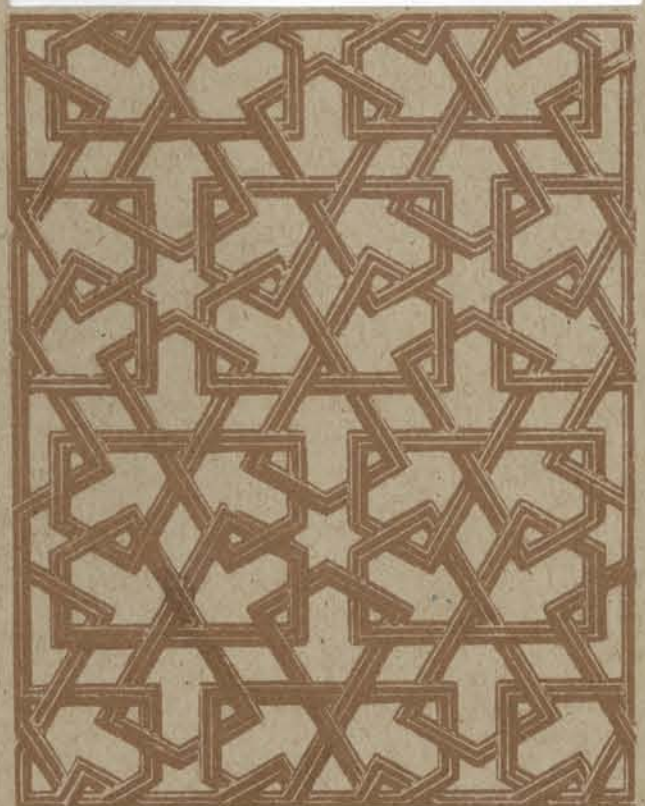




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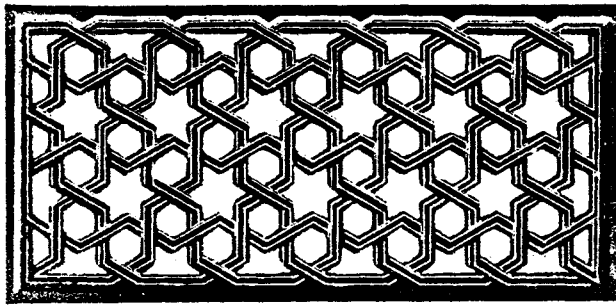
**IRAQ: OPTIONS FOR U.S. POLICY**

LAURIE MYLROIE



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# POLICY Focus

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Clinton administration inherited a flawed Iraq policy from the Bush administration, but, in formulating a new policy, it has failed to accurately define those flaws. Its emphasis on "depersonalizing" the conflict with Iraq by shifting the focus from Saddam Hussein to Baghdad's compliance with relevant UN resolutions may mean that the Clinton administration will eventually, if reluctantly, come to terms with Saddam's dogged hold on power and accept a diluted form of Iraqi compliance with the resolutions. Although that may be far from the administration's intent, the present formulation of U.S. policy may weaken the coalition and lead to that result nonetheless.

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

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

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

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





## IRAQ: OPTIONS FOR U.S. POLICY

Understanding the issues facing the Clinton administration in dealing with Iraq, begins first with understanding the issues left unresolved by the Bush administration. George Bush deserves enormous credit for leading a reluctant nation to victory in war with Iraq, but the war's outcome was more problematic than the Bush administration was prepared to acknowledge publicly. The problems began with the cease-fire document itself, UN Security Council Resolution 687.

Resolution 687, the formal cease-fire to the Gulf War, is the longest UN resolution ever enacted, with thirty-four paragraphs and their component subparagraphs. The resolution, very much a product of U.S. diplomacy, is unenforceable. It is no exaggeration to say that, over the long-term, it is not worth the paper it is written on so long as Saddam Hussein, or a figure like him, remains in power.

Despite the unprecedented events of the last three years, including Iraq's stupendous military defeat, the Iraqi leadership does not accept that the UN Security Council, or any other body, has a legitimate right to diminish their sovereignty, and they say so. For example, Iraqi Vice President Taha Yasin Ramadan told the Egyptian press two years after the war that "We regard all UN Security Council resolutions as unfair and unjust."<sup>1</sup> Since the war, Baghdad has repeatedly renewed its claim to sovereignty over Kuwait, most recently on February 28, 1993, the second anniversary of the cease-fire. The government-controlled press proclaimed, "Kuwait, this dear and beloved part of the homeland, gained its freedom for the first time when it returned to the nation's fold in August 2, 1990... Kuwait was not liberated from Iraq. It was sliced off from Iraq to be colonially occupied after February 28, 1991."<sup>2</sup> Even during Iraq's so-called "charm campaign" aimed at lifting sanctions, no Iraqi official would recognize Kuwait's independence. Rather, the best that Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, the urbane, sophisticated face of the regime, could muster was that "the chapter of Kuwait is closed."<sup>3</sup> But, of course, a closed chapter can be reopened at anytime.

Similarly, Saddam has demonstrated his determination to rebuild what was destroyed in the war, including Iraq's nuclear program. As a former UN arms inspector related,

Dr. Jaffar dia Jaffar, the British educated leader of Iraq's effort to produce a bomb, described in detail the lessons that Iraq had learned about the effectiveness of coalition

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<sup>1</sup> *Al-Sha'b*, January 26, 1993, in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service* [hereinafter cited as *FBIS*] February 1; similarly, Iraqi media reported that in a tour of friendly Arab states, Vice President Ramadan affirmed "Iraq's rejection of all the aggressive resolutions." Iraqi News Agency, February 6, 1993, in *FBIS*, February 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Reuters*, February 28, 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Brendt Sadler, CNN interview with Tariq Aziz, January 25, 1993; David Frost, BBC Television, January 31, 1991, in *FBIS*, February 2.

airpower. He told us that new guidelines had been issued by the Ministry of Military Industrialization for the construction of new buildings, so that 'next time' they would better survive.<sup>4</sup>

Baghdad has so far refused to accept Resolution 715, which provides for long-term monitoring of its weapons programs, or to provide a list of Iraq's foreign arms suppliers, as the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) charged with supervising Iraq's disarmament demands. Saddam hopes that by dragging his feet, he can get sanctions lifted without ever having to comply fully with UNSCOM's demands.

Yet suppose Saddam accepted Resolution 715 and provided a credible list of foreign suppliers, as UNSCOM demands? According to paragraph 22 of Resolution 687, which stipulates conditions for lifting sanctions, a reasonable argument could be made that sanctions should be lifted. Resolution 687 links sanctions to the destruction of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, but not to issues like Iraqi recognition of Kuwait's border and its independence, the return of hundreds of Kuwaitis taken hostage during the war and still held by Baghdad, etc. Resolution 687 was passed under the UN Charter's Chapter VII, which authorizes the use of force. The use of force to compel Iraq's compliance with the non-weapons provisions of Resolution 687 appears legitimate, but the use of economic sanctions does not.

Resolution 687 is inherently flawed, as was the policy of the Bush administration that fashioned this unenforceable resolution. Above all, Iraq needs to be prevented from acquiring weapons of mass destruction; this requires a long-term monitoring program. But no such program is workable. Once sanctions are lifted, Saddam will surely renege on any commitments he had to make in order to get them lifted. He will challenge the weapons inspectors, restrict their freedom, and otherwise prevent them from doing their jobs, before ousting them altogether.

UNSCOM is aware of the problem, but believes that the Security Council must enforce its procedures through the threat, and even, if necessary, use, of force against Iraq. But, realistically, how long can the United States threaten to bomb Iraq to compel compliance with measures that the Iraqi leadership rejects? Is such a mission "doable"? Nor can it be assumed that dramatic changes will not occur in the international scene—such as the failure of the democratic experiment in Russia or a major conflagration in the Balkans—that would make American use of force against Iraq even more problematic than it is today.

The roots of the problems facing the Clinton administration in Iraq lie in the policy of the previous administration. It is impossible to understand those problems and the options for dealing with them without understanding the Bush administration's policy.

### BUSH ADMINISTRATION POLICY

The Bush administration expected that Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War would precipitate Saddam's downfall. It did not want to disrupt the structure of

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<sup>4</sup> David Kay, "Bomb Shelter," *New Republic*, March 15, 1993; for a cogent and disconcerting survey of inspection efforts since the war, see Gary Milhollin, "The Iraqi Bomb," *New Yorker*, February 1, 1993.

authority in Iraq and its expectations for the country's future governance were not high. It expected a more pliable figure to emerge, though any new strongman who might replace Saddam would not be a particularly savory character. To limit the future threat from Iraq, a high percentage of its oil income was to go to the payment of reparations and its previous debt. To the extent that the Bush administration was resigned to an outcome that left Saddam in power, it expected that he would be so broken psychologically by Iraq's overwhelming military defeat that he would have little choice but to comply with UN *diktat*, as detailed in Resolution 687's many paragraphs.

But it soon became apparent that those assumptions were wrong. Saddam was not overthrown, nor was he broken. He even managed, with time, to convince himself that he won the war. The Bush administration came to recognize that Resolution 687 was unenforceable. For example, as the dimensions of Iraq's immense nuclear program became known after the war, it was learned that Baghdad had four covert programs. Not only had it invested resources in acquiring a bomb far beyond what any Western government had imagined, but after the war the Iraqis "gave every indication that they had not abandoned their aims."<sup>5</sup>

The Bush administration could have openly acknowledged that Resolution 687 was unenforceable with Saddam in power. Instead, beginning in May 1991, the Bush administration began to assert publicly that it would not agree to lift economic sanctions while Saddam remained in power, modifying the terms of Resolution 687. Secretary of State James Baker explained why: "Left alone, free to reconsolidate his brutal dictatorship and military machine, we know that he will... threaten his neighbors."<sup>6</sup> The Bush administration remained hopeful that Saddam's ouster would occur through internal Iraqi developments, and that its public posture would contribute to prospects for a coup by convincing those around Saddam that they had no future with him in power. But the Bush administration never sought to aggressively mobilize international support for ousting Saddam, as that would have been tantamount to public acknowledgment that the war's end was flawed.

As long as Iraqi non-compliance with Resolution 687 justified sanctions, the contradiction between the formal and real policies of the Bush administration could be fudged, and so they successfully were. Yet there will likely come a point in the next year or two, when Iraq can plausibly claim to have complied with the disarmament provisions of Resolution 687. International pressure to lift sanctions will grow. Yet if Baghdad were to regain control of its oil revenues, its rearmament would be swift. Saddam, the phoenix risen from defeat, will again threaten his neighbors, casting a disruptive shadow throughout the Middle East.

### **Flawed *Realpolitik*: Counting on a Coup, While Missing Other Opportunities to Oust Saddam**

It is said that George Bush was "tough" on Saddam Hussein, inasmuch as his position was that he would not agree to lift sanctions while Saddam remained in power. That is not entirely accurate, however. The Bush administration eschewed other avenues for exerting pressure on Saddam's

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<sup>5</sup> David Kay, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> Hearing of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, May 22, 1991.

regime since it believed that a military coup would be able to oust Saddam. Yet events in the period since the war's end suggest that a successful coup is unlikely.

There has only been one confirmed coup attempt, in June 1992, which was nipped in the bud before it even came close to succeeding.<sup>7</sup> Afterwards, Saddam's confidence was on display in his public humiliation of the family of the officer who led the attempt.<sup>8</sup> The claim made during the Bush administration's last days by National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft that the effort came "pretty close" would appear to be an exaggeration, while Scowcroft's assertion that, if Saddam were removed, it would be through a coup showed how little administration thinking had progressed in the two years since the war.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, the Bush administration took refuge in the argument that it could not formally seek Saddam's ouster as there was no international consensus on that goal. But the Bush administration itself blocked the formation of such a consensus, believing that a coup was imminent and that pursuing other means to oust Saddam would preempt a coup. That peculiar mind-set contributed to four questionable decisions, which limited the administration's ability to pursue other means to oust Saddam.

- The Decision to Let Saddam Suppress the Uprisings

Bush was persuaded that the post-war uprisings in Iraq threatened the "break-up" of the country and that the "Sunni elite" failed to move against Saddam as expected because the revolts caused it to rally around the regime. Thus, on March 26, 1991, the White House gave Baghdad the green light to suppress the uprisings by announcing that U.S. forces would not shoot down Iraqi helicopters, clarifying an ambiguity that had been helpful to Baghdad's opponents.<sup>10</sup>

At the time, Saddam had just put down the revolt in the south and had begun moving his loyalist forces to the north. The gratuitous White House announcement, criticized at the time by Turkish President Turgut Ozal as a "big help for Saddam Hussein," precipitated the ferocious attack on the Kurds and their panicked flight.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The perpetrators, led by a Republican Guard officer, Sabri Mahmud al-Juburi, stepped into a trap laid by loyalist forces. Those not killed in the firefight were subject to slow, hideous tortures, their agony videotaped, and the tape shown as an object lesson to other officers. Jack McKinney, "Saddam's Anti-Coup Videos," *Tulsa World*, July 12, 1992.

<sup>8</sup> Saddam went to the officer's home town of Sharqat and obliged his father and other kinsmen to dance with him at the officer's grave, a performance that was broadcast on Iraqi television. David Hirst, "A Twilight of Blood and Fear in Iraq," *Guardian*, February 13, 1993.

<sup>9</sup> *Washington Post*, January 20, 1993.

<sup>10</sup> See Laurie Mylroie, *The Future of Iraq*, Policy Paper Number 24, (Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1991) pp. 45-60 for analysis and documentation of U.S. decision-making in this period.

<sup>11</sup> Ozal's criticism can be found in *Mideast Mirror*, March 28, 1991.

- The U.S. Ban on the Iraqi Opposition

U.S. officials were prohibited from meeting most of Saddam's Iraqi opponents until March 29, 1991. The ban was first lifted as a sop to the outcry that followed the March 26 White House announcement on the helicopters.<sup>12</sup> Various reasons were advanced for the prohibition. Perhaps the most revealing was given by a National Security Council staffer as she sought to abort an inadvertently scheduled State Department meeting with Kurdish representatives, "We want to remove Saddam, not change the regime."<sup>13</sup>

- U.S. Opposition to War Crimes Trials

The European Community formally voted in favor of holding war crimes trials for the Iraqi leadership in mid-April 1991, at the height of the Kurdish crisis. The United States opposed the EC position. The Kuwaitis also wanted to pursue war crimes indictments, but the administration discouraged them too, believing that such measures would interfere with a potential coup against Saddam.

As recently as July 1992, when delegates from the opposition Iraqi National Congress (INC) met with Baker and urged the United States to support war crimes trials against the Iraqi leadership, Baker repeated the administration's position. It fell to a Sunni member of the delegation, a former Iraqi prime minister and head of the air force, to explain to Baker why a coup was unlikely and that, even if one occurred, replacing Saddam with a war criminal would solve few problems.<sup>14</sup>

- U.S. Ambivalence over UNSC Resolution 688

The Bush administration was unenthusiastic about Resolution 688, which demands that Baghdad cease its repression of the Iraqi population. The United States delayed consideration of Resolution 688 until after the passage of Resolution 687, despite the urgency of halting the ongoing assault on the Kurds. Even then, the United States succeeded in diluting some language critical of Iraq.

These four decisions reflected the administration's softness towards those around Saddam in the hope that they would oust him. That indulgence had a cost. It stymied the formation of an international consensus which might have helped legitimize Saddam's ouster at the most opportune time for doing so—when the international community was most outraged by Saddam's brutalities

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<sup>12</sup> Consistent with the administration's desire for a coup, the ban did not include former army officers. General Hassan Naquib, who broke with the regime in the early 1970s before going into exile, told this author that he was twice invited to meet officials in Washington at the time.

<sup>13</sup> *Civil War in Iraq*, Staff Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, May 1, 1991, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> This is based on a transcript of the meeting. Baker also opposed a war crimes indictment on the grounds that the guilty parties could not be apprehended. But this is not a compelling argument, as reflected in the Bush administration's subsequent support for war crimes trials against Serbian leaders.

and when his extreme vulnerability would have made his ouster a relatively easy matter.

### The Bush Administration's Evolving Policy

As prospects for a coup in Baghdad appeared to become increasingly remote with the passage of time, U.S. policy shifted. Some of the more problematic decisions were modified. This was apparent in the Bush administration's last two moves on Iraq, support for Resolution 688 and for the nascent Iraqi opposition, which were really *ad hoc* measures in response to specific setbacks, rather than the product of a systematic reconsideration of policy. Moreover, the presidential election campaign, then just beginning, inhibited the Bush administration from following through on the new steps.

- Support for UNSC Resolution 688: The No-Fly Zone

As it became evident that Resolution 687 was difficult to enforce and that the attempt to do so would not necessarily bring Saddam down in a timely fashion, the administration grew increasingly willing to focus on Iraqi violations of Resolution 688. The turning point came in July 1992, when the stand-off between UN weapons inspectors and Iraqi authorities outside the Agricultural Ministry was resolved on terms favorable to Iraq.<sup>15</sup> The virtues of Resolution 688, long ignored by the Bush administration, became clearer. Iraqi violations of Resolution 688 provided the justification for imposing a no-fly zone in southern Iraq in August 1992. Originally, the idea was that the no-fly zone would facilitate the documentation of repression in the south, preparing the way for further measures against Baghdad. However, the Bush administration did not proceed as originally planned and dropped the effort to give more attention to atrocities in the south.

- U.S. Support for the Opposition: The Iraqi National Congress

With the passage of time, the Bush administration grew more willing to support a democratic Iraqi opposition. The Iraqi National Congress held its founding conference in June 1992. The administration had agreed in advance to receive an INC delegation; the July visit coincided with the Agricultural Ministry crisis and provided another way to respond to Saddam. Secretary of State James Baker and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft met the INC delegation.

At U.S. insistence, Massoud Barzani, one of the two principal Kurdish leaders, was a member of the INC delegation. He was reluctant to come to

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<sup>15</sup> Rolf Ekeus, the head of UNSCOM (UN Special Commission), agreed that UNSCOM teams would not seek to enter ministry buildings, in deference to Iraqi claims that such inspections violated Iraqi sovereignty, and that nationals of the Gulf War coalition would not head the inspection teams. Indeed, the three most confrontational episodes involved inspection teams headed by Americans. They were, however, also some of the most productive inspections. One, led by David Kay in June 1991, discovered calutrons, a central component of one of Baghdad's nuclear programs, and another inspection, in September 1991, uncovered the Iraqi design program for a nuclear bomb.

Washington, because he remains haunted by the fate of his father, Mullah Mustapha Barzani. In 1975, covert aid provided by the United States, Iran, and Israel to Mullah Mustapha's forces was abruptly cut off, as the Shah reached a surprise agreement with Saddam Hussein on dividing the Shatt al-Arab. The Iraqi army then proceeded to brutally suppress the Kurdish revolt.

When Massoud Barzani met Scowcroft, he expressed his concerns. Scowcroft replied, "We won't let you down," while he promised the delegation, "We are committed to you until a change of regime." Similarly, Baker promised that the United States would enforce Resolution 688 and that "no means are excluded" in doing so.

However, the Bush administration did relatively little to implement those pledges. Even in the months after the presidential elections, as Saddam grew increasingly bold in challenging the system of post-war constraints, offering every opportunity for action, the Bush administration remained passive, responding minimally, and then only when obliged to do so.

The promises made to the Kurds are of particular note. Barzani knew that joining the INC would anger Saddam, who would be even more inclined to take revenge at the first opportunity. But the Bush administration coaxed him into the INC in order to deal with a unified opposition. Certain commitments were implied in that policy, expressed in Scowcroft's succinct pledge, "We won't let you down."

Although the Bush administration's policy toward Iraq was fundamentally flawed, the revisions to that policy entailed only incremental, *ad hoc* adjustments, never a strategic reassessment, a new beginning, and a determined effort to oust Saddam. The Bush administration left the Clinton team a policy premised on a coup, although prospects for a coup are slim and it is questionable what a coup would resolve. A number of short-term measures exist to deal with Saddam, but, as they are by nature short-term, they will be difficult to sustain over the long-run. Thus, a fundamental re-examination of Iraq policy is in order.

### THE PRESENT SITUATION IN IRAQ

Saddam's ability to survive has been remarkable. Many other leaders would have fallen under the pressures of his spectacular military defeat and the international sanctions in effect for over two years, yet there are few indications that Saddam's rule is endangered. To be sure, his grip is weaker than it was before he invaded Kuwait, but it is far stronger than in the war's immediate aftermath, when two-thirds of the country was in revolt.

Saddam faces a low-level insurgency in the south, which he is incapable of suppressing. Morale within the army's rank and file is low, as is morale among the general population. The crime rate in Baghdad has soared to unprecedented heights. One-time supporters of the regime are fed up, moving in increasing numbers to Jordan or wherever they can find refuge. Kurdish sources report that, since January 1993, the numbers of Iraqis fleeing Saddam's control and crossing into northern Iraq has increased dramatically.<sup>16</sup>

Yet it is difficult to see how these developments will cause Saddam's downfall. It is said, particularly by those who believe that the present policy is

<sup>16</sup> Hoshyar Zebari, KDP Politburo member, to author, March 1993.



working, that Saddam's base is becoming ever more narrow. That may be correct, but it is not very relevant as it fails to take the nature of totalitarian rule into account. Saddam monopolizes control of all institutions inside Iraq and does not tolerate independent groups, no matter how innocuous.<sup>17</sup> The population is atomized and cannot act in concert. For someone to work against the regime, he must talk to others. But anyone could be an agent or informer for Saddam, and, if a would-be plotter is betrayed, he and his family face a terrible death.<sup>18</sup>

Proponents of a coup scenario may not recognize that Saddam relies on obscure individuals for his security, such as 'Abd Hamid Hamud, the most powerful figure in the palace. Prominent figures around Saddam, like Defense Minister Ali Hassan al-Majid or Saddam's son-in-law Hussein Kamil, could not carry out a coup, even if they wanted to, as they control no substantial armed forces in Baghdad; the movement and access to ammunition of forces under their control is controlled by others, including Saddam; and they are unlikely to know where Saddam is at any given time.

In sum, a major problem with the Bush administration's hopes for unseating Saddam was their focus on the most difficult, least likely scenario, a coup in Baghdad.

### **Saddam's Totalitarian Control of the Iraqi Economy**

Iraq's economy is hurting, particularly since last summer when Jordan began to enforce sanctions more tightly. Disaffection is rising, even among those associated with the regime, and perquisites to its supporters are being reduced. However, journalists visiting Baghdad have long reported on the astonishingly lavish life-style of Saddam's cronies.<sup>19</sup> Sanctions created new opportunities for their enrichment, even as the rest of the population grew increasingly impoverished.

Despite high inflation, the Iraqi currency maintains a degree of stability. There is no hyper-inflation; the Iraqi dinar fares much better, for example, than the Russian ruble. Saddam's tight political control allows him to limit demand and force dramatically lower standards of living on the population. Also, Iraq has essentially free energy. These two factors help explain why sanctions have not had their intended effect.

Furthermore, Saddam has two ways out of his economic problems, if they should seem to threaten him. Resolution 706, passed in August 1991, mandates the temporary sale of Iraqi oil under UN supervision, with a percentage of the proceeds earmarked for reparations and UN activities, including weapons inspections and humanitarian assistance. Saddam never accepted the

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<sup>17</sup> See, for example, "Omar: Inside a Baghdad Prison," pp. 105-134 in Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising and the Arab World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993) which describes a group of young men, engaged essentially in partying together, whose regular gatherings aroused suspicion and ultimately got them in trouble with Iraq's security police.

<sup>18</sup> A Kurdish officer, who served in the Iraqi army until March 1991, stressed this point in an interview with the author in northern Iraq, November 1992, to explain why the army was unable to move against Saddam.

<sup>19</sup> See *Vanity Fair*, August 1992, and Michael Kelly, *Martyr's Day: Chronicle of a Small War* (New York: Random House, 1993), pp. 334-354.

resolution, and thus Iraq has not paid any reparations, while UN activities remain chronically underfunded.

Saddam can accept Resolution 706 and spare himself the expense of providing the little he does give the population. That he has not done so suggests that he is reasonably confident that the situation does not threaten his hold on power.

The experience with Iraq after two and a half years of sanctions suggests that it is difficult to manipulate the economic situation to threaten Saddam. The international community exerts control only at a general level, while Saddam can precisely direct available resources.

### **Iraq's Reconstruction: The Threat to the Gulf**

The Iraqi regime has done a remarkable job of reconstructing what was destroyed during the war, including its oil refining and export capacity and the electric power grid. This is one more unexpected post-war development with which the Bush administration failed to come to terms.

Notably, Iraqi reconstruction proceeded even while the country remained under sanctions, testament to the competence and skill of the work force and the regime's considerable expertise in smuggling. While the reconstruction of Iraq's civilian sector is visible, that in the military sector is less so. But there is reason for concern.

Although the Iraqi army—once the world's fourth largest—has been reduced by half, Iraq still has the largest armored force in the Gulf, including 3,000 tanks, of which some 2,000 are operational. Baghdad manufactures munitions, even while under sanctions. Iraq's minister of industry and minerals even announced in February 1993 that Baghdad had resumed production of tanks and other military hardware.<sup>20</sup>

Although the Bush administration first intended sanctions to enforce Resolution 687, and then to precipitate a coup, their purpose again shifted to limiting Iraq's revenues and thus its rearmament. Indeed, former Defense Secretary Richard Cheney warned that if sanctions were lifted, Saddam could rebuild what the United States destroyed within "five or ten years."<sup>21</sup> Former CIA Director Robert Gates warned that "Iraq could begin producing chemical and biological weapons almost immediately," while the resumption of nuclear weapons production would require "few, rather than many, years."<sup>22</sup>

U.S. military planning, based on a worst case scenario of the lifting of sanctions and Iraq's rebuilding, assumes a replay of Desert Storm—Saddam takes Kuwait, and perhaps even the Saudi oil fields. Saddam recognizes that he stopped short last time.<sup>23</sup> U.S. forces, according to Pentagon planners, would

<sup>20</sup> *Mednews*, March 1, 1993. Kurdish Radio reported over a year ago that Iraq had renewed the manufacture of tanks, Voice of the People of Kurdistan, December 15, 1991, in *FBIS*, December 16.

<sup>21</sup> MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour, January 17, 1992.

<sup>22</sup> Hearing of the U.S. Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, January 15, 1991.

<sup>23</sup> Indeed, this point is so obvious that Saddam's son Uday claimed to have asked his father, "Why did our forces not advance to the eastern region and occupy oil fields there?" *Akhir Khabar* (Amman), December 2, 1991, in *FBIS*, December 4. Similarly, an Iraqi opposition group reported on what it claimed was Saddam's address to a Ba'ath party meeting in which Saddam said that "his mistake was not

intervene to drive Iraq back.<sup>24</sup>

While the United States would likely possess the capability to do that, such thinking does not take account the options that would be available to Saddam if he could gain control over 40 percent of the world's oil reserves. He could, for example, hold the Saudi oil fields hostage, threaten to destroy them, and then offer their return intact if he is allowed to keep Kuwait.

Saddam also has other options short of invasion. At some point he could launch a terrorist campaign against Kuwait and its ruling family. He could make limited military incursions into the emirate, insufficient to trigger a major U.S. military response, but enough to cause considerable apprehension and instability in Kuwait. And if Saddam launched another major military venture, he might be less restrained than last time in using unconventional weapons, if only because he might calculate that, should he not prevail in any future conflict, he would not be allowed to survive.

### **The Limits of Weapons Inspections**

Originally, U.S. officials thought that the UNSCOM mission in Iraq, to find and destroy weapons of mass destruction (WMD), would involve some thousand individuals with a permanent headquarters in Baghdad. Instead, a system emerged in which teams of tens of persons visited Iraq periodically for brief tours of inspections.

UNSCOM procedures have differed from U.S. expectations. The United States wanted inspection teams to visit any site where there might be weapons-related material. Instead, UNSCOM has insisted that it be given specific intelligence before it will visit a site. Thus, UNSCOM has never inspected Iraq's Defense Ministry or Ministry of Military Industries.

UNSCOM has, however, scored remarkable achievements. It was responsible for the destruction of more of Iraq's WMD than the Gulf War itself, notably including critical nuclear facilities missed by allied forces. Yet a basic problem exists. Resolution 687 requires the Iraqi government to reveal all aspects of its WMD program. But Baghdad has only grudgingly provided such information, often only after it became known to UNSCOM through other channels. Without knowing the full scope of Iraq's weapons programs, it is difficult to prove that Baghdad is withholding information and it is impossible to know when all the items relating to prohibited weapons programs have been discovered and destroyed. The CIA estimates that "Saddam still has significant residual programs in all four areas of weapons of mass destruction," including chemical weapons munitions and several hundred SCUD missiles.<sup>25</sup>

Recent UNSCOM inspections have turned up little new information. UNSCOM increasingly suggests that the job is nearly done and wants to focus on the two clear remaining issues. Iraq is required to 1) provide a list of its foreign suppliers; and 2) agree to a program for long-term monitoring of its weapons programs, as stipulated in Resolution 715. UNSCOM has suggested that

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continuing the attack all the way to Saudi Arabia's eastern province and then occupying it." Voice of the Iraqi People, March 24, 1992, in *FBIS*, March 25.

<sup>24</sup> This scenario is described in the 1994-99 Defense Planning Guidance Scenario, as reported in *Washington Post*, February 20, 1992. According to the Pentagon report, the U.S. coalition wins after fifty-four days combat.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Gates, December 15, 1992.

if Iraq satisfies its requirements on these two issues, it would recommend lifting sanctions, in accordance with paragraph 22 of Resolution 687.

## ISSUES FOR THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

### Enforcement of UN Resolutions

An Iraqi charm offensive, directed at the Clinton administration and aimed at lifting sanctions, was expected. Indeed, the anticipated campaign began the day before President Clinton took office. On January 19, 1993, Saddam called off Iraq's challenge to the no-fly zones, announcing a "unilateral cease-fire." Still, he could not resist the temptation to test whether the new administration would enforce those zones. Any doubts were laid to rest, as U.S. warplanes swiftly responded to Iraq's activation of its missile radars.

Similarly, whereas Baghdad repeatedly obstructed the work of the inspection teams in the last two months of the Bush administration, it suddenly began to cooperate with UNSCOM once President Clinton took office. Baghdad's established habit of harassing weapons inspectors and interfering with their work continued, but at a low enough level to avoid a major confrontation with the UN Security Council.

Baghdad has not cooperated on the two WMD issues noted above. Additionally, Iraq retains undeclared prohibited material. As long as Baghdad remains uncooperative, the Clinton administration will face little opposition to maintaining sanctions, because a consensus exists in the Security Council that Iraq must live up to the disarmament provisions of Resolution 687.

Yet a "rational" Iraqi policy would be to cooperate with the UN on the remaining issues. Indeed, Lt. General Amir Rashid, head of the Iraqi Military Industrialization Commission, informed an inspection team February 26, 1993, "We are ready for long-term monitoring,"<sup>26</sup> although he still rejected Resolution 715. Baghdad is seemingly probing the extent to which it might succeed in modifying the terms for long-term monitoring. But the possibility cannot be precluded that Saddam will not eventually bite the bullet and comply, tactically, with UN demands on its WMD program in order to get sanctions lifted.

Although the Security Council has focused on the WMD provisions of Resolution 687, it is a long document and there are other outstanding issues including the repatriation of Kuwaiti nationals and return of Kuwaiti property, the renunciation of terrorism, the payment of reparations, and the repayment of Iraq's foreign debt.

Over 700 Kuwaitis, taken hostage by retreating Iraqi forces, remain unaccounted for. Iraq has yet to return all the property it seized from Kuwait, including military equipment. To the extent that such equipment has been returned, it was often damaged, sabotaged by the Iraqis. For example, two Kuwaiti A-4 Skyhawks, seen by independent observers in good condition, "were sawed into pieces, wires were ripped out and dials broken" when they were returned days later to Kuwait.<sup>27</sup> Although Baghdad is supposed to pay reparations for damage to Kuwaiti property, Saddam has no intention of paying.

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<sup>26</sup> Randall Palmer, *Reuters*, March 1, 1993.

<sup>27</sup> *Defense News*, February 15, 1993.

Baghdad has also been engaged in a terrorist campaign in Iraqi Kurdistan aimed at promoting instability and undermining the international relief presence. During the past eleven months, there have been nearly sixty incidents of terrorism, including bombings, assassinations, and assaults perpetrated against international relief officials and Kurdish civilians. Such actions violate both Resolutions 687 and 688. Paragraph 32 of Resolution 687 requires Iraq "to condemn unequivocally and renounce all acts, methods, and practices of terrorism." Resolution 688 demands that Iraq "immediately end" the repression of its population and "allow immediate access by international humanitarian organizations to all those in need of assistance in all parts of Iraq."

As part of any move to lift sanctions, Baghdad would be obliged to commit itself to long-term weapons monitoring, to payment of war reparations and its foreign debt, and all the other provisions of Resolution 687. However, any such commitments would be as meaningless as Baghdad's original acceptance of the resolution. Soon after sanctions ended, Saddam would likely declare that Iraq's agreement to pay reparations, its foreign debt, etc., was coerced and that it had no further obligations. Baghdad is trying to use its vast oil resources to undermine the international community's resolve to enforce the UN resolutions. Unscrupulous parties already advance money to Baghdad in exchange for discounted oil in anticipation of the lifting of sanctions.<sup>28</sup> Two French companies, Elf and Total, and an Italian firm, ENI, are negotiating exploration rights with Baghdad, while oil companies from Britain, Germany, and Greece are also talking to Baghdad.<sup>29</sup> Reliable Iraqi opposition sources report that even a U.S. company, Coastal Oil, has begun talks with Iraq, while Baghdad is offering the prospect of oil on concessionary terms to countries like India and Pakistan in an effort to lift sanctions.<sup>30</sup>

Once sanctions were lifted, Saddam's strategy would likely be an extension of Baghdad's present policy. Iraq would offer oil on favorable terms to as many parties from as many countries as possible, particularly those with political clout. Once the sweetheart oil deals were in place and Iraq's relations with many countries had been normalized, mobilizing the international community to take effective measures would be extremely difficult, as Iraq gradually renege on one commitment after another.

This issue is most relevant regarding the UN program for long-term weapons monitoring. The risk in the course set by the Bush administration—focusing on Resolution 687, while waiting for a coup in Baghdad—was that no coup would come; Saddam would reconcile himself to the inevitable and do what was necessary to seem to be in compliance with the resolution; international pressure to lift sanctions would mount; and once they ended, Baghdad would violate its commitments. A rearmed Iraq and a vengeful Saddam Hussein would soon reemerge.

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<sup>28</sup> This was told to the author in November 1992 by Pentagon officials. Former U.S. diplomat Robert Oakley claimed subsequently that "European traders are now supplying goods, including modern military weapons, to Iraq in exchange for oil." *Washington Post*, March 28, 1993.

<sup>29</sup> *Wall Street Journal*, January 29, 1993; *Agence France Press*, April 12, 1993, in *FBIS*, April 15.

<sup>30</sup> Japanese Foreign Ministry officials to author in conversation, March 1993.

## Iraq's Kurds

Like much of the Bush administration's legacy on Iraq, only short-term measures are in place for handling the Kurdish issue. Coalition (i.e., U.S., UK and France) protection of the safe haven in northern Iraq depends on an agreement with Turkey, subject to semi-annual renewal by the Turkish parliament. As the date for renewal approaches, strenuous efforts must regularly be made to secure its extension. The evolution of the Kurdish safe haven, an unintended consequence of the war, has far-reaching implications, which the Bush administration, fixed on maintaining Iraq's territorial integrity, never understood.

Since October 1991, when Saddam imposed a blockade on the north and ordered his officials there to return to Baghdad, the Kurds have been administering a territory the size of Belgium, with a population of over three million. The Kurdish administration is reasonably successful and is democratic by regional standards.<sup>31</sup> If the north is to remain part of Iraq, the government in Baghdad cannot be substantially less democratic than the Kurdish-administered areas. Otherwise, Baghdad's opponents would simply go to the north and challenge the government from there. Thus, if Iraq's territorial integrity is to be preserved, the entire Ba'athist regime must be replaced by at least a quasi-democratic government.

Turkey's attitude toward the Kurds is critical and complex. After World War I, the area between Turkey and British-mandated Iraq was disputed. Britain secured the area for Iraq, but elements in Turkey may wish to revisit that question in one way or another, particularly if Saddam Hussein's regime remains in power and Baghdad is blocked from reestablishing control over the north. Indeed, Turkey's former president and prime minister during the war, Turgut Ozal, did not forget Turkey's old claim. Early in the crisis, he adopted a conciliatory posture toward Iraq's Kurds. Subsequently, he even went so far as to suggest that an independent Kurdistan in northern Iraq would not pose a threat to Turkey.<sup>32</sup>

Ozal was considered by many to be a figure of considerable vision. He gave full and early support to the U.S. decision to confront Iraq after August 2, 1990. His defense minister and foreign minister, who represented conventional Turkish opinion, resigned in protest. Ozal's untimely death in mid-April 1993 was a major loss to Turkey and the whole region.

Ozal's friendliness toward Iraq's Kurds was not conventional Turkish opinion either, which can be summarized in the phrase "the Kemalist legacy." Mustapha Kemal, the legendary father of modern Turkey, established the new Turkish state after World War I on the ruins of the defeated Ottoman empire, seat of the Sunni Muslim caliphate for four hundred years. In the process of establishing modern Turkey, Mustapha Kemal led a national revolt against the 1920 Treaty of Sevres, imposed by the victors in World War I. That treaty, had, *inter alia*, promised the Kurds independence if the majority of the Kurdish population favored it. Not only were the provisions for Kurdish independence not carried out, but Mustapha Kemal transformed the basis of the country's political identity from Islam, in which the Sunni Muslim Kurds participated

<sup>31</sup> See Laurie Mylroie, "Kurdistan After Saddam Hussein," *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1992, for a lengthier description of the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan.

<sup>32</sup> *Mideast Mirror*, July 14, 1992.

fully, to Turkish nationalism, which excluded the Kurds. The brutal suppression of a major Kurdish revolt followed, as well as denial of the Kurds' cultural identity in subsequent decades. The official ban on the use of the Kurdish language was not lifted until 1990.

Conventional Turkish opinion insists on the inviolability of all borders in the Middle East, including that of Iraq. It views with alarm the implications of developments in the Kurdish administered region of Iraq on Turkey's Kurdish minority, while the most extreme hardliners harbor the unexpressed hope that Saddam will return to northern Iraq and "take care" of the Kurdish problem.

However, Ankara has a dilemma, which sober figures recognize. If Saddam were allowed to return to the north, he would again threaten Iraq's Kurds and Turkey would face a flood of refugees, as was the case in August 1988, after the end of the Iran-Iraq War, and again after the end of the Gulf War. Sealing the border, which is one tough-minded option, is problematic; the mountainous terrain is difficult to control, while an attempt to close the border would strain relations with the West.

Moreover, Turkish opinion toward Iraq's Kurds is shifting. This is evident even in the military, long a bastion of conventional opinion. The Kurdish Workers Party (the PKK), a Marxist organization of Turkish Kurds, exploited the post-war situation in northern Iraq to conduct an intensified terrorist campaign inside Turkey. However, in October 1992, the Iraqi Kurds decided to move against the PKK. They eliminated the bases the PKK had established in northern Iraq and took Osman Ocalan, brother of PKK chief Abdullah Ocalan, as a prisoner.

Elements in the Turkish military are now coming to recognize that they might better control the PKK in concert with the Iraqi Kurds than with Saddam in control of the north. Baghdad (along with Damascus and Tehran) has been supporting the PKK since the Gulf War. The days in which Turkey and Iraq acted in concert to suppress the Kurds have arguably passed. More likely, Saddam would always keep the PKK in reserve as leverage against Ankara. Indeed, the fall 1992 offensive against the PKK resulted several months later in an unprecedented cease-fire offer from Abdullah Ocalan. The Turkish authorities responded positively, if very cautiously, and the Kurdish New Year, March 21, which resulted in the deaths of nearly 100 people in 1992 during violent confrontations with Turkish authorities, passed with unexpected calm in 1993. Whether substantial political progress can really be made in addressing Turkey's Kurdish problem remains to be seen, but an unprecedentedly wide-ranging debate is occurring over the appropriate posture for Turkey to take toward the Iraqi Kurds.<sup>33</sup>

There are two new constants regarding the Iraqi Kurds with which any Turkish leadership must grapple: as long as they retain the sympathy of the international community, facilitating the return of Saddam's regime to northern Iraq carries such a high price internationally that it is almost not an option; and Ankara may well be able to control the PKK more successfully in concert with Iraq's Kurds than by working with Saddam.

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<sup>33</sup> General Ashraf Bitlis, head of the Turkish gendarmerie, responsible for the anti-terrorist campaign against the PKK, was the most prominent figure in Turkey's military establishment to adopt a friendly posture toward Iraq's Kurds. He died in an accidental helicopter crash in February 1993, and the Iraqi Kurds much regretted his passing.



### **The Economic Situation in Iraqi Kurdistan**

The economic situation in northern Iraq is dismal. Although Iraqi Kurdistan is a fertile region, capable of self-sufficiency, the situation is very difficult because the region is subject to two embargoes. Iraqi Kurdistan is subject to the UN's embargo on Iraq as a whole, while Saddam has had the area under siege since the fall of 1991, when autonomy negotiations with the Kurds faltered. The Iraqi siege has had a particularly devastating effect on fuel supplies. Though there are abundant supplies of all kinds of fuel in the nearby Iraqi cities of Kirkuk and Mosul, fuel, particularly kerosene for heating, is practically non-existent, in northern Iraq.

While the issue seems to be a humanitarian one, it is above all a political question. Saddam's strategy is to impose such suffering on the Kurds, that eventually they will accept that they have no other choice but to come to terms with Baghdad. Saddam's view is that he is in reasonable control of the rest of the country, and eventually—Saddam is prepared to wait several years—the Kurds' suffering will be such that they will be obliged to deal with him.

Given the indifference of the international community toward Baghdad's siege of the north—a blatant violation of Resolution 688—the current application of the UN sanctions regime to northern Iraq aids and abets Saddam in that strategy.

In the fall of 1992, the U.S. Congress appropriated \$43 million for a winter relief program for northern Iraq. However, that proved too late to begin such a major operation, given the obstacles that emerged: Baghdad launched a terrorist campaign against the relief effort; and the UN's Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), in charge of the Iraqi relief operation, proved too willing to make concessions to Baghdad.

Despite Resolution 688, in which the Security Council took the unprecedented step of condemning a government's treatment of its own population, the DHA believes that it is obliged to respect the sovereignty of the Iraqi government. The DHA approach to its duties in Iraq differs from that of UNSCOM. Whereas UNSCOM tends to accept the principle that it has the right to dictate terms to Baghdad and then return to the Security Council if problems arise, DHA negotiates and compromises with Saddam Hussein's regime, even though DHA is succoring the very population for which Saddam is supposed to be responsible.

Recognizing the many inefficiencies in the UN relief program, the 1992 Congressional appropriation specifically stated that the money was to be spent by U.S. organizations. That resulted in two parallel, but related, U.S. and UN programs, supplemented by European Community participation. The U.S. assessment of relief needs in northern Iraq, set forth in an October 1992 study by the State Department's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), set forth a more comprehensive and demanding agenda than the UN's assessment. For example, the UN judged that it would be necessary to supply kerosene for heating to 750,000 needy individuals.<sup>34</sup> The OFDA report more accurately saw that scarcely any of Iraqi Kurdistan's three million inhabitants

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<sup>34</sup> See DHA/Special Unit for Iraq, "Winter Plan for Northern Iraq (1992/93)," September 28, 1992 and DHA "Plan of Action for Iraq, 1 July 1992-31 March 1993," October 1992.

could afford kerosene, given the limited quantities that Baghdad allowed to be smuggled into the region. Notably, the OFDA report called for major repairs to infrastructure, including the electrical grid and water and sewage plants, although they require specific exemption from the sanctions committee.

Although coalition military forces, under U.S. leadership, first established the "safe haven" zone, and although it was a highly successful operation, the U.S. military has since sought to avoid involvement in Iraqi relief. The roads under Kurdish control are in bad condition and not suitable for trucks, particularly in winter. Consequently, it was decided to deliver the relief supplies via a road that passes near Mosul and is held by the Iraqis for some fifty miles. The U.S. officer who heads the coalition Military Coordinating Commission (MCC) first told the Kurdish leadership that coalition military forces would escort the aid convoys. Instead, the UN was charged with overseeing the transport of supplies, for which U.S. officials paid and contracted.

U.S. officials wanted UN guards to accompany the convoys, as OFDA foresaw the possibility of Iraqi sabotage.<sup>35</sup> But DHA rejected the idea. No sooner did the relief operation get underway in late November, than Iraqi agents began placing bombs on the trucks as they passed through Iraqi checkpoints. Although Baghdad was bombing a U.S.-funded operation, the Bush administration failed to make a timely *démarche* until the third incident. But at that point, the DHA announced that it would suspend the relief operation until satisfactory arrangements on security could be reached with Baghdad.

Over a month of deliveries was lost. The bombings scared the Turkish truck drivers, who never regained full confidence in their own security.<sup>36</sup> Deliveries fell chronically behind what was planned. The population spent the winter largely without fuel for heating and with limited food supplies. Yet deaths did not occur on a significant scale, and the situation was eclipsed by Bosnia's more desperate circumstances.

Other problems arose as the UN and U.S. programs clashed. The OFDA program called for the shipment of diesel fuel for tractors for the winter planting in northern Iraq. The DHA's "Winter Plan" did not include diesel fuel for tractors. Consequently, when U.S. officials sought to import the tractor fuel, the DHA balked, blocking the import of fuel for several critical weeks. DHA head, Jan Eliason, in a letter to the *Wall Street Journal*, denied his department's responsibility for the delay, even claiming that the UN was the first organization to recognize the need for diesel fuel.<sup>37</sup> Yet numerous U.S. officials complained to this author about the problem created by DHA, and while the OFDA report explicitly mentions the need for diesel fuel for tractors, DHA's far lower assessment of the required diesel appears limited to that necessary for the shipment of supplies.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> See Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance/U.S. Agency for International Development, Joint Emergency Winter Humanitarian Needs Assessment Mission to Northern Iraq, October 9-16, 1992, p. 13, which cites the potential terrorist threat and calls on the UN to supply armed escorts for the convoys.

<sup>36</sup> In a February 23, 1992 BBC report—even as the winter relief season neared its end—Turkish truck drivers still expressed great anxiety about crossing the Iraqi lines.

<sup>37</sup> "Saddam Moves Northward," *Wall Street Journal*, December 21, 1992 and Jan Eliason's reply, December 31, 1992.

<sup>38</sup> This author first learned about this issue while sitting in the lobby of a hotel in

In an effort to avoid repeating the winter 1992/93 experience, U.S. officials subsequently decided to try to coordinate activities more closely with DHA and to begin planning the relief program early. However, the results so far have not been encouraging.

A joint mission from DHA and donor countries, including the U.S., visited Iraq in early March 1993, to assess the relief situation. U.S. officials were denied entry visas to Iraq and limited their trip to the north. Washington's understanding had been that a joint assessment report would be written in Geneva, after the two groups were reunited. However, DHA representatives proceeded to write most of the report in Baghdad, to the anger of the Americans, who insisted on completely rewriting the report in Geneva, with mixed results.

This situation is clearly unsatisfactory; the international community is being forced to expend significant sums on relief in Iraqi Kurdistan, when the demand for international relief funds worldwide is at unprecedented heights. And the results are unsatisfactory, because they chronically fail to deliver what is needed. DHA is as much a part of the problem as the solution and there is reason to question whether it is implementing its mandate.

### **The Iraqi Opposition: The Iraqi National Congress**

The Iraqi opposition has a deserved reputation for fractiousness—hardly a novelty in Middle East politics. A dispassionate analyst would be hard-pressed to argue that the Iraqi opposition is more fractious than the Palestinians, for example. Palestinians have long been involved in murderous internecine feuds, while since the *intifada*, they have been responsible for nearly as many Palestinian deaths in the occupied territories as Israeli forces have been. Yet, while the Bush administration tried to develop a Palestinian leadership with which it could negotiate, it initially adopted the opposite attitude toward the Iraqi opponents of Saddam Hussein.

Hoping for a coup, and perhaps having ceded to Riyadh a dominant role in shaping Iraq's political future, the Bush administration banned official contacts with the Iraqi opposition. When that ban was lifted in late March 1991, the administration knew little about the personalities involved and was ill-prepared to deal with them. For instance, one Shi'a cleric it had initially labeled a terrorist led the INC delegation that met with Baker and Scowcroft. Indeed, a year later, this cleric made such a positive impression that the administration was encouraged to establish the no-fly zone in the south.

The initial aloofness of the Bush administration toward the Iraqi opposition helped perpetuate its fractiousness.<sup>39</sup> Denied meaningful support, it was too easy to fall into senseless quarrels about petty issues, while the impact of Middle Eastern countries ostensibly supporting the Iraqi opposition was largely negative; Syria, Iran, and Saudi Arabia were more concerned with promoting

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Zakho, Iraq, and overheard a U.S. official urging a Turkish businessmen with whom the U.S. had contracted to deliver relief aid to make greater efforts. In passing, the American criticized the UN as a greater obstacle than Baghdad. When pressed, he, and later others, explained that the DHA was blocking the shipment of diesel fuel urgently needed for the winter planting.

<sup>39</sup> The attempt to ostracize the Iraqi opposition during the Gulf crisis went so far that one U.S. official sought to discourage Harvard University from hosting an opposition seminar.

their own men than in achieving tangible progress in ousting Saddam.

However, once the U.S. adopted a more positive attitude toward the Iraqi opposition, the situation changed fairly quickly. In the spring of 1992, the Bush administration agreed to receive an opposition delegation, on condition that it represent all segments of the Iraqi population. By holding out the prospect of tangible reward—a meeting with U.S. officials and possibly U.S. support—the Bush administration contributed to the relative success of the INC's June 1992 founding conference, which included the two major Kurdish groups and the Western-based opposition. The inclusive U.S. approach was exactly the opposite of that of the Middle Eastern governments, each of which wanted to keep the opposition weak and divided, so that it could not become independent of their respective wills.

Soon after the INC visit to Washington, the United States helped establish a no-fly zone in southern Iraq and moved to secure the partial release of frozen Iraqi assets for UN activities, including humanitarian relief, in Iraq. Those moves further enhanced the INC's prestige.

The INC visit also had a positive effect on Kurdish politics. Until then, the two principal Kurdish leaders, Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, were divided in their strategic approach.<sup>40</sup> Talabani supported joining the INC; Barzani, habitually cautious and mindful of his father's experience, hesitated to cut all ties with Baghdad and join the untested Iraqi opposition allied to the United States, whose commitment and staying power was unclear. However, the visit to the United States helped reassure Barzani. Coordination between the Kurdish leaders improved, facilitating the on-going transfer of authority from their parties to the elected Kurdish administration.

The INC visit to Washington led to the organization's further expansion. American officials told the INC that it should include the Middle East-based Iraqi opposition groups, including Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim's Supreme Assembly for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI), based in Iran. In fact, the INC understood SAIRI's inclusion to be a condition for U.S. support. Toward that end, an expanded INC conference was held in northern Iraq in late October 1991, attended by the Syrian and Iranian-based groups.

The INC conference had an impact inside Iraq. In the south, the population listened to news of the conference on VOA and BBC, hopeful that the INC might help end their misery.<sup>41</sup> The two Kurdish leaders and figures like General Naquib, a Sunni member of the INC's presidential council, report that their contacts with military officers in Iraq increased after the INC conference.<sup>42</sup>

Saddam's hold on power is based, above all, on his ability to prevent concerted action through his control of all institutions in Iraq. The INC provides an organized structure which could potentially coordinate the activity of the many dissident elements in Iraq. However, the INC is still in its infancy. It must develop politically, and it needs outside support to counter the atomizing

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<sup>40</sup> Barzani is the leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party, Talabani the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

<sup>41</sup> In December 1992, while in Iraqi Kurdistan, this author met three groups of Shi'a, who had just come clandestinely from the south. They reported this information.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. State Department officials told this author that their information supports these claims.

effects of Saddam's brutal totalitarianism.

Moreover, Iraqi Kurdistan now serves as a base for the INC. Saddam's economic and terrorist campaign against the north aims partly at splitting the Kurds from the INC. Allowing the economic situation in northern Iraq to deteriorate seriously, as happened this winter, weakens the greatest challenge to Saddam's rule that has emerged since the Gulf War.

Since the Bush administration began to deal with the Iraqi opposition, the impact on Iraqi politics, including Kurdish politics, has been positive. The United States has considerable influence, if it chooses to use it.

### The INC and the Regional Powers

The INC has reasonable relations with Cairo. Interviews with INC officials regularly appear in the Egyptian media and the INC has other ties with Egypt. However, the INC does not now have relations with other regional states.

Syria opposes the INC because it is terrified by the emergence of a democratic opposition to a Ba'athist regime, which might encourage such a development against Syria's Ba'athist government as well. Iran dislikes the INC's endorsement of the Kurdish formula for a "federal" Iraq, fearing that its own Kurdish minority might also demand political rights. Moreover, Baqir al-Hakim, head of SAIRI, the largest Islamic group, was thwarted in his effort to dominate the INC. Initially, Hakim's response was to remain aloof from the INC. However, in February 1993, after several months of hesitation, he rejoined the group. Nevertheless, there is great anger among the Shi'a with Hakim and the other Iraqi clerics. The population that remained inside the country and felt the full brutality of Saddam's post-war repression hold the clerics responsible for their abandonment. It is highly questionable how much support Hakim retains among Iraq's Shi'a.<sup>43</sup>

Turkey maintains a suspicious posture toward the INC, claiming that it is merely a Kurdish front. That position is hard to understand, because the best way to avoid an independent Kurdish state—Ankara's nightmare—is to overthrow Saddam and let a new government in Baghdad reassume control of the north. One element in the Turkish attitude toward the INC is the fear that by supporting the INC they would further provoke Saddam, and unless the United States were prepared to stay the course, they would face his vengeance alone.

Kuwait feels most threatened by Saddam and would support any alternative. Indeed, Kuwaiti apprehensions were increased further, if that were possible, when Baghdad renewed its challenges to the UN regime in the last days of the Bush administration. Iraqi forces carried out raids in Kuwait, crossing UN lines, while Saddam again hinted that he had not dropped his claim to Kuwait.<sup>44</sup>

Kuwait would presumably support the INC, but needs assurances that the

<sup>43</sup> David Hirst, "The Turning of a People," *Guardian*, February 11, 1993. Similarly, this author was told by several groups of Iraqi Shi'a, transiting through northern Iraq, that they regarded Hakim as a "traitor," and an "agent of Iran."

<sup>44</sup> In a speech marking the second anniversary of the Gulf War, while speaking about Kuwait, Saddam asserted that "our people are one people. Our nation is one nation," and attacked the "deviationists and traitors, the Croesus of the al-Sabah family." Baghdad Republic of Iraq Radio Network, January 17, 1993, in *FBIS*, January 19.

United States is similarly committed to such a policy, and that the INC accepts the new Iraq-Kuwait border, as delineated by the UN. The INC's position has been ambiguous, claiming it is willing to do so in exchange for meaningful support from Kuwait.

Indeed, Secretary of State Warren Christopher urged Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, during a February 1993 tour of the Middle East, to receive an INC delegation. Kuwait subsequently invited Jalal Talabani, head of one of the two major Kurdish parties and a significant INC figure. Although the Kuwaiti foreign minister affirmed that Kuwait would cooperate with the INC "in ending the injustice inflicted on the Iraqi people," Kuwait failed to extend an invitation to an INC delegation *per se*.<sup>45</sup> It seems that Kuwait's hesitancy reflects Saudi pressure.

Saudi Arabia feels threatened by Saddam, and, like Kuwait, was particularly alarmed in January 1993 when Saddam challenged the Bush administration in its last days. Yet Riyadh is extremely uneasy about the INC's democratic platform. It should be remembered that since the mid-1960s successive Saudi rulers have promised to establish a "Consultative Council" in Saudi Arabia to allow for a limited degree of popular participation in government. Such a council was demanded by both Saudi liberals and clerics after the Gulf War. Every other state in the Arabian Peninsula has such a forum, or, as in Kuwait and Yemen, an even larger body. Yet, a Consultative Council in Saudi Arabia has yet to be established. When Scowcroft visited Riyadh in March 1991, the Saudis warned, "What's all this about democracy in Kuwait? That's not why we fought the war." Days later, the *New York Times* reported, "Bush Not Pressing Kuwait on Reform."<sup>46</sup>

Like the Bush administration, Saudi Arabia wanted to see Saddam ousted by means of a military coup. Since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Riyadh has supported two individuals, one Sunni and one Shi'a—Salah Omar Ali al-Takriti and Saad Salih Jabir. Salah Omar Ali, a member of Saddam's original coterie, who served briefly on Iraq's Revolutionary Command Council, was involved in the public hanging of fourteen Iraqis in January 1969. He is remembered and disliked among much of the Iraqi opposition for his brutality. Neither he nor Saad Salih, a long-established exile figure in London, is an effective political leader. Despite the substantial Saudi funds they received, neither managed to build anything but the smallest political organization. The Saudi intelligence officer responsible for dealing with the Iraqi opposition was dispatched as ambassador to Afghanistan in late 1992 in seeming acknowledgment of the failure of Saudi policy, and there are indications that Saudi support for their two Iraqi candidates is diminishing. However, Saudi policy has yet to change decisively. There are elements in the Saudi leadership that support the INC and Riyadh might sometime be prepared to reassess its position. However, the Saudis hesitate, as they are caught between their fear of Saddam and their fear of an organization professing democratic principles in a neighboring state.

### **Bureaucratic Drift**

After the Gulf War, the Arab-Israeli conflict re-emerged as the Bush

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<sup>45</sup> *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, March 10, 1993, quoted in *Mideast Mirror*, March 10.

<sup>46</sup> The former was reported by administration officials at the time, the latter appeared in the *New York Times*, April 3, 1991.

administration's top Middle East priority. The question of Iraq was left to a high-level inter-agency deputies committee. The committee might have been able to implement a well-conceived coherent strategy, but without clear objectives and a coherent strategy to achieve them, the bureaucracies drifted. For example, Washington could not make a timely *demarche* to Baghdad over the bombing of U.S.-financed aid convoys into northern Iraq until the third episode. An attempted *demarche* following the second episode—after time-consuming inter-agency consultations—was blocked by Britain's refusal to support the United States in the UN, although British Prime Minister John Major was a key figure in establishing the Kurdish safe haven. Bureaucratic gridlock is not limited to Washington, a fact that compounds the problem.

This helps explain how UNSCOM ended up capitulating to Saddam during the July 1992 confrontation at the Agricultural Ministry and, how, despite Washington's resolve not to let Saddam get away with something like that again, he managed to sabotage the UN/U.S. relief program in the north, before going on to challenge the Bush administration in its last days.

The same problems will recur, unless Iraq is a priority issue for a high-ranking official. Unless someone with authority has responsibility for Iraq, it will slip through the cracks, Saddam will take the initiative, and the Clinton administration will, like the Bush administration, find that it is reacting in a strategic vacuum.

### CLINTON ADMINISTRATION POLICY

After a review of its Iraq options, the Clinton administration has decided on a policy that senior officials have described as "enhanced containment" which seems to entail a continuation of the policy of the Bush administration, in a more effective manner, with more concern for human rights and democratic values. The Clinton administration's position is that it will enforce all UN Resolutions on Iraq, including Resolutions 687 and 688.<sup>47</sup> This contrasts with the Bush administration's narrower focus on implementing Resolution 687, while hoping for a military coup.

In some respects the broader focus of the new policy will make the coalition easier to maintain. Arab peoples sympathize with the Iraqi population. Punishing the Iraqi people to force Baghdad into compliance with complex and seemingly legalistic UN demands about weapons inspections is hard for them to understand. A concern for the fate of the Iraqi population will make coalition measures easier to justify to peoples in the Middle East,

Yet, particularly in the Middle East, governments have been more willing to focus on the issues contained in Resolution 687, which deal with commitments by Baghdad to the international community, and avoid Iraq's internal affairs. Unlike Resolution 688, Resolution 687 was passed under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which authorizes the use of force. However, Resolution 688 served to justify the first post-war use of force in Iraq, the imposition of the safe haven zone in the north.

Indeed, it is not difficult to justify the use of force to enforce Resolution 688. Numerous Security Council resolutions on Iraq were passed under Chapter VII, including Resolution 687. Resolution 687, paragraph 34 states that "further steps" may be taken "to secure peace and security in the region." As Baghdad's

<sup>47</sup> Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Meet the Press, February 28, 1993.



suppression of its population threatens the peace and security of the region, using force to implement Resolution 688 is justified. That was the Bush administration's position in arguing last summer that the coalition already possessed the authority to impose a no-fly zone in the south, without further Security Council action.

It will not be impossible for the Clinton administration to muster support for enforcing Resolution 688, but it will have to work at it. Baghdad's repression is particularly severe and has been documented in five reports by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iraq, former Dutch Foreign Minister Max van der Stoel. Van der Stoel's reports have detailed Baghdad's fierce campaign against the Shi'a opposition in the southern marshes. Already in August 1992, Van der Stoel reported that he had in his possession a videotape in which the Iraqi prime minister, Muhammad al-Zubaydi, instructed army officers to "wipe out" three Marsh Arab tribes. By February 1993, Van der Stoel had obtained an Iraqi document entitled "Plan of Action for the Marshes" which detailed plans for a campaign to subdue the south.

As part of that campaign, Iraq has placed an embargo on the marshes, preventing food from entering the region. Additionally, it has completed several major drainage projects intended to dry the marshes so that they will be more accessible to tanks and other wheeled vehicles. As Van der Stoel reports,

The self-sufficient agrarian and fishing traditions of the Ma'dan (Marsh Arabs) are in extreme danger as large numbers of fish have reportedly been dying as a result of the falling water levels whereby free-flowing water drops to form stagnant pools in which poisonous algae grow and release their toxins. Therefore, in addition to being deprived of food, fuel, and construction materials, the water supply... has become contaminated.<sup>48</sup>

Since the summer of 1992, there has been a series of Iraqi offensives in the south under the direction of Defense Minister Ali Hassan al-Majid who also supervised the campaign against the Kurds. The Iraqi offensive in the south has been limited only slightly by the imposition of a no-fly zone in the area in August 1992, and Van der Stoel strongly suggests that a genocidal campaign similar to that which was conducted against the Kurds is now occurring against the Shi'a in the marshes of southern Iraq.

The Clinton administration has had difficulty explaining its policy clearly; one particularly red herring has been allowed to slip into the discussion. The Clinton team, recognizing that Bush's Iraq policy was flawed, defined that flaw as Bush's "personalization" of the conflict and said that they would seek to "depersonalize" it, linking sanctions not to Saddam's remaining in power but to a standard of behavior, defined as his compliance with the UN resolutions.

The notion that Bush had "personalized" the conflict was an Iraqi charge of dubious validity. Rather, it was Saddam that personalized the conflict. Iraq, is after all, a totalitarian dictatorship, run by one man, a demonstrated megalomaniac, who once declared in a revealing moment, "I am in every glass of milk an Iraqi child drinks."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> "Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Iraq," prepared by Max Van der Stoel, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, in accordance with Commission resolution 1992/71, E/CN.4.1993/45, February 19, 1993.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with ABC's Diane Sawyer, June 24, 1990, in *FBIS*, July 2.

The flaw in Bush's policy that the Clinton team seems to be trying to articulate is that Bush never explained clearly why sanctions could not be lifted while Saddam remained in power, i.e., because he is a murderous tyrant, bent on revenge. Moreover, since the war's end Saddam has demonstrated his determination to undo all the constraints imposed on him.

The failure to state this clearly risks creating the impression that somehow the Clinton administration will be softer on Saddam than was the Bush administration. Perceptions are important, particularly as the Middle Eastern members of the coalition are nervous and insecure about U.S. intentions. If they feel that the U.S. is waffling, they will not cooperate with Washington in confronting Saddam. Rather, they will make their peace with him, and hope for the best. The United States will find itself ever more incapable of effective action, and the coalition will disintegrate.

Moreover, the question arises as to why the Clinton administration is reluctant to clearly state that it aims to oust Saddam Hussein, if that is the only way that the UN resolutions can be enforced. The apparent answer is that it has higher priorities, specifically its domestic agenda and other foreign policy issues. Probably, too, it does not want to posit Saddam's ouster as a goal, because it does not want to be seen to fail, if Saddam's overthrow does not come about in a timely fashion.

Yet such prudence carries disadvantages. It will be harder to convince Middle Eastern countries to take risks in support of U.S. policy insofar as the energy and prestige that the Clinton administration is willing to devote to the issue has its limits. Moreover, the danger exists that as time passes, and Saddam retains his grip on power, the international community will settle for some diluted and incomplete Iraqi compliance with the UN resolutions, putting pressure on the Clinton administration to do likewise. Finally, "enhanced containment" does not state a clear goal for Clinton administration policy. If the stated goal of U.S. policy is to enforce the UN resolutions, and that cannot be done with Saddam in power, then the logical goal of U.S. policy is Saddam's ouster. By not stating that goal clearly those involved in implementing policy may lose sight of it. Rather than pursue steps which undermine Saddam's grip on power, with a view to ousting him, U.S. policymakers may grow confused, taking tactical measures that address immediate problems but do little to advance the strategic goal. That, after all, is what occurred in the last weeks of the Bush administration, when the United States responded to Saddam's challenges tit for tat, leaving unclear which side got the better of the exchange.

Moreover, key questions remain to be answered:

- How will the new U.S. administration enforce Resolution 688? Does it intend to act upon Baghdad's massive, ongoing violations of that resolution?
- The situation in northern Iraq is untenable. A major humanitarian crisis was only averted this winter, because the winter was unusually mild. Each winter is more difficult than the last, as the infrastructure deteriorates further, and meager savings are exhausted. It is doubtful that the Kurds can survive another winter like the past two. How does the Clinton administration plan to address the impending humanitarian crisis this winter in Iraqi Kurdistan?
- It is necessary to work with Turkey to develop a more stable foundation for protecting northern Iraq than exists now. There may just come a time, when, against all "rational" and "enlightened" assessments of Turkey's interests, the Turkish parliament fails to renew the coalition basing agreement.

How does the Clinton administration plan to prevent that?

- When Saddam is thwarted in his effort to lift sanctions, he will likely renew his challenge to various aspects of the UN regime. What preparations have been made for various contingencies, including possible Iraqi challenges to the no-fly zones or an Iraqi attack on the Kurds? Such challenges would require a U.S. military response. Have the necessary consultations been held with American allies to facilitate a prompt response?

As these questions suggest, even the effort to contain Saddam and maintain the status quo will require substantial high level attention. Containment alone is always in danger of eroding and offers no solution.

### **A Shifting Agenda: Implications of the Clinton Administration's Declaratory Policy**

If the Clinton administration's stated policy were really implemented, it would mark a significant escalation in U.S. pressure on Iraq. The enforcement of all UN resolutions, including Resolution 688, is tantamount to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime. Saddam cannot abide by Resolution 688 and survive, as numerous Clinton administration officials have observed.

When Saddam's charm campaign falters, as it predictably will, he will almost surely again begin to challenge the regime of post-war constraints. Saddam's actions will require a U.S. response at the same time, generating international support for action against him. The Clinton administration should be prepared to promote measures then that contribute to Saddam's overthrow and not merely respond to Saddam's own violations. Furthermore, the Clinton administration can take the initiative and promote an early consensus for action by highlighting the regime's continuous, ongoing violations of the UN Resolutions, particularly Resolution 688.

Overthrowing Saddam's regime has essentially two components—undermining his ability to maintain control, while promoting an alternative political authority. The only candidate for that alternative authority is the INC.

There is a range of political and military steps, which can be taken, as circumstances suggest, to serve the related goals of undermining Saddam and promoting an alternative political authority.

### **Political Measures**

- Saddam Hussein and his cronies are vulnerable to indictment for war crimes in Kuwait and crimes against humanity in northern and southern Iraq. Indeed, one of the first acts of the Clinton administration was to release the U.S. army's official report on Iraqi war crimes to the Security Council.

Lawyerly in tone, but grisly in detail, the report details Baghdad's violation of sixteen different international law of war treaties. The Iraqi occupation authorities developed bizarre, sadistic forms of torture and execution. One woman was forced to eat flesh cut from her own body, and another Kuwaiti was put in a large washing machine. The occupation authorities had one exercise in which they pumped air and gasoline through prisoners, "then igniting the gasoline so that the bodies exploded."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> War Crimes Documentation Center, International Affairs Division, Office of

The administration announced on the occasion of the INC's April 27 meeting with Secretary Christopher that it would propose to the Security Council the establishment of a commission to bring charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Baghdad regime.

The international trial of Saddam Hussein and other responsible Iraqi officials is a useful step. The recently-established UN tribunal on war crimes in former Yugoslavia serves as a precedent. Iraqi war crimes and crimes against humanity could be added to the UN tribunal's brief.

The indictment of Saddam Hussein and his cronies by an international commission would put the regime beyond the pale and justify other, exceptional actions against Iraq. Indictments could be crafted to focus on the main perpetrators in Baghdad, while enhancing incentives for a move against Saddam by offering amnesty to whomever might succeed him.

- The Clinton administration has already received an INC delegation and at a higher level than the Bush administration did, the Vice Presidential level. This early high-level meeting, which received little publicity, can serve as a basis to clearly demonstrate the new administration's support for the INC, thereby boosting its prestige and effectiveness. The INC dialogue should be continued in order to provide an opportunity for the United States to present the INC leadership with its concerns.

The INC's need to establish the principle of a general amnesty in a post-Saddam Iraq must be addressed now. The desire for revenge is a particular problem with the Shi'a. The post-war uprising in the south was chaotic and violent, and Saddam's repression of the uprising there fierce. The United States must make clear that it will not support those bent on revenge, difficult as it may be for those who last year saw their families slaughtered.

- The administration ought to continue promoting relations between regional states—including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey—and the INC. Kuwait seems ready to establish such ties; Saudi Arabia and Turkey do not, yet neither has any answer to their present predicaments. The Saudis want Saddam gone, but their hopes for a coup are unlikely to be realized. Turkey wants Baghdad to reassert its control over northern Iraq, but that cannot happen until the Baghdad regime changes. Support for the INC offers the most promising framework for promoting such a change in Baghdad.

If Riyadh continues to hesitate, Ankara might prove more promising, particularly in light of the improvement in relations with Iraq's Kurds since their October 1992 offensive against the PKK, and particularly if the tenuous March 1993 cease-fire between Ankara and the PKK holds.

Turkish support for the INC would facilitate the continuation of the "Poised Hammer" deployments because it would suggest that Turkey accepts the U.S. vision of how Saddam might be removed. The Turks would then see where U.S. policy is going and be less troubled by the open-ended nature of the present situation. Furthermore, to the extent that coalition military action against Saddam is appropriate, enhanced coordination with Turkey would facilitate it.

Kuwait could provide financial assistance. It could allow the INC to establish a political office in Kuwait; maintain a radio station to broadcast to the south; and

hold a major conference there. Such steps would increase the INC's standing in southern Iraq and facilitate contacts with the population there, preparing the way for other measures. Moreover, by boosting the activity of the Shi'a Arabs, such measures would address the complaints of some about Kurdish dominance in the INC.

- The administration could move to establish a safe haven in the south, ordering the withdrawal of Iraqi armed forces now engaged in gross violations of Resolution 688.<sup>51</sup> The INC leadership estimates that with sixty days' notice, it could prepare a cadre to direct the administration of the south, duplicating what was achieved in northern Iraq, where the Kurdish parties succeeded in administering the area by taking over the local bureaucracies and running them, once Saddam loyalists retreated.

- The release of frozen Iraqi assets, held by the international community, to the INC for humanitarian and administrative work in the north, and in the south, as well, if a safe haven were established there, would be helpful.

- The administration could work to deny Saddam representation at the UN and other international organizations. One would be hard-pressed to argue that the South African minority government, which lost its UN seat, treated its majority population worse than the minority government in Baghdad is now treating its own. Eventually, as the INC gains stature, prestige and credibility, Washington could promote it as the alternative, legitimate representative.

- The administration ought to lift sanctions on those areas of Iraq not controlled by Saddam. Some in the U.S. government are concerned that any effort to lift sanctions on areas Saddam does not control might lead to a wholesale rewriting of the rules and the end of sanctions on Saddam's regime as well. This is a case in which some form of war crimes indictment would have particular effect. By delegitimizing Saddam's regime, it is easier to promote the idea that areas under his control should be subject to punitive sanctions, but not those areas of Iraq under a more legitimate authority.

Iraqi Kurdistan has some limited oil reserves, but reserves in the south are huge. If sanctions were limited to the areas of Iraq under Saddam's control, the economic problems in northern Iraq would be significantly eased. If a safe haven zone were established in the south under INC administration and exempted from sanctions, that would generate tremendous revenues because there is a lot of oil there.

Oil pumped under an INC administration in the south would provide money for the administration of both the north and the south. It could be used to pay for the chronically-underfunded UN programs in Iraq, including both the weapons inspection teams and the humanitarian relief effort. The INC could also start paying modest reparations, particularly to the most needy elements due compensation from Baghdad, above all the foreign laborers who lost their property and livelihood as a result of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

If sanctions are not lifted on those parts of Iraq not under Saddam's control,

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<sup>51</sup> Such violations are detailed in Max Van der Stoel's February 19, 1993 report, as well as *Sunday Observer*, February 28, 1993, which contains an account of a reporter's ten-day sojourn in southern Iraq.

then it is necessary to take other measures to ensure that the economic situation in the north does not become desperate. The United States, after all, made certain commitments to protect the Iraqi Kurds, while the growing INC presence in northern Iraq is the greatest challenge to Saddam's regime.

All action in the north must be coordinated with Turkey, and if Turkish-Kurdish relations continue to improve, Turkey might become significantly more forthcoming toward the situation in northern Iraq. Furthermore, a perception of U.S. seriousness in confronting Saddam would alleviate Turkish concerns about being left alone in the future to face his revenge.

Several options exist for addressing the economic situation in the north:

- End the Iraqi blockade. Baghdad's economic blockade, a violation of Resolution 688, is a strategic problem that complicates everything else. The blockade's greatest impact is on fuel supplies. The UN Security Council can simply tell Baghdad to make fuel supplies available to the north "or else."

- Improve Kurdish lines of communication. The Kurdish-held roads are long and in bad shape. There is a good road, of which Baghdad holds a small stretch. Extending the security zone and expelling Iraqi forces from that road would significantly facilitate the shipment of supplies from Turkey.

Syria recently opened its border with Iraqi Kurdistan, and is now allowing sporadic traffic. However, vehicles must be ferried across a river. Given the relative cordiality between Washington and Damascus these days, Syria might be asked to open its border on a permanent basis and allow the construction of a bridge to facilitate the shipment of supplies to northern Iraq.

- Repair the electrical grid and undertake other infrastructure repairs and developments. The State Department's OFDA report recommended such steps, while the American officer in charge of the MCC estimates that significant repairs to the electrical grid could be made "within two weeks."<sup>52</sup>

- Effect a complete separation, administratively and institutionally, between relief work done in areas under Saddam's control and that done elsewhere, particularly in the north. The present UN organization in charge of overall relief work in Iraq, the DHA, has proven incompetent, at least in northern Iraq. Its reports have grossly underestimated the need there. And it compounds its original error by letting Baghdad pressure and manipulate it for the sake of preserving its relief program in the rest of the country, which, in fact, has become quite limited under pressure from Baghdad. It is by now recognized that some long-standing international bureaucracies are incapable of handling the new, complex tasks that were thrust upon them suddenly in recent years. The DHA would appear to be one of them. A special organization, the equivalent of UNSCOM, created specifically for dealing with northern Iraq, is necessary.

It will be objected that separating the administration of the relief effort in northern Iraq from the rest of the country would erode Iraq's territorial integrity. Perhaps, but only symbolically, and in a minor way. The real

<sup>52</sup> Col. Robert Young, then Military Coordinating Commission head in Zakho, Iraq, to author, December 1992.

challenge to Iraq's territorial integrity is Saddam's brutal and illegitimate rule.

It is incumbent on those who argue against any modification of the humanitarian and relief situation in northern Iraq to develop a feasible, alternative approach, especially as concerns the fuel situation. If such hardships are imposed on the Kurdish population that it indeed becomes ready to reach a deal with Saddam, as Saddam calculates, then the Clinton administration will have sold out the Kurds no less than the Ford administration, with Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State, did two decades earlier.

### **Military Measures**

A variety of military measures could be integrated with these political steps, as circumstances suggest. Under the Bush administration, Saddam held the initiative, pushing wherever he saw a weak point, until his actions became so outrageous that Washington was forced to react.

That pattern will likely resume, but the Clinton administration can turn it to its own advantage. Rather than merely reacting, the United States can plan in advance how it will push the "line" back, as Saddam's actions generate coalition support for a military move against him.

Above all, any military strikes against Iraq must attack his power base, such as the internal security forces, their barracks, the Republican Guards, the forces maintaining the siege on northern Iraq and the forces attacking the population of the south. There is little point in attacking symbolic targets in Baghdad. Saddam's loyalist troops hail from the Sunni Arab towns of Salah al-Din province—Sharqat, Beiji, Ouja, Takrit, etc. Striking targets in those areas is more likely to make an impression on Saddam's political base, while minimizing the chances of such embarrassments as, say, a wayward missile hitting Baghdad's hotels in full view of the world's television cameras.

The object of any military action should be the same as that of political action—to weaken Saddam's hold on power and promote the INC/Kurdish opposition. The territory that the opposition holds can be expanded, no-fly zones extended, and Saddam's power base attacked, all as circumstances suggest and opportunities arise.

### **Last Steps: Military Defections or an Afghan Strategy**

The Bush administration counted on a coup in Baghdad. That was unlikely to happen, at least without far more international pressure on the regime and support for Saddam's opponents than the Bush administration was willing to give. Rather, the better prospect for Saddam's collapse lies in an unraveling from either end. As the INC becomes more credible and Saddam increasingly squeezed, Iraqi military units, particularly in outlying areas, might be induced to revolt or defect. Such activities stand a greater chance of occurring than a coup in Baghdad, where Saddam's loyalist forces are concentrated.

If the armed forces, including the Republican Guards, where there is reportedly considerable disaffection, could be made to crack, the end of Saddam's regime would not be far off. Saddam, however, has many ways of controlling the military.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> That the June 1992 attempt was led by a Republican Guard officer supports hearsay that disaffection has even reached the Republican Guards. However, it is reported



If the armed forces did not split, it might eventually become necessary to consider prospects for an Afghan strategy. This would have to be done with care, however, by qualified people. Strong biases exist against supporting guerrilla wars in the U.S. bureaucracies. Congress had to push the CIA into effective action in Afghanistan, while the U.S. military habitually thinks in terms of conventional warfare.

Yet such considerations are premature now. They would become relevant 1) after the INC succeeded in proving itself a credible, reliable, political force, and 2) if during that process, the Iraqi armed forces did not split. Then, very serious thought should be given to arming Saddam's opponents for a guerrilla war against the regime, if he remains in power.

### CONCLUSION

The ultimate logic of the present situation is the promotion of an INC government in Baghdad. It may be a tall order, but there is no practical alternative. Nor is it something that must be accomplished this year, or next. As long as Saddam is on the defensive, growing ever weaker, the threat that he poses to his neighbors will be limited. However, the situation is dynamic. If the United States rests, allowing itself to become preoccupied with other issues, Saddam will undermine the system of restraints that has been imposed upon him. Moreover, if Washington lacks clear goals and a strategy for achieving them, it will find itself reacting in a policy vacuum, responding tactically and ineffectively to Saddam's challenges, and ultimately undermining its own policy as its ineffectiveness weakens and erodes coalition support.

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that the families of senior military officers are obliged to live in Baghdad, where they are, in effect, Saddam's hostages.

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