on February 26 to all American conditions. The logic behind this seemingly stunning reversal was actually quite simple. America had the power and the will to use it; Iraq had to accommodate—on a tactical level. Previously, Saddam has made far-reaching concessions only to renounce them when the balance of power seemed to shift in his favor. Among the more notable examples of this treachery was Saddam

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[23]Hearing of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee May 22, 1991.

[24]See also Albert Wohlstetter, "Iraq: Dictatorship is the Problem," *The Washington Post,* April 24, 1991 and Edward Mortimer, "Iraq: The Road Not Taken," *New York Review of Books,* May 16, 1991.

Hussein's attempt to assassinate the Kurdish leader, Mullah Mustafa Barzani eighteen months after they had reached the March 1970 agreement on Kurdish autonomy. Today, Saddam hopes that when he is in a stronger position he will be able to reverse the commitments Iraq has made to the international community in UN Security Council Resolution 687 detailing the cease-fire provisions of the Gulf war. Indeed, Baghdad's unsatisfactory responses to the terms of Resolution 687 requiring full disclosure of its weapons of mass destruction and facilities related to those weapons suggest that such a policy has already begun. It is not clear that even the economic and political sanctions, being presently applied, and buttressed indirectly by the presence of allied forces in Northern Iraq are sufficient to insure Iraq's full compliance with 687. At any rate, the leverage of the international community will only diminish in the future. In addition to Iraq's failure to provide comprehensive information about its weapons of mass destruction, Iraq so far has not honored the cease-fire terms requiring the return of stolen Kuwaiti property and the repatriation of Kuwaitis held by Baghdad.

Some analysts have begun to warn that Saddam could re-establish Iraq as a "major military power" within five years, even as the Soviet ambassador to the United Nations has advised that Iraq should "now be treated normally, like any other state in the region."[25] Indeed, if Saddam Hussein succeeded in significantly normalizing Iraq's situation—regaining control over oil revenues and access to arms suppliers, such as China, North Korea, and even the Soviet Union, while re-establishing Baghdad's sophisticated illicit technology and weapons procurement network—Iraq could probably soon rebuild its military capabilities to the point where it once again overshadowed its neighbors, given their chronic military weakness. Considerable elements of the Iraqi armed forces survived the war. Iraq retains some 400 of its 700 fixed wing aircraft, while its 400 combat helicopters were never involved in the war and its attack helicopter force remains intact. Although many of the tanks Iraq still possesses are old, Baghdad has upwards of 3,000 of them.

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[25]Amatzia Baram in the *Jerusalem Post International,* April 13, 1991; Yuli Vorontsov in *Mideast Mirror,* May 10, 1991.

Saddam's sensitivity to force enjoins deferring to the powerful and brutalizing the weak. He will be vengeful against those who seem vulnerable. That may include Saudi Arabia; it is almost certain to include Kuwait. Even without waiting to rebuild his military machine, Saddam may try to keep Kuwait uneasy and off-balance by promoting terrorism there, taking advantage of the political tensions that have emerged in Kuwait since its liberation. As Kuwait's amir warned, "The tyrant of Iraq is still there holding power in his country.... We cannot feel secure that he will not rely on a fifth column of his cronies among us to undermine security and stability."[26]

Saddam's suppression of Iraq's popular revolts created the largest refugee crisis since World War II, and threatens to leave a legacy of ongoing guerrilla wars that may destabilize neighboring states. The influx of Kurdish refugees threatened Turkey's internal stability and Turgot Ozal's political position. Even if the Kurdish leadership reaches an agreement on autonomy with Saddam's regime, it may well not endure, as such agreements have been reached in in the past, only to degenerate into conflict; thus, a guerrilla war in Northern Iraq remains possible. That in turn would exacerbate tensions in Turkey, as disorder in Northern Iraq would provide haven for the Marxist, Syrian-backed Kurdish Worker's Party, the PKK, which has long pursued a campaign of terror in Eastern Turkey. Similarly, the Shi'i revolt in the south looks like it will continue as a guerrilla war, backed by Iran. If political tensions within Kuwait degenerate into civil strife, conflict in southern Iraq could become entangled with conflict in Kuwait, exacerbating political tensions in the sheikhdom.

Saddam's continued tenure in Iraq also raises broader questions of basic justice. Domestically, the Shi'i and Kurdish uprisings in March, the most widespread revolts in Iraq's modern history, demonstrate that the government clearly lacks popular legitimacy. Externally, Saddam's forces aggressively occupied another country and systematically devastated it. Three months after liberation, over 500 oil fires remain burning in Kuwait and parts of the sheikhdom will probably be inhabitable this summer, as hot-weather

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[26]KUNA, April 7, 1991, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service—Near East and South Asia, April 8.

temperature inversions concentrate the smoke and pollution.[27] No one knows how much time will be required to restore Kuwait to a reasonable physical condition and to reconstitute a modicum of political harmony there. Saddam Hussein is responsible for that situation, as well as for the vicious atrocities committed in Kuwait during the period of occupation. It seems hardly possible that the U.S. can reasonably view the conclusion of the Gulf war with satisfaction if Saddam Hussein remains in power. Indeed, the new policy that began to emerge in late May suggests that the Bush administration has reached that judgment.

U.S. OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Although more and better options existed for promoting the ouster of Saddam Hussein three months ago than exist today, there are still viable strategies for removing him from power. Absent some further outrage from Baghdad, the maximalist approach of renewing military hostilities against Iraq for the purpose of ousting Saddam seems remote from the public mood or that of the administration. Yet there does exist a wide range of political and economic measures which could isolate and severely weaken the Iraqi regime. There is no guarantee that such measures will succeed in removing Saddam, and the administration may hesitate to pursue openly an aim that it is not confident it can achieve. Yet important goals are frequently pursued without such assurances, the perennial attempt to secure a satisfactory settlement to the Palestinian problem perhaps being the best example. The strategic and moral need to secure Saddam Hussein's ouster would appear sufficiently evident that the administration would in fact be more susceptible to criticism not by failing to succeed in doing so, but by failing to pursue Saddam's downfall as vigorously as circumstances permit.

So far, it appears that the administration expects to rely on continued economic sanctions to remove Saddam Hussein, retaining them indefinitely, or at least as long as possible. This approach, however, raises the difficult problem of whether the pursuit of a "hard peace" will exact too high a

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[27] William Booth, "Kuwait May Evacuate Smoke-Filled Areas," *The Washington Post*, May 21, 1991.

price from the Iraqi population and become both undesirable to maintain for humanitarian reasons and impossible to maintain for political reasons. The Iraqi regime will try its best to demonstrate to world public opinion that the population is suffering intolerable hardships, even as it will seek to divert the supplies that do enter the country to its own constituencies—the military and the populations of Baghdad and the Sunni Arab area to the north. If maintaining economic sanctions should become impossible, the U.S. would find itself without the means to achieve its goals. Thus, the administration may find it necessary to develop a more comprehensive strategy to promote the ouster of Saddam Hussein.

Two radically different approaches for seeking Saddam Hussein's ouster suggest themselves. One entails a tacit acceptance of the legitimacy of the regime, while the other is to openly declare the regime to be illegitimate.

Saddam Hussein has made many commitments to many parties as he struggles to cope with Iraq's post-war crises. Most notably, they include the promise to establish a democratic regime in Baghdad and to hold elections within six months. Elements of this program stem from earlier promises of political reform which were never implemented, as was discussed earlier. While there is no reason to believe that Saddam is any more sincere in his intent to fulfill those commitments now, one possible U.S. strategy could be to lead the international community in a sustained effort to hold Saddam Hussein to his stated promises. UN Security Council Resolution 688, passed at French initiative to halt the regime's genocidal repression of its Shi'i and Kurdish populations, called for an "open dialogue" within Iraq "to ensure that the human and political rights" of all citizens are respected. On the basis of 688, the lifting of UN sanctions and other punitive measures against Iraq could be linked to the regime's fulfilling its stated promise of free and fair elections. The holding of such elections would require a period of time in which the Iraqi population enjoyed an atmosphere sufficiently free of intimidation and the threat of violence so that a more normal political discourse could develop and political parties representing popular sentiments and aspirations could emerge and become organized. In other words, civil society would have to be reintroduced in Iraq.

Securing such an atmosphere would not be easy. The most brutal figures in the Iraqi regime would probably have to resign. This would include two men who played a prominent role in the torture and repression of the Kuwaiti population while the sheikhdom was under Iraqi occupation—Ali Hassan al-Majid, recently appointed Interior Minister, and Sabawi Ibrahim, head of the secret police. A large team of UN and other international observers would be required to oversee Iraq's internal situation and it would need both the authority and the means to halt abuses. The UN team would then monitor elections in Iraq, as the UN has done elsewhere in special circumstances, like Namibia.

Such an approach, fostering a genuine political culture and culminating in free elections, would probably lead to the regime's downfall. For that reason, Saddam Hussein would be unlikely to accept it and would most likely denounce international supervision—a key element of this strategy—as foreign interference in Iraq's internal affairs. Moreover, it is far from clear that the international community possesses the coercive instruments to oblige Saddam to accept such a program or to enforce his adherence to it, even if he formally accepted it. Even now, Iraq is in violation of elements of Resolution 687, although the leverage of the international community is at its peak, with economic sanctions in full effect and the allies in occupation of Northern Iraq. The danger exists that if the international community were to be ineffective in promoting an atmosphere within Iraq sufficiently free of terror, Saddam Hussein would be able to win such elections as may be held and establish renewed legitimacy for his rule. However, the advantage to such an approach is that Saddam Hussein, by pledging democracy and free elections, has accorded legitimacy to those goals, and the attempt to secure them may be less controversial from the perspective of international diplomacy and alliance politics than the effort to proceed on a radically different path, directly challenging the regime's legitimacy.

An opposite strategy for ousting Saddam Hussein would proceed from the premise that as a result of its naked and unprovoked aggression against Kuwait and the five other countries Iraq has attacked—Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Bahrain and Qatar, where the Scuds missed their targets—as well as its near-genocidal suppression of the Iraqi population,

Saddam's regime no longer has legitimate claim to rule. The U.S. would then seek to mobilize an international consensus to isolate Baghdad and openly force a change in regime. Such a policy would begin with a clear statement that the ultimate U.S. goal is the removal of Saddam Hussein by all economic and political means possible and that the administration seeks as an interim goal the maximal isolation and punishment of the regime.

A first step in such a program would be the promotion of war crimes trials. The European Economic Community, at German initiative, endorsed the idea in mid-April and the U.S. Senate has backed the EEC. The administration, however, after first considering the idea, ultimately rejected it, the State Department arguing that trials *in abstentia* might help preserve Saddam in power.[28] That, however, seems to be another version of the argument that pressure on Saddam Hussein leads Iraqis and other Arabs to rally around him, an argument largely discredited by the outcome of events since August 2. Throughout, effective external pressure weakened and isolated the regime, while his crushing defeat at the hands of Western powers undercut Saddam Hussein and did not generate widespread support for him either inside or outside Iraq. Appropriate attention and publicity to the atrocities committed by Iraqi forces in Kuwait and their subsequent suppression of the Shi'i and Kurdish populations would help mobilize the sentiments of the international community for further action against Iraq.

The administration has also argued that war crimes trials would foreclose the possibility that Saddam would seek exile abroad. Yet leaving Saddam the option of a peaceful exit could be combined with the threat of war crimes trials. Specifically, he could be given a fixed (and limited) period of time within which to seek exile, before legal proceedings began; were he and his closest associates to leave Iraq in that period, then criminal proceedings would be suspended.

Beyond serving immediate purposes, punishment for Saddam Hussein, whether through exile or war crimes trials, would have a salutary impact both on the Middle East and

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[28]Martin Sieff, "Bush, State Debate War-Crimes Trials," *The Washington Times*, February 28, 1991; David Hoffman, "U.S.: No Plans to Try Saddam in Abstentia," *The Washington Post*, April 24, 1991.

America's future relationship with it. The administration's reluctance to hold Saddam formally accountable raises the risk that Middle Easterners, both governments and peoples, will understand that, as far as the U.S. is concerned, the Middle East is to be fenced off from international standards of behavior, and its people relegated to a Hobbesian state of nature, restrainable only by violent and undemocratic governments. Moreover, the failure to detail and record the actions of the Iraqi regime encourages an underlying disposition to believe that the only true injustice in the region is Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, a position which is convenient for local governments to promote, but not one which facilitates a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. And distinguishing Saddam Hussein in this way would help assure other governments that actions taken against Iraq do not set precedents for actions against them, thus encouraging the emergence of an international consensus against Baghdad.

Even as preparations for war crimes proceeded, the present regime could be declared illegitimate by the UN Security Council, as long as Saddam remains in power. UN Security Council Resolution 674, passed last October, raised the possibility of holding the regime responsible for violations of international law. Presently, the UN is faced with the question of when to start lifting economic sanctions on Iraq; but the UN should never lift sanctions on Saddam Hussein's regime. Rather, it can adopt a radically different approach, banning direct commercial relations with Iraq while Saddam Hussein remains in control.

Baghdad will eventually require money for humanitarian purposes and its people's other legitimate needs. Unfrozen assets or income from oil sales could be held in escrow by an international body which would distribute the funds to pay for authorized Iraqi imports of food or other essentials. Thus, new money coming to Iraq could not be diverted for purposes that violated the UN cease-fire provisions, as embodied in Resolution 687—which is surely Saddam Hussein's intention. While this would be tantamount to revising Resolution 687, the reason and justification for doing so is that Iraq is already in contravention of the resolution. Specifically, it has failed to disclose fully its weapons of mass destruction, repatriate Kuwaiti prisoners, and return stolen Kuwaiti property. Furthermore, the regime's brutal

suppression of the March 1991 revolts, which precipitated the passage of Resolution 688, vividly demonstrated its lack of domestic support and the continuing threat to international peace and security posed by its harsh treatment of its own population.

The international community could also deny Iraq representation in international organizations, including the UN General Assembly.[29] A sustained campaign like the one taken against another international outcast, South Africa, could be mounted. Those countries that maintained relations with Iraq could be encouraged to break them, while no country would renew diplomatic ties already broken.

The UN Security Council is the best forum for a campaign to delegitimize Saddam Hussein's regime. However, neither the Soviets nor Chinese may want to pursue such a course now and might threaten to use their veto. The European Community, on the other hand, has been outspoken on the need to remove Saddam. Were the U.S. to join with the EC, the two communities combined could mobilize much of the industrialized world behind them. If the Western world advised the Soviets and Chinese that removing Saddam Hussein was a strategic priority in light of which other aspects of relations would be judged, including economic aid and trade concessions, it is doubtful that either would seriously jeopardize their relations with the West for the sake of Saddam Hussein.

Still, if it proved impossible to pursue these goals through the Security Council because of a permanent member's veto, the Western countries could carry out much of this program on their own. Trials could be conducted in cooperation with Kuwait, under Kuwaiti jurisdiction, for atrocities committed during the occupation. Although Saddam would remain in power in Baghdad, the regime would be politically isolated and its most thuggish members subject to arrest and thus unable to travel. Similarly, the West, perhaps through fora such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), could prohibit its nationals from trading directly with Baghdad and oblige them to deal instead with an international fund that would hold in escrow Iraqi oil revenues

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[29]This idea was suggested by Hassan Chalabi, an international lawyer in the Iraqi opposition.

produced from trade with nationals of participating countries, or Iraqi assets unfrozen in those countries. Further means might be improvised to deprive Saddam Hussein's regime of the normal functions of a government. For example, UN agencies could be made responsible for the distribution of humanitarian imports like food and medicine so as to ensure an equitable sharing of limited resources by all sectors of the Iraqi population, while denying the regime legitimacy in the eyes of its own population.

A "delegitimization" approach aimed at removing Saddam Hussein holds no guarantee of success, but neither is it without prospect. It offers better promise than relying on economic sanctions alone, which, in view of their potential ineffectiveness, could give way to the creeping re-legitimization of the Iraqi regime. At a minimum such an approach would increase the isolation of the Iraqi regime. It would also serve the important purpose of demonstrating that the U.S. is not willing to see the atrocities committed by Saddam Hussein's regime go unpunished, a stand that is essential to promoting broader human rights goals in the Middle East in the future.

Constitutionalism in Iraq?

It is important to distinguish between a strategy to isolate and punish Saddam Hussein's regime and the question of what form of government might replace his regime. As of this writing, the U.S. administration has yet to pronounce itself, even tentatively, in favor of democratic government in Iraq. Not one of the most senior American officials, for example, has said that the U.S. would welcome a constitutional government in Iraq, even in principle.[30] This reluctance to assert any preference for constitutional government in Iraq is of a piece with a policy of looking to members of the existing regime to provide a successor to Saddam Hussein. This puts the U.S. in a

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[30]This position may be changing. Notably, the Secretary of State recently explained, "I believe that a new Iraqi political compact which reflects the pluralistic makeup of its population . . . is possible, and such a compact must be arrived at by negotiations among all Iraqis, and not by force." Hearing of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, *op. cit.*

peculiar situation. All Iraqi parties speak of democracy, the opposition demands it, Saddam Hussein promises it, significant elements of the population desire it, but the U.S. has little to say about it.

It would seem self-evident that dictatorial rule by 20 percent of the population will not provide for stable government now or in the future, and that a looser system in which all political communities are represented is an essential prerequisite for stability. The old formula of military-based Sunni rule is a legacy of the British role in founding the Iraqi state. However, under the monarchy, which ruled until 1958, time and economic development modified the character of government, as members of politically disadvantaged communities increasingly came to occupy positions of authority. Yet the growing flexibility of the old political system ended when the army took over and restored the exclusive Sunni monopoly of power. Despite the considerable social and economic changes within Iraq in the three decades since, political power has not only remained within the Sunni community, but has become even more narrowly held within that community itself. By its attachment to the present regime and its unwillingness to state a preference for constitutional government, the United States essentially looks to an old, outdated, and extremely unrepresentative political system. Lebanon's experience suggests that the attempt to preserve such a system by force is a major cause of civil strife and that only genuine power sharing among diverse communities can bring the modicum of stability which is an essential strategic need for the region.

A Sunni-based Ba'athist/military government in Iraq is likely to be the object of continuing, sectarian guerrilla wars so long as it is unwilling to share power with Iraq's other communities. That, indeed, is the logic behind Baghdad's negotiation of autonomy with the Kurds, and even the regime's promises of democracy. Among the leaders of the allied coalition, Turkey's President Turgot Ozal has most clearly understood the desirability of political change in Iraq. From the beginning he favored democratic government, explaining weeks before the Gulf war's end, "Our wish—and I stress this is a wish and not an aim—is for a democratic

regime to be established in Iraq... For if democracy is victorious, this might make Iraq more stable."[31]

The establishment of a constitutional regime in Iraq is not as remote a possibility as might seem. Saddam Hussein's promises of democratic reform are testimony to the existence of a significant Iraqi constituency which seeks precisely that. A policy responsive to the aspirations of the Iraqi people would win America considerable good will, as shown by the initial enthusiasm for the U.S. by Iraqis who first believed that the war had liberated them from Saddam Hussein. Moreover, the U.S. government's silence about constitutional government in Iraq is understood by many Iraqis to mean that the U.S. favors some form of continued dictatorship in Baghdad. By banking on the current regime, Washington risks alienating important elements of the population, weakening those who would be sympathetic to the U.S., and depriving itself of a friendly constituency in Iraq if and when change does indeed come.

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[31] *Mideast Mirror*, February 18, 1991.

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