Preemption in Iraq: Rationale, Risks, and Requirements

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by

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Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report addresses the issue of the United States pursuing a preventive war (or what the Bush Administration has labeled "preemptive" war) against Iraq. Preventive wars and attacks are relatively rare in history, and for good reason. Any war is a risky proposition. Choosing to assume that risk by initiating conflict is something that states have done typically with great reluctance. Nevertheless, a strong case can be made for launching a preventive war against Iraq.

The dangers from Saddam Hussein are real. He does not appear to respond to American notions of deterrence and containment. He takes risks most senior US policymakers would consider reckless. He has used chemical weapons to kill thousands of Iranians, as well as thousands of his own people. Despite economic and political sanctions, he almost certainly has continued to pursue the development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including nuclear weapons.

Moreover, it is not at all clear that the current sanctions regime, which was experiencing severe erosion prior to 9/11, will prevent him from achieving his goal. Nor is it clear that the current intrusive inspection regime, enabled by a major US diplomatic effort and show of military force, can be sustained beyond the near term.

Lastly, the Bush Administration has, for better or worse, put US credibility on the line, much as the Kennedy Administration did during the Cuban Missile Crisis when it publicly declared as unacceptable the Soviet move to place nuclear-armed missiles in Cuba. The administration's public pronouncements add weight to the pressure on Saddam Hussein. However, they also could erode US credibility if Iraq is not clearly disarmed. In the administration's parlance, the Iraqi regime must change its behavior or the United States will change it. Few objective observers believe the former is possible while Saddam Hussein is in charge.

On the other hand, despite the strong case that can be made for preventive war, it remains a difficult choice. There are a range of significant risks that will be incurred if the United States pursues that option. Among other things, the impact of such an attack on the war on terrorism is unclear. The Bush Administration argues that, given Iraqi links to some terrorist groups, defeating Saddam Hussein through a preventive war would help the administration win the war on terrorism. However, it is also possible that an attack on Iraq could prove to be a distraction from the broader war on terrorism, or that it could even increase the level of terrorist activity aimed at the United States. There is also a risk that launching a preventive war could set a precedent that could be misused by some other countries in future conflicts, or that such a war could create a backlash against the United States among some governments, possibly including some friends or even allies. In addition, there are a range of more strictly military challenges that might make a preventive war against Iraq difficult and dangerous.

Iraqi Preemption. Iraq may conduct preemptive strikes of its own. Saddam Hussein stands to gain little by following the strategy of the Gulf War, remaining passive while the United States builds up its forces in the region. His best chance for success may be to attack American forces before they are at full invasion strength or, better still from his perspective, Israel, so as to draw it into the conflict.

A Protracted Conflict: The Prospect of Urban Warfare. The Iraqis' best chance to prolong the war probably centers on a vigorous defense of their urban areas. Urban eviction operations tend to be manpower intensive, and to impose relatively high casualties. Under these circumstances, given its need to win relatively quickly, the US military may find itself on the horns of a dilemma. It could attempt to minimize casualties, for example, by surrounding major Iraqi cities and besieging them. But that would prolong the conflict. On the other hand, US forces could risk more casualties (to themselves and, perhaps, noncombatants as well) by attempting to defeat urban resistance more quickly.

WMD Use. It is likely or perhaps even inevitable that in a desperate attempt to either save his regime or leave a scorched earth in his wake, Saddam Hussein will employ chemical and biological agents against coalition (including US) forces, Israel, regional states supporting US operations, and the Iraqi people themselves. The use of WMD against Israel offers Saddam perhaps the best chance for transforming the conflict to one less favorable to the United States and its allies. Employed against US forces, WMD could also produce substantial casualties.

Going It Alone. The United States needs allies in any confrontation with Iraq. The UN Security Council's willingness to sanction military action would provide many states with the cover they need to provide US forces with basing support. Allied support will also be essential to resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict and the global war on terrorism. The stability operations that follow any war with Iraq will likely be both protracted and require substantial military forces. The willingness of allies to provide forces for these operations could substantially enhance both the legitimacy of the post-war occupation and liberate US forces for other missions.

The risks associated with a preventive war against Iraq can also be mitigated—although not eliminated—by pursuing a military campaign along the lines of the "Fast Squeeze" option, which takes into account two key concerns. One is that sufficient forward base assets may not be available to accommodate the deployment of Desert Storm–size ground and forward, land-based air forces along acceptable time lines. The other concern is that the deployment timelines may have to be compressed to minimize the time available to Saddam Hussein to conduct a preemptive strike against US forces while they are assembling in the region prior to their attack.

The Fast Squeeze option calls for heavy reliance on rapid, *simultaneous* and *nonlinear* operations by US forces from the very start of the war in order to shatter the Iraqi military's resistance and effect its rapid collapse. This approach differs markedly from the *sequential* and *linear* operations of Desert Storm, where prolonged aerial bombardment preceded the assault by US-led coalition ground forces. The assumption is that, although the ground and air forces are smaller than those called for in Desert Storm, the fact that they are operating simultaneously and moving quickly will give them the combat effectiveness of a larger force operating sequentially.

The risks associated with undertaking a preventive war against Iraq were noted above. There are, however, additional issues relating to the effective employment of US military power that lie outside the realm of Iraqi activity. The US military often refers to such major barriers to a successful operation as "long poles in the tent." They are:

Base Access. Several countries have declared their willingness to provide forward base support to US forces only if military operations against Iraq are sanctioned by the United Nations. Thus there is a risk that, should Washington fail to win Security Council approval for taking action against Iraq, forward base availability will be scarce. Lack of base access would create significant problems for US ground force deployments and Air Force tactical air units, whose relatively short range militates against anything but basing at forward locations.

PGM Stocks. The US military's expenditure rate of precision-guided munitions has been on the rise since Desert Storm. In recent months the Defense Department has worked with industry to accelerate the production of precision munitions. While progress is being made, if a war against Iraq follows the pattern of higher-than-expected demand for PGMs that has been a hallmark of recent operations, then the sheer scale of US operations relative to Allied Force and Enduring Freedom could reduce US PGM stocks to dangerously low levels.

Chem-Bio Defenses. Saddam Hussein is believed to have significant stocks of chemical and biological weapons. While steps have been taken to protect US forces operating in a chemical or biological warfare environment (e.g., gas mask recertification, troop inoculation), it is not clear how effective US defenses against such attacks will be.

Adequate Intelligence (WMD and Leadership). A key element in determining how rapidly victory can be achieved is the Americans' ability to identify Iraqi WMD stocks and the location of the Iraqi leadership, Saddam Hussein in particular. The Gulf War showed how well Saddam was able to hide his WMD program, as well as himself, from US detection.

Information Warfare. If the United States goes to war against Iraq, there is a significant chance that the Americans will use their information warfare capabilities on a range and scale heretofore unseen in warfare. The kind of confusion induced by such operations may be critical to US forces' ability to win a rapid victory. On the other hand, given the uncertainties surrounding information warfare, it is possible that US information warfare capabilities will yield far less impressive results.

Although there is a chance it may prove more difficult than currently envisioned, if war comes, the United States military will almost certainly defeat the armed forces of Iraq and depose Saddam Hussein. The question is primarily a matter of how long it will take and how costly the victory will be. A protracted campaign against Iraq would incur a number of costs for the United States. Among the most salient are higher US casualties, a ruptured coalition, and a loss of prestige for the US military.

The key to US success is to win quickly and decisively. Rapid, audacious operations that exploit the American military's advantage in striking power, mobility and information-related operations (e.g., information warfare; stealth; precision attack; highly integrated and highly complex operations) can produce such a victory. Just as a relatively protracted conflict would almost certainly find the United States incurring costs, a rapid victory would yield important benefits, to include increased regional stability, a more advantageous US forward basing posture, and sustainment of the US military's reputation as a dominant fighting force.

Winning the war will leave the United States with the perhaps even more difficult task of winning the peace. The keys to success here will likely center upon the US military's ability to secure a quick and decisive victory; coalition participation in stability operations that enable Iraq's economic recovery; the emergence of a successor regime that is capable of attracting the support of Iraq's diverse population; and a willingness to stay the course for what is likely to be an extended period of stability operations.

A preventive war against Iraq and the stability operations that follow will present daunting challenges, even for the world's sole superpower. In confronting them, it is easy to look for better alternatives. Unfortunately the two principal alternatives—a continuation of the strategy of deterrence and containment, or an enduring, highly intrusive inspection regime—are not likely to be effective, nor may they be realistically possible. By their statements and actions, both the Bush Administration and a bipartisan coalition in Congress clearly realize this. Should they choose the difficult course of preventive war, however, they should do so under no illusions that the path to victory will be as smooth as it was in 1991, or that the peace that follows will be easily secured.

IRAQ

TURKEY

Hakkâri
Orūmīyeh (Umia)
Daryācheh-ye Orūmīyeh (Lake Urmia)
Mīāneh
Qezel Owzan

Zākhū
DAHŪK
Dahūk
'Aqrah
Rāyāt
Mīāndowab
Zanjān

Al Qāmishlī
Al Mawşil (Mosul)
ARBĪL
Arbīl
Kūysanjaq
AS SULAYMĀNĪYAH

Sinjār
Tall 'Afar
NĪNAWÁ
Makhmūr
Great Zab

Ar Raqqah
Al Qayyarah
'As Sulaymānīyah
Sanandaj

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC
Al Ḩaḑr
Little Zab
Kirkūk
Hālabjah
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF

Dayr az Zawr
AT TA'MĪM
Bayjī
Ṭāwūq
Nahr al 'Uzaym
IRAN
Hamadān

Abū Kamāl
Euphrates
Buḩayrat al Qādisīyah
SALĀH AD DĪN
Qaşr-e Shīrīn
Khānaqīn
Kermānshāh

'Ānah
Tharthā Lake
Sāmarrā'
DIYĀLÁ
Borūjerd

Al Qā'im
Al Ḩadīthah
Ba'qūbah
 Īlām
Khorramābād

'Akāshāt
Al Ḩabbānīyah
Hīt
Wādī Ḩawrān
Mehrān
Rūdkhāneh-ye Sīmareh

Al Walīd
Ar Ramādī
Baghdad
BAGHDAD

Ar Ruţbah
AL ĀNBAR
Al Fallūjah
Ḩabbānīyah Lake
WĀSIT
Shaykh Sa'd
Dehlorān

JORDAN
Trebil
Razzaza Lake
Karbalā'
BĀBIL
Al Kūt
Alī al Gharbī
Dezfūl

Nukhayb
KARBALĀ
Al Ḩillāh
Al Hayy
MAYSĀN

Wādī al Ghadawī
An Najaf
Ad Dīwānīyah
Qal'at Sukkar
Al 'Amārah
Ahvāz

Judayyidat 'Ar'ar
Wādī al Ubayyid
Abū Şukhayr
AL QĀDISĪYAH
Qal'at Şāliḩ

Qaryat al Gharab
DHĪ QĀR
Shatt al Gharrāf
Khorramshahr

Ar'ar
AN NAJAF
Euphrates
Al Qurnah
Ābādān

As Samāwah
An Nāşirīyah
Hawr al Hammār
Shatt al 'Arab

SAUDI ARABIA
As Salmān
Jalībah
Al Başrah
AL BAŞRAH
Umm Qaşr

AL MUTHANNÁ
Makhfar al Buşayyah
Al Fāw

Rafḩā
KUWAIT
Al Jahrah
Persian Gulf

Kuwait
Ḩafar al Bāţin
Al Aḩmadī

Legend

⊛ National capital
⊙ Governorate capital
○ Town, village
Airport
— · · — International boundary
— · — Governorate boundary
Expressway
Main road
Secondary road
Railroad

IRAQ

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

0 50 100 150 200 150 300 km
0 50 100 150 200 mi

I. BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

The United States Congress has authorized President Bush to use force if Iraq fails to disarm itself of its weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The United Nations Security Council has unanimously passed a resolution calling upon Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein to disarm himself of all weapons of mass destruction and to terminate programs whose intent it is to develop such weapons. A United Nations inspection team has reported that, twelve years after the Gulf War, "Iraq appears not to have come to genuine acceptance—not even today—of the disarmament that was demanded of it and which it needs to carry out to win the confidence of the world and live in peace."[1] Given the report's dim view of Iraq's willingness to meet its obligations, the odds are high that, absent a truly remarkable shift in Baghdad's position, hostilities are likely, if not imminent.[2]

The prospect of war with Iraq has triggered considerable debate over whether the United States should resolve its outstanding issues with Iraq through the use of force, or whether it should pursue another approach, perhaps one centered on an enhanced containment strategy and inspections. This report begins with a brief discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of each approach. It then proceeds to explore some of the factors and considerations that could enhance the prospects for success, or alternatively increase the odds of failure, should the decision be made to go to war.

THE CASE FOR PREEMPTION

We will be deliberate, yet time is not on our side.

—President George W. Bush

No doubt time is working for us. We have to buy some more time and the American-British coalition will disintegrate.

—Saddam Hussein

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[1] The statement is by Hans Blix, one of the United Nations chief weapons inspectors. He was summarizing the results of nearly two months inspections of Iraq, from early December 2002 to late January 2003. Julia Preston, "UN Inspector Says Iraq Falls Short on Cooperation," *The New York Times,* January 28, 2003, p. 1.

[2] In reacting to the UN inspectors' report, Secretary of State Colin Powell noted, "The issue is not how much more time the inspectors need to search in the dark. It is how much more time Iraq should be given to turn on the lights and to come clean. And the answer is: not much more time. Iraq's time for choosing peaceful disarmament is fast coming to an end." Steven R. Weisman, "Powell Adopts Hawkish Tone," *The New York Times,* January 28, 2003, p. 1.

The case for launching a war against Iraq to prevent its acquisition of WMD, or the expansion of any existing WMD capabilities, is strong. Saddam Hussein has shown himself to be a brutal, irresponsible and aggressive dictator. His continuation in power poses a serious danger to the United States, other western states and, perhaps most of all, to other states in the Middle East. One of Saddam Hussein's central objectives is to diminish or remove western, and especially US, influence in the Middle East and to expand his own power in the region through the use of force. His wars against Iran and Kuwait can be viewed as attempts to increase dramatically Iraq's control over the Persian Gulf's oil resources. Had he been successful in those earlier efforts, the temptation to subjugate Saudi Arabia may have been irresistible, not only for its oil wealth but also to displace it as the guardian of several of Islam's most holy sites, further enhancing Saddam's image as the architect of an Arab restoration of power and influence. Given Saddam's single-minded pursuit to acquire WMD, it appears that he views chemical, biological, and especially nuclear weapons as a key means for enabling his expansionist aims.

Containment and Deterrence May Not Be Effective

What if he [Saddam] fails to comply, and we fail to act, or we take some ambiguous third route which gives him yet more opportunities to develop this program of weapons of mass destruction, and continue to press for the release of the sanctions and continue to ignore the solemn commitments that he made? Well, he will conclude that the international community has lost its will. He will then conclude that he can go right on and do more to rebuild an arsenal of devastating destruction. And some day, some way, I guarantee you, he'll use the arsenal.

—President William J. Clinton

His [Saddam's] WMD program is active, detailed and growing. The policy of containment is not working. The WMD program is not shut down. It is up and running.

—Prime Minister Tony Blair

One argument for launching a preventive war against Iraq, rather than continuing to rely on a strategy of containment and deterrence, revolves around Iraq's link to international terrorism. Saddam Hussein has actively supported a variety of terrorist organizations, including some Islamic groups, over the years. Moreover, Iraq and radical Islamic terrorist movements share a common goal of eliminating US influence in the region, toppling regimes friendly to Washington, and destroying Israel. Thus, there is a real danger that in the future, especially should Iraq acquire nuclear weapons, it might supply radical Islamic terrorists with weapons of mass destruction, or be willing to adopt the methods of radical Islamic terrorist movements behind the shield of its nuclear arsenal, however small that arsenal might be relative to America's. Even an enhanced containment strategy might not prove effective enough to prevent Iraq from acquiring nuclear weapons over the next few years, and deterring Iraqi support of terrorist activities would almost certainly be far more difficult once the country has acquired such weapons.

Although the argument that invading Iraq would help the United States win the war on terrorism has received a great deal of attention and has been emphasized by the Bush Administration, it is

by no means the only, or even necessarily the most persuasive, argument that can be made in favor of launching a preventive attack. Whatever one thinks about the link between Saddam Hussein and the war on terrorism, the case for launching a preventive war against Iraq, rather than continuing to rely on a strategy of containment and deterrence, rests on several considerations:

- Unlike other rogue states such as North Korea and Iran that are also pursuing nuclear weapons, Saddam has persisted in this endeavor for over a decade despite UN resolutions requiring Iraq to disarm, and despite the enormous costs of doing so. Had Iraq submitted to a thorough inspection of its WMD facilities and weapons, and allowed UN inspectors to certify their destruction, Iraq could have had economic sanctions lifted years ago. Yet Saddam Hussein persisted in obstructing the UN resolutions.

- It is not clear why Saddam so desperately wants WMD. It may be that he plans to use these weapons to deter any use of WMD against Iraq by another regional nuclear power (e.g., Iran, Israel). This is certainly plausible. But it is also quite conceivable that Saddam may be willing to use these weapons in acts of aggression. Iraq used chemical weapons against Iran during their war in the 1980s, and Saddam has also used them against his own people, killing thousands.

- Saddam may have a different kind of deterrence in mind—constraining the United States' freedom of action. Would the United States feel confident in maintaining bases in the Persian Gulf region if Iraq had nuclear-tipped missiles targeting these bases? Would the United States be willing to conduct the kind of military buildup that it undertook leading up to Operation Desert Storm—and that it may soon undertake again (albeit in reduced form) if Iraq had nuclear weapons today? Would prospective allies in the region be willing to support such a US buildup? In the event of a future instance of Iraqi aggression, would the United States be willing to conduct an air campaign against an Iraq armed with nuclear weapons? It may be that Saddam sees WMD, and nuclear weapons in particular, as a means of deterring the United States by increasing dramatically the risks of responding to Iraqi intimidation, coercion, and aggression.

- It is plausible that if the United States fails to eliminate Iraq's nuclear weapons program, Israel may feel compelled to act, creating a much higher probability that an ensuing conflict would pit the Islamic world against Israel and the United States. Such a development would seriously undermine the United States' goal of ensuring that moderate Islamic forces prevail against the threat from terrorists and rogue states.

- For several decades now, Saddam has lived on the edge. He has demonstrated a willingness to take risks that, to US leaders, border on recklessness. For example, initiating wars with Iran and against a broad coalition backed by the UN Security Council and led by the world's only superpower, as well as attempting to assassinate a former US president. At a minimum, he seems prone to gross miscalculations of his adversary's intentions and capabilities. Disturbingly, he seems to have a penchant for overestimating Iraq's capabilities while underestimating those of his rivals. What kind of influence would possessing nuclear weapons have on Saddam Hussein's flawed calculus? For Washington to have confidence in

a strategy of deterrence against Iraq implies a level of rationality on the part of the Iraqi dictator that would, based on his track record, seem misplaced. For example, would a highly risk-tolerant tyrant like Saddam Hussein be deterred from providing terrorist groups with chemical and biological agents for use against the United States or other adversaries (e.g., Israel), under the assumption that, since the United States failed to identify the source of the anthrax attacks conducted last fall, this form of ambiguous aggression can be pursued with little chance of being detected? Or might he see proliferating terrorist access to chemical and biological agents as a means of fielding, through proxies, the ability to strike at the US homeland with such weapons, thereby enhancing his own deterrent against American interference in his plans to increase his power in the Persian Gulf region?

- Finally, Saddam may feel that, at least in one way, time is not on his side. He is, after all, 65 years old. Time is running out if his agenda involves (as it seems to) a series of bold moves designed to remove US presence in the region, eliminate Israel, make him the leader of the Arab world, and begin to reverse centuries of decline in Arab civilization. This may make Saddam Hussein even more prone to take risks.

An Enhanced Inspection Regime May Not Be Effective Or Sustainable

We have to defend ourselves from the predators of the 21st century . . . . [a]nd they will be all the more lethal if we allow them to build arsenals of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and the missiles to deliver them. We simply cannot allow that to happen. There is no more clear example of this threat than Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

—President William J. Clinton

Does [America] realize the meaning of every Iraqi becoming a missile that can cross to countries and cities?

—Saddam Hussein

Another important element in the case for preventive war is that not only is a strategy based on containment and deterrence unlikely to prove effective, but an enhanced approach involving a more thorough and intrusive inspection regime is also unlikely to prove viable. The Bush Administration has pursued this path in its recent UN initiatives, although it is unclear to what extent it sees this as a true option as opposed to a requirement to gain international sanction for a forcible regime change in Iraq. Thorough inspections, conducted on a continuing basis, would likely slow Saddam Hussein's efforts to acquire more chemical and biological agents, and to develop nuclear weapons. However, this option has several major drawbacks:

- Even an intrusive inspection regime is not likely to dismantle Iraq's WMD program entirely. The Iraqis had over six years' experience in learning how to conceal their programs from UN inspectors, and over four years since their departure to conceal their efforts further. Intelligence reports cite key materials being buried under bodies of water or shipped abroad. Certain facilities have been made mobile to avoid detection and inspection. Again, the UN resolutions require Iraq to disarm itself of its WMD and for the UN inspection teams to

verify the disarmament. The resolution's intent was *not* to have the teams engage in a game of hide-and-seek with the Iraqi government.

- An intrusive and *protracted* inspection regime may be able to arrest the Iraqi development of WMD, or at least appreciably slow the process. But how long can such a regime be sustained? The current effort is intended to determine whether the Iraqis have, in fact, disarmed themselves as required, not to serve as a kind of highly intrusive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In short, the Iraqis must demonstrate to either the UN Security Council's satisfaction, or the satisfaction of the United States and its allies, that they have complied with UN Resolutions 687 and 1441 (among others). Failing that, Baghdad will be considered in "material breach" of the resolutions, which will almost certainly lead to war.[3] The path to returning to the pre-1998 situation seems highly unlikely. In fact, it is only the threat of war that has facilitated the reintroduction of the inspection teams. It is unrealistic to assume that the current level of military and diplomatic pressure can be sustained over a long period of time, or that a substantially lower level of pressure (e.g., the pre-1998 situation) will lead to anything but the intransigence and obstructionism that characterized the first inspection regime. Should that occur, one would have to take into account the enormous difficulty and expense in resurrecting the support for military action that it has taken the United States months to put into place.

- Even a rigorous inspection regime could lead America's rivals (and some of its friends) to view the result as another instance of the United States' inability to "close the deal" when it comes to dealing with threats to its security. According to this argument, the United States failed to depose Saddam Hussein when it had the opportunity in 1991, proved feckless in Lebanon in the 1980s, and failed to respond vigorously to the mounting terrorist threat in the 1990s. Irrespective of this argument's merits, the concern is the *perception* that may be created among America's allies and adversaries that the United States, for all its power, is an unreliable security partner.

RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH LAUNCHING A PREVENTIVE WAR

As the discussion above suggests, a strong case can be made in favor of launching a preventive war against Iraq. However, a decision to make such an attack is also fraught with considerable danger and uncertainty. A few of the most prominent concerns raised by critics of a preemptive war against Iraq are the following[4]:

- **Diverting Focus in the War on Terrorism**. The Bush Administration has argued that a war against Iraq that led to Saddam Hussein's ouster would represent a major victory in the war on terrorism. Some have argued that a war against Iraq would act as a distraction from the war on terrorism. History would indicate, however, that the United States is fully capable of

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[3] Baghdad is currently in violation of 16 UN Resolutions relating to its WMD program.

[4] For a thorough presentation of the case against launching a preventive war against Iraq, see Steven E. Miller, "Gambling on War: Force, Order, and the Implications of Attacking Iraq," in Carl Kaysen, et al, *War With Iraq: Costs, Consequences, and Alternatives* (Cambridge, MA: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2002).

dealing with more than one threat to its security at a time.[5] Still others point out that an attack against Iraq might even increase the level of terrorist activity aimed at the United States. These concerns may have merit. However, it is difficult to see why terrorist organizations like al Qaeda would restrain themselves from undertaking attacks against the United States if Washington fails to act against Iraq. Indeed, should the United States retreat from its current position on Iraqi disarmament, it might be argued that America would be at an *increased* risk of terrorist attack for appearing weak and indecisive when confronted by a clear threat to its interests.

- **Precedent of Preventive War.** Another concern raised by critics of the Bush Administration's policy toward Iraq is that launching a preventive war against that country could set an unwelcome precedent. Although there may be important differences in the abstract, in some instances differentiating a legitimate "preventive war" from an illegitimate war of aggression might, in practice, prove difficult. The administration has made clear that, while it would prefer to have UN support, it is willing to launch a preventive war against Iraq without such support. Whatever the merits of taking this kind of unilateral step in the case of a US attack on Iraq, US policymakers must bear in mind that other countries may see such a use of force as legitimizing their own unilateral use of force at some future date, and in circumstances US policymakers might well not see as legitimate. Of course, it is far from clear that any US decision to wage preventive war against Iraq would prove to be a (let alone *the*) decisive factor in another state's decision to undertake a preventive war. Historically, instances of preventive war do not seem to set precedents. Put another way, a preventive war does not seem to provide a significant inducement for either the state undertaking the war, or other states, to engage in preventive war. The same appears to hold in cases of preventive attack.

- **Balancing Versus Bandwagoning.** The Bush Administration seems to assume that as long as the United States wins its war against Iraq, world opinion will, for the most part, come to see the wisdom of the attack. Thus US prestige will be enhanced, regional stability will be furthered, and US influence and access to the region will grow. But such a "bandwagoning" effect is not guaranteed. It is also possible, although it seems unlikely, that such a victory by the United States could have a "balancing" effect. That is, some states, possibly including a few of America's current friends and allies, could react to a rapid and decisive victory by adopting a more circumspect or, in the case of neutral states, possibly even hostile, posture with respect to the United States and its foreign and national security policies. Likewise, there is no guarantee that adversaries and potential adversaries of the United States will react to such a victory by restraining their behavior. Indeed, it is possible that they will react, for example, by accelerating their efforts to acquire WMD. Whether or not states move to bandwagon with the United States or to suspend their WMD programs may depend, to a

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[5] For example, during the Cold War the United States dealt with the threat of forward-deployed Soviet forces in Europe while simultaneously fighting major wars in Asia (e.g., the Korean and Vietnam wars). During the Korean War the United States also supported French operations in Indochina. During the Vietnam War the United States also addressed other crises (e.g., the Six-Day War; the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia; the India-Pakistan conflict; and the North Korean seizure of the USS Pueblo) and conducted military operations (e.g., the intervention in the Dominican Republic; support for counterinsurgency operations in Latin America and Asia).

significant extent, on the magnitude of the US victory in any conflict with Iraq, and the skill at with which the Bush Administration practices its statecraft.

LESSONS FROM THE PAST

One way to help resolve the difficult debate over whether the United States should launch a preventive war against Iraq would be to consider any lessons that might be drawn from historical experience. Preventive wars and preemptive attacks are relatively rare in history, probably because the risks of undertaking any war are considerable. Nevertheless, some interesting observations concerning preventive war may be distilled from the historical record:

- Preventive attacks and preventive wars can be successful. For example, Rome, as a republic, waged a successful preventive war on Carthage (the Third Punic War). In the case of preventive attack (i.e., where a state did not seek regime change but rather satisfied itself with destroying threatening capabilities either possessed or under development by its putative threat), we find that the Royal Navy executed a preventive attack on the fleet of its ally, France, following the latter's signing of an armistice with their common enemy Germany, in June 1940. The attack was undertaken to prevent the French fleet from falling into the hands of the Germans. In 1981, Israel executed a preventive attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak, which produced condemnation from the international community in the short term— and unspoken gratitude over the longer term.

  In a sense, preventive attacks are intended to buy time for those that undertake them. A key question, then, is how well is the time purchased used to improve one's security posture? The Royal Navy destroyed the French fleet as an effective fighting force and secured for itself sufficient command of the seas so as to allow it to prosecute the war against the Axis powers to a successful conclusion. Israel derailed an Iraqi nuclear program that could well have seen Saddam Hussein in possession of nuclear weapons during his war with Iran, or his attack on Kuwait. While it is not possible to know how the world would have looked if these preventive measures had not been undertaken, a strong case can be made for their efficacy. In the case of preventive war, the object is not to buy time; rather, it is to eliminate the threat. Thus in the Third Punic War, Rome waged preventive war to eliminate Carthage as a potential threat. With respect to Iraq, the United States has arguably already conducted a preventive attack through its operations in Desert Storm. The time purchased was used to implement a regime comprised of economic sanctions and disarmament.

- Despite the conventional wisdom that democracies do not initiate wars, they have undertaken preventive attacks, and done so successfully, as demonstrated by the actions of Great Britain and Israel during the last century.

- The risk of inaction can outweigh the risks of action. A cardinal example of this is the unwillingness of Great Britain and France to wage preventive war against Hitler's Germany in the mid-1930s, even though Germany had violated the terms of the Versailles Treaty. The problem, of course, is that both Britain and France viewed the cost of action as high, while believing that inaction would enable them to secure both their interests and the peace. This proved a grave miscalculation.

- On the other hand, there have been instances where preventive measures backfired. In the fall of 1941, Imperial Japan concluded that, given its objectives in the Far East and the economic embargo instituted against it by the United States, that preventive war was its best option. The war proved catastrophic for Japan. Arguably, Sparta precipitated the Peloponnesian War with Athens in large measure out of concern over the growth of Athenian power. While victorious in war, Sparta was exhausted, and its power soon waned. Thus sometimes inaction is the best course. Few would argue the United States made the wrong choice in deciding not to pursue a preventive war against the Soviet Union in the early days of the Cold War.

- States that undertake preventive war do not typically go on a "preventive war binge," nor do they seem to encourage others to wage preventive war. This may be due to the fact that there are not that many cases where the risks of preventive attack are sufficiently low and the risks of waiting sufficiently high so as to merit such a course of action. Whatever the reason, instances of preventive war seem to be relatively isolated. Thus concerns that the United States may be on the cusp of a series of preventive wars seem, if history is any guide, misplaced, as perhaps are concerns that other states will use US action against Iraq as a precedent to wage preventive war. On the other hand, it may be that the danger posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons to rogue states will be seen as a special case, which could yield several preventive attacks, if not wars. Here the case of North Korea comes to mind.

- Wars often turn out quite different than anticipated, as the history of the last century shows. The conventional wisdom held that the war that began in Europe in 1914 would be brief and limited, like the Franco-Prussian and Russo-Japanese wars before it. It was anything but, leading to the collapse of several great power regimes, including one on the victorious side. On the eve of World War II, many were expecting a protracted stalemate, as had occurred in World War I. Yet World War II introduced *Blitzkrieg*, or lightning war. Israel was believed by many to be in dire straits in early June 1967, rather than on the cusp of a smashing victory against its enemies, which it brought about in less than a week. It was widely believed the United States and its allies would prevail against Iraq in the Gulf War, but at a cost of American deaths numbering in the thousands; in reality, they would number less than 150.

In short, the lessons of history suggest that preventive wars can be effective, under the right circumstances, but are also fraught with risk. Unfortunately, for our purposes, while interesting, the historical record provides no definitive guidance for policymaker attempting to decide the merits of a preventive attack on Iraq today.

CROSSING THE RUBICON

Whatever the merits of launching a preventive war against Iraq, a key factor that must be considered involves the public declarations made by the Bush Administration in recent months that have, in the eyes of many, essentially committed the United States to take some kind of action. While these public statements offer the benefit of convincing both friend and foe alike that the United States views the current situation as a major threat to its security, it also stakes the nation's credibility on fulfilling these declarations. Bluntly stated, the Bush Administration has gone to the brink. It has clearly declared the current situation unacceptable. Should it ultimately accept the continuation of Saddam Hussein's regime, at least for the foreseeable

future, much of the world might draw unflattering conclusions regarding the credibility of US policy proclamations. In short, the president may have, to some extent, burned his bridges behind him.[6]

The remainder of this report examines how a preventive war led by the United States might proceed, to include some of the key uncertainties that will likely drive the war's outcome and set the stage for a post-Saddam Iraq, the Middle East in general and the United States' long-term position in the world. The discussion in the following chapters also makes clear that victory, over the long term, will be determined by more than merely whether the war goes well. Following any military campaign, no matter how successful, the matter of winning the peace must be addressed, lest defeat be snatched from the jaws of victory.

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[6] In October 1962, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the United States found itself in a similar position. President John Kennedy had "burned his bridges" behind him by foregoing private diplomacy in favor of a national televised address to the nation in which he declared the Soviet placement of ballistic missiles in Cuba to be unacceptable. While the president ordered a blockade (using the euphemism "quarantine" in attempting to avoid the issue of whether the United States was committing an act of war), some missiles were already being assembled in Cuba. Had a resolution to the crisis not occurred, Kennedy was prepared to order preventive strikes against the missile sites before they became operational.

II. A SECOND GULF WAR?

KEY RISK FACTORS

No plan of operations reaches with any certainty beyond the first encounter with the enemy's main force.

—Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke

There is only one thing I can tell you about war . . . and it is this: no war ever shows the characteristics that were expected; it is always different.

—President Dwight D. Eisenhower

Should a decision be made to launch a preventive war against Iraq, the United States will obviously want to do everything it can to maximize its prospects for success. In turn, to a large extent, the success of a preventive war against Iraq will depend on the ability of United States to avoid the following:

IRAQI PREEMPTION

Much has been made over the United States' shift toward a so-called doctrine of preemption (i.e., preventive war). However, far less attention has been devoted to the possibility that Iraq may conduct preemptive strikes of its own. Saddam stands to gain little by following the strategy of the Gulf War, in which he remained passive while US forces built up in the region. His best chance of scoring some successes will likely be to attack American forces before they are at full invasion strength or, better still from his perspective, draw Israel into the conflict.

Iraq's best opportunity to induce Israel to strike would be to attack that country before US forces were in position to provide an effective defense of the Israelis. If Iraq can precipitate an Israeli intervention, the conflict could well be transformed into one of the Islamic world against the United States, Great Britain and Israel. This could have dire consequences both for the US position in the region following the campaign in Iraq, and for its war on radical Islamic terrorism as well.

> *The Iraqi army has no chance whatsoever to stand steadfast and will fall like a sandcastle.*
>
> —Gen. Salah Halaby (Ret.), Egyptian Army Commander in Desert Storm
>
> *My assessment is that if you put enough pressure on them, they will come apart and won't fight. The notion that they will retreat into the built-up areas and turn them into a kind of Stalingrad is laughable.*
>
> —General Barry McCaffrey, US Army (Retired), Commander, 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) in Operation Desert Storm
>
> *I think it is a serious mistake to underestimate the current combat capability of [the] Iraq military . . . .*
>
> —General Joseph P. Hoar, US Marines (Ret.), former Commander, US Central Command

The Iraqis' best chance to prolong the war probably centers on organizing a vigorous defense of its urban areas. Urban warfare tends to reduce substantially the effectiveness of many advanced technology systems and capabilities, neutralizing a major source of US military advantage. Urban eviction operations also tend to be manpower intensive, and to impose relatively high casualties. Under these circumstances, given its need to win relatively quickly, the US military may find itself on the horns of a dilemma. It could attempt to minimize casualties, for example, by surrounding major Iraqi cities and besieging them. But that would prolong the conflict. On the other hand, US forces could risk more casualties (to themselves and, perhaps, noncombatants as well) by attempting to defeat urban resistance more quickly.

A protracted conflict involving urban fighting could disadvantage the United States in several ways. First, it may provide America's enemies with a moral victory similar to that achieved by front-line Arab states during the Yom Kippur War of October 1973, which Israel won but only after much harder than expected fighting. Substantial US casualties would also likely diminish the American military's prestige, and the Pentagon could incur second-order effects with respect to recruiting and retaining its all-volunteer force.[7] Second, the longer a conflict goes on, the more

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[7] As used here, prestige refers to the US military's reputation as a highly effective fighting force among friends and rivals. While actual military capability is what counts once a conflict occurs, efforts to deter a conflict, or to dissuade military competition in the first instance are more dependent on an adversary's perception of existing and prospective US military effectiveness.

opportunity there is for unwelcomed unintended consequences to occur; for example, a horizontal escalation of the conflict.[8]

WMD USE

It is likely or perhaps even inevitable that in a desperate attempt to either save his regime or leave a scorched earth in his wake, Saddam Hussein will employ chemical and biological agents against US and allied (e.g., British) forces, against Israel, and against regional states supporting US operations, or against the Iraqi people themselves. The use of WMD against Israel offers Saddam Hussein perhaps the best chance for transforming the conflict to one less favorable to the United States and its allies. Employed against US forces, WMD could produce substantial casualties. Attacks on Israel could induce a major Israeli military response, possibly transforming the conflict into a high-intensity Arab-Israeli war. Should Hussein attempt to undertake genocidal cleansing against ethnic groups in Iraq (e.g., Shi'ite Muslims, Kurds) it could conceivably lead to demands for a cease fire. Moreover, to the extent that American troops are forced to operate in protective gear, the pace of operations will slow dramatically, lengthening the conflict.

INTERRELATED RISKS

The above risks are interrelated. For example, a preemptive Iraqi WMD strike against Israel almost certainly has a greater chance of bringing about Israeli involvement in the conflict, while inducing greater casualties. If such an attack also produces turmoil among US partners in the Arab world, the conflict could become more protracted.[9] American efforts to win a quick victory under these circumstances could require accepting greater risks, including the risk of increased casualties.

WAR OPTIONS

Three basic war options have been advanced to deal with the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's continued flouting of UN resolutions pertaining to Iraq's disarmament obligations and his ongoing efforts to add nuclear weapons to his WMD arsenal. The first option, Desert Storm II, is essentially a variation on the Gulf War battle plan. Similarly, the second option, Afghanistan II, takes an approach along the lines of that pursued by US forces in Operation Enduring Freedom, only on a far greater scale. The final option, called the Fast Squeeze, advocated here seeks to exploit the lessons of US military operations going back to Desert Storm to deal with the unique requirements of a Second Gulf War.

All options call for US force levels substantially below those deployed in the last Persian Gulf War. There are two reasons for this. First, Iraq's military is substantially weaker today than it

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[8] For example, as noted, one particular form of horizontal escalation that must be avoided is the direct involvement of Israel in the conflict.

[9] For example, Arab states might, on short notice, cancel or severely truncate agreements allowing US forces to operate from bases inside their countries.

was in 1991. At the same time, US forces are significantly more capable today than they were a decade ago. For instance:

- A far higher percentage of US aircraft are capable of delivering precision-guided munitions, greatly enhancing the striking power of the American air forces.

- With the advent of GPS-guided precision munitions, US strike aircraft can now employ these weapons at night and in poor weather, particularly against fixed targets, to include troops.

- The introduction of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and the arming of selected UAVs (turning them into Unmanned Combat Air Vehicles, or UCAVs) has substantially enhanced US reconnaissance capabilities and provided some ability to engage fleeting targets effectively.

- The US military's ability to exploit space to enhance terrestrial operations was in its infancy in 1991. Since then, substantial improvements have occurred in the American forces' ability to use space assets to enhance their effectiveness, to include relying on space for position location, precision attack, communications and data transfer.

- US information warfare capabilities have apparently improved significantly over the past decade. Although shrouded in secrecy, some recent major US military operations such as Allied Force apparently relied to a significant extent on information warfare operations (e.g., corrupting data files; inserting false or misleading communications; and inducing power surges that "fry" electronic components).

THE FAST SQUEEZE

> *They are much weaker than they were during Desert Storm.*
>
> —General Richard Myers, Chairman, US Joint Chiefs of Staff

The Fast Squeeze option differs significantly from both the Desert Storm II and Afghanistan II options in both its assumptions and execution. The Fast Squeeze option takes into account two key concerns. One is that sufficient forward base assets may not be available to accommodate the deployment of Desert Storm II ground and forward, land-based air forces along acceptable time lines. The other, related concern is that the deployment timelines may have to be compressed to minimize the time available for Saddam Hussein to conduct a preemptive strike against US forces while they are assembling in the region prior to their attack or to concentrate forces for the defense of urban areas. It must be remembered that the Republican Guard withstood an intense US aerial bombardment in the weeks leading up to the ground assault in Desert Storm without breaking. If the Iraqi forces avoid collapse and are able to mount a defense of their urban areas, a US-led coalition with a small ground force may be faced with several options, all unpalatable. They include:

- Heavy bombardment of urban areas, which would likely result in substantial civilian casualties;

- Assaulting with small, mostly ill-trained indigenous ground forces, which may be defeated or, if victorious, prone to sack their conquest; and

- Delaying their attacks for weeks, and perhaps months, until US regular ground forces can be deployed. This could lead to pressure for a cease fire, while also posing humanitarian issues (i.e., the welfare of civilians in the isolated cities) and the prospect of high US casualties.

The Fast Squeeze option calls for heavy reliance on rapid, *simultaneous* operations by US ground, air, maritime and special forces from the very start of the war in order to shatter the Iraqi military's resistance and effect its rapid collapse. This approach differs markedly from the *sequential* pattern of operations following during Desert Storm (and in the Desert Storm II option), where prolonged aerial bombardment preceded the assault by US-led coalition ground forces.[10] The assumption is that, although the ground and air forces are smaller than those called for in Desert Storm II, the fact that they are operating simultaneously will give them the combat effectiveness of a larger force operating sequentially.

The US air forces in this option would comprise four or five carrier battle groups, and between six and eight land-based tactical fighter wings.[11] Heavy reliance would be placed on the US Air Force's fleet of long-range bombers—the stealthy B-2s, and nonstealthy B-1s and B-52s—as a source of unparalleled striking power and a critical hedge against the lack of forward bases.[12]

The main allied ground forces would comprise perhaps three US Army divisions and a Marine Expeditionary Force, along with a brigade or two of the British Army. An additional two US Army divisions might be held in reserve. Thus total US forces would be roughly 200,000-250,000 troops. The ground forces would focus on the Iraqi center of gravity—Baghdad, and the elite Republican Guard forces, which number roughly seven divisions.[13] In contrast to Desert Storm and Desert Storm II, ground operations would be nonlinear, i.e., allied ground forces

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[10] One can thus draw a rough comparison between Desert Storm and the Fast Squeeze on the one hand, and between the offensive operations that characterized the Western Front in Europe during World War I and the blitzkrieg operations of World War II on the other. In both instances the former operation was sequential in nature: the ground force offensive was preceded by a prolonged bombardment of the enemy. Similarly, in both cases the latter operation was characterized by simultaneous employment of forces. (One huge difference, of course, is that in the case of Desert Storm, the preliminary allied aerial bombardment significantly eroded the Iraqi forces' effectiveness.)

[11] The number of forward-based tactical fighter wings, which approximates to roughly 3-4 Air Expeditionary Forces, would be influenced significantly by the United States' ability to secure forward air base access from states near Iraq for the purpose of combat air operations.

[12] Relative to the Desert Storm II option, the air forces mix in the Fast Squeeze option is driven by two factors. One is a concern over forward base access. Hence the need to seize air bases within Iraq itself early in the conflict. The second, more important factor is the need to win quickly even in the absence of widespread forward base access and a protracted buildup of US and allied forces. Hence the willingness to mount a ground offensive with significantly less ground and air forces than called for in Desert Storm II, and also to mount the ground offensive with a greatly reduced preparatory air campaign.

[13] There are also an additional four brigades of Special Republican Guard forces, which function as Saddam Hussein's praetorian guard.

would *not* accord high priority to maintaining a continuous front line to protect their flanks.[14] That responsibility would fall primarily to the air forces and to ground force reconnaissance and strike helicopter aviation units. The principal focus of ground operations would be to exploit the disarray produced by air-strike and information-strike operations to bring about the rapid collapse of Iraqi resistance, thereby ensuring a short war.

Specifically, the US and British Special Forces would infiltrate into Iraq's western desert region prior to the actual start of hostilities for the purpose of identifying and maintaining awareness of any Iraqi missiles that may threaten Israel. Special Forces may also conduct raid operations at suspected Iraqi WMD storage sites, either to facilitate their rapid destruction or to confirm the effectiveness of air attacks to achieve the same purpose.[15]

One US Army division (the 101st Air Assault Division), operating from bases in Turkey, would secure Iraq's northern oil fields, and then move on Baghdad, perhaps with the support of indigenous Kurdish resistance forces.[16] On its approach to Baghdad, the 101st would seize and occupy Tikrit.[17] In the west, US and allied forces would seize air bases and other forward operating bases (e.g., potential supply points) to support the prompt (and somewhat risky) rapid deployment of US Air Expeditionary Forces *inside* of Iraq. This might be necessary if the United States fails to gain forward base access from key states in the region (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Turkey). The main effort, however, would come in the south, where two US Army divisions, along with one US Marine division and one or two British Army brigades, would spearhead the sprint to Baghdad. Their objectives would be to force Iraqi ground force units to come out and challenge their advance (making them highly vulnerable to US air power), to reach the Iraqi capital as soon as possible, so as to minimize the Iraqis' ability to mount an effective defense of their capital, and to seize Iraq's southern oil fields before they could be destroyed by the Iraqi regime.

The reader will note that the Fast Squeeze option takes into account possible limitations on US access to forward bases in the region, and the need to move quickly from deployment of forces to

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[14] Linear operations are characterized by force operating contiguous to one another on an extended front. Operations along the Western Front in Europe during World War I are an example of linear operations. Nonlinear operations find major force elements operating more in clumps, with major gaps between them. Nonlinear operations dominated much of the US Civil War, when armies on both sides typically operated at great distances from other friendly armies, with very few forces in between them.

[15] One option that might be pursued to draw Iraqi forces out into the open involves initial operations by relatively small forces to seize Iraqi air bases and WMD facilities located outside of urban areas. If the Iraqis fail to contest these operations strongly, the US buildup of forces will be accelerated and Saddam could lose his ability to inflict mass casualties on his enemies. If the Iraqi forces contest these initial strikes, however, it will leave them less capable of fortifying their urban redoubts.

[16] The division, which has the heaviest concentration of helicopters of any division in the US Army, is also the Army's most mobile formation. It is possible that the division could deploy to bases in northern Iraq, where Kurdish separatists control substantial parts of the country. The United States could also benefit from the active involvement of Turkish ground forces, which are reported to be deployed in significant numbers in the Kurdish controlled areas of northern Iraq.

[17] Tikrit is Saddam Hussein's home of origin and the principal source of his political support within Iraq.

combat operations, so as to minimize the threat of Iraqi preemptive attacks, either on pre-deployed US forces or against Israel.

THE CROSSOVER POINT

> *[T]he generals in Iraq must understand clearly there will be consequences for their behavior. Should they choose, if force is necessary, to behave in a way that endangers the lives of their own citizens, as well as citizens in the neighborhood, there will be a consequence. They will be held to account.*
>
> —President George W. Bush

A critical aspect of the Fast Squeeze option concerns the "crossover point." In fact, there are two such points, one for Saddam Hussein and the other for his senior leaders. Saddam Hussein's crossover point will occur if and when he comes to believe that his ability to buy time through the renewed inspection regime is coming to an end, and that war is inevitable. Until that time, one might expect Hussein to be on his best behavior. After he reaches the crossover point, however, the restraints on his behavior will be few, if any. He will then believe that he is fighting to preserve his regime, and perhaps his personal survival as well. For this reason the United States will want to avoid Saddam Hussein reaching the crossover point until it is too late for him to take effective action. This may influence significantly the way in which the United States introduces forces into the Persian Gulf region. One would expect an emphasis on covert deployments, the use of deception and misinformation as to other deployments, and great reliance, at least initially, on "over-the-horizon," or extended-range forces, such as long-range bombers, so that when the conflict begins, it is characterized by speed and achieves tactical surprise.

The second crossover point will occur if and when Saddam Hussein's key military commanders and subordinates believe that his regime is doomed. At that point they will begin to calculate and balance the risk of remaining loyal to Hussein—and perhaps facing the vengeance of the Iraqi people after his fall or confronting an unsympathetic allied coalition—against the risk of attempting to overthrow Hussein (or at least refuse to execute his orders) so as to get on the right side of history, if only at the eleventh hour. This crossover point will only likely occur after hostilities have begun, and once it becomes evident that the US military is on its way to an overwhelming victory. While the United States should do what it can to *delay* Hussein from reaching his crossover point, it should also do what it can to *accelerate* the process by which his key lieutenants reach theirs. Efforts along these lines seem to be under way, and include President Bush's public warning to Iraqi commanders cited above, as well as other psychological operations (e.g., leaflet dropping) designed to raise questions in Iraqi military commanders' minds concerning their troops' reliability. One suspects that more discrete efforts may be under way to contact key Iraqi commanders to facilitate their cooperation once war begins.

In summary, the success of any US campaign in Iraq may depend, to a significant extent, on how well it handles the crossover points.

LONG POLES IN THE TENT

The risks associated with undertaking a preventive war against Iraq were noted above. There are, however, additional issues relating to the effective employment of US military power that lie outside the realm of Iraqi activity. The US military often refers to such major barriers to a successful operation as "long poles in the tent." They are summarized below.

Base Access

Several countries have declared their willingness to provide forward base support to US forces only if military operations against Iraq were sanctioned by the United Nations. Thus there is a risk that, should Washington fail to win Security Council approval for taking action against Iraq, forward base availability will be scarce. Some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, whose willingness to provide base access could prove crucial to the execution of US war plans, have intimated they may not provide such access for air strike operations even if action against Iraq is sanctioned by the United Nations. Lack of base access would create significant problems for US ground force deployments and Air Force tactical air units, whose relatively short range militates against anything but basing at forward locations.

Going It Alone

> *We always consider requests from our friends. We consider the United States our ally.*
>
> —Hamad Bin Jasim al-Thani, Foreign Minister of Qatar

The United States needs allies in any confrontation with Iraq. The UN Security Council's willingness to sanction military action would provide many states with the cover they need to provide US forces with basing support. Allied support will also be essential to resolving the other two elements of the conflict: the Arab-Israeli conflict and the global war on terrorism. The stability operations that follow any war with Iraq will likely be both protracted and require substantial military forces. The willingness of allies to provide military forces for stability operations could substantially enhance both the legitimacy of the post-war occupation and liberate US forces for other missions.

The importance of widespread international support, especially from allies and friends in the region may prove important, if not crucial, to the effort to win the peace following any military campaign. The Bush Administration is right that US interests and freedom of action should not be held hostage to the views of the international community. However, for a range of very important, practical reasons, strong international support including—if at all possible—UN authorization, is likely to prove an important asset.

PGM Stocks

The US military's expenditure rate of precision-guided munitions has been on the rise since Desert Storm. In that conflict, roughly seven percent of the munitions employed were precision

guided. By the time of Operation Allied Force in 1999, this figure had grown to some 35 percent, and in Operation Enduring Freedom the level reached roughly 60 percent. In both the latter cases, the level of PGM use exceeded planning estimates by a substantial margin. Planning estimates for a war with Iraq find PGM expenditure estimates running as high as 80 percent of the total munitions employed in the air campaign. Consequently, in recent months the Defense Department has worked with industry to accelerate the production of precision munitions. While progress is being made, if a war against Iraq follows the pattern of greater-than-expected demand for PGMs that has been a hallmark of recent operations, then the sheer scale of US operations relative to Allied Force and Enduring Freedom could reduce US PGM stocks to dangerously low levels.[18]

Chem-Bio Defenses

Saddam Hussein is believed to have significant stocks of chemical and biological weapons. During the Gulf War he refrained from employing these weapons against the United States and its allies. However, at that time his regime's survival was more likely to be assured if he refrained from using these weapons. Now Hussein is likely to be confronted with a US-led coalition whose objective is the termination of his regime. If and when Saddam Hussein becomes convinced that his ability to use the UN inspections as a shield from a US attack has run its course, and that military action against his regime is imminent, he will likely have little incentive to restrain from using his WMD. This is the reason why US officials, including President Bush, have warned senior Iraqi military officers against carrying out any orders by Hussein to employ weapons of mass destruction against the United States, it allies, or Israel. While steps have been taken to protect US forces operating in a chemical or biological warfare environment (e.g., gas mask recertification; troop inoculation), it is not clear how effective US defenses will be against such attacks.

Adequate Intelligence (WMD and Leadership)

As noted above, the United States desires a quick victory against Iraq. A key element in determining how rapidly victory can be achieved is the Americans' ability to identify Iraqi WMD stocks and the location of the Iraqi leadership, Saddam Hussein in particular. Rapid seizure of WMD stocks will eliminate nearly all of Iraq's ability to produce mass casualties. Eliminating Iraq's political and military leadership would greatly facilitate the rapid collapse of Iraqi resistance. There is, however, reason to be concerned over the ability of US intelligence to identify the location of Iraq's WMD or its leaders. The Gulf War showed how well Hussein was able to hide both his WMD program and himself from US detection. He has had over a decade of experience since then to perfect ways to conceal his WMD weapons and programs, and since 1998 has not had to contend with UN interference in these efforts. Hussein's ability to survive numerous plots on his life does not augur well for US efforts to locate him during any military operation, when he would likely be exercising extra caution.

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[18] The Pentagon is also trying to accelerate the production of Patriot missiles to defend against Iraqi missile attacks.

Information Warfare

If the United States goes to war against Iraq, there is a significant chance that the Americans will use their information warfare capabilities on a range and scale heretofore unseen in warfare. This could produce devastating results for the Iraqis. Saddam Hussein's communications with his senior commanders might be cut off. Iraqi computers may have their data files corrupted or their hard drives erased. Iraqi commanders may receive false messages. Baghdad could find itself broadcasting false messages to the Iraqi people. The kind of confusion induced by such operations may be critical to US forces' ability to win a rapid victory. On the other hand, given the uncertainties surrounding information warfare, it is possible that US information warfare capabilities will yield far less impressive results.

Summary

Warfare is an inherently uncertain enterprise. To the extent these long-pole issues work in the United States' favor, it will be able to mitigate the major risks associated with the three major operational options cited above. Should most of these key areas of uncertainty be resolved in favor of Iraq, the conflict could be far longer, and far costlier, than Washington hopes, and than the achievement of long-term US objectives in the region demands.

III. What Next?

Although there is a chance it may prove more difficult than currently envisioned, if war comes, the United States military will almost certainly defeat the armed forces of Iraq and depose Saddam Hussein. The questions are primarily: "How long it will take?"; "How costly will the victory be?"; and "What will be the war's long-term consequences?".

A Protracted Conflict

A protracted campaign against Iraq would incur a number of costs for the United States. Among the most salient are the following:

High Casualties. A protracted conflict will almost certainly involve urban fighting and perhaps efforts to track down guerrilla forces or deal with terrorists. American forces may also suffer significant urban casualties after the campaign to depose Saddam Hussein, during the stability operations phase. Finally, if Iraq is able to execute effective WMD strikes against US forces, they could induce high casualty rates. The United States military is not accustomed to taking high casualties. The last conflict in which US armed forces sustained major casualties was the Vietnam War. American participation in that war ended three decades ago, before the country abandoned the draft in favor of an all-volunteer (i.e., professional) military. Significant casualties, say in the range of one to ten thousand, could embolden those seeking to challenge US security interests in the Persian Gulf region and other key areas. They could also stimulate recruiting difficulties for the US armed forces. It could turn out that the American public supports the conflict, but that there will be insufficient numbers of young Americans willing to pursue a career that now seems far more dangerous than it was over the preceding thirty years. This could have long-term implications for the US military's force posture, and hence its ability to preserve US interests.

Ruptured Coalition. Another casualty of a protracted conflict may be the fraying, or even rupturing, of a US-led coalition. This could make it far more difficult to enlist others for the rather lengthy stability operations that are likely to follow an Iraqi regime change. Worse still, one manifestation of a ruptured coalition could well be calls from America's allies to negotiate a cease fire, perhaps with Saddam still in power.

Pyrrhic Victory. An Iraqi defeat in which the US military must struggle to achieve victory could prove Pyrrhic for the United States in that it would represent, in comparison to the Gulf War, a moral or symbolic victory for Iraq, and by extension, hostile regimes (i.e., the "Axis of Evil") and terrorist organizations. Just as Israel's victory in the 1973 Yom Kippur War assuaged Arab pride following the debacle of the 1967 Six Day War, so too an American victory achieved more slowly, and at a higher price, could find Washington's prestige eroded, making the achievement of post-war objectives in the region a much more difficult proposition.

RAPID VICTORY

As discussed earlier, the key to US success is to win quickly, and decisively. Rapid, audacious operations that exploit the American military's advantage in striking power, mobility and information-related operations (e.g., information warfare; stealth; precision attack; highly integrated and highly complex operations) can produce such a victory. Just as a relatively protracted conflict would almost certainly find the United States incurring costs, a rapid victory could yield important benefits. On the other hand, even a rapid victory will not guarantee long-term success. A rapid victory could have the following benefits:

Prestige. A quick, decisive victory would reaffirm the US military's standing as far and away the world's most capable armed force. This could be important for any future contingencies that follow. It also could support a key element of the Bush Administration's defense strategy: dissuasion (i.e., discouraging would-be adversaries from entering into a military competition with the United States in the first instance).

Regional Stability. A rapid victory would likely be associated with the equally rapid collapse of support for Saddam Hussein within Iraq. This could make stability operations easier. A quick victory should also prove less disruptive to other states in the region. For example, there would be less likelihood that unstable regimes in the region would come under further stress for supporting US-led military operations against Iraq. The war could be seen as a significant victory for the moderate forces of Islam. Finally, a rapid victory could further encourage the opposition movement in Iran, another state that supports terrorism and seeks nuclear weapons.

Base Realignment. Rapid victory could permit the United States to realign its forward presence in the region from a position of strength. In particular, it could allow the withdrawal of US forces from Saudi Arabia—a key sticking point for many Muslims—not out of fear of radical Islamic terrorism, but because Iraq no longer posed a threat to its neighbors. Of course, the United States is already shifting its basing posture out of Saudi Arabia and into several Gulf States (e.g., Qatar). It would, obviously, also have bases in Iraq during the period of stability operations.[19]

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[19] The basing issue here is somewhat reminiscent of the US Jupiter missile bases in Turkey during the early 1960s. Developments had made these bases unnecessary, and President Kennedy planned to withdraw the missiles. However, he refused to publicly link this action to Soviet demands during the Cuban Missile Crisis that the bases be dismantled. Once the crisis ended and a decent interval passed, the United States followed through on these plans. Graham Allison and Philip Zelikov, *Essence of Decision*, Second Edition (New York; Longman Publishers, 1999), pp. 356-61. The same approach might be undertaken by the United States in the current crisis: should it prove desirable, the Saudi government could be given assurances that the United States will terminate its presence in their country within a reasonable time frame in return for Riyadh's support during a war with Iraq.

STABILIZING IRAQ

> *Iraq's oil fields are rich and abundant, but the country needs to develop every barrel in order to reconstruct its economy, and it needs to do so fast.*
>
> —Fahdil Chalabi, Executive Director, Center for Global Energy Studies

The United States could well win the war against the Iraqi military and lose the peace. The Islamic civil war is essentially a war of ideas, in which radical Islamic elements seek to trigger a mass movement to overthrow moderate Islamic regimes, and to expel foreign influence. For the United States, winning the war of ideas requires a post–Saddam Hussein Iraq that brings economic, political, and social benefits to its people, and long-term stability to the region. This implies some form of representative government for Iraq, one that offers a voice for that nation's disparate population—the Kurds to the north, Sunni Arabs in the center, and the Shi'ite Arab population in the south. Accomplishing this will be no mean feat, given that recent trends point toward the atomization of multiethnic states, rather than their integration.[20] The key to Iraq's continued viability as a state may well be some form of federal arrangement, where the central government is dominant, but where each region still has a significant say in local governance. Producing this kind of outcome will likely require a long-term commitment of US (and, hopefully, allied) forces in stability operations and a strong economic recovery that provides incentives to maintain political stability.

Fortunately, Iraq has the assets to enable such a recovery, with the world's second-largest proven oil reserves. However, a combination of war and economic sanctions have seen Iraq's sustainable production drop to three million barrels per day.[21] With the proper investment, production could be increased over the next decade to between five and eight million barrels per day.[22] Such an increase in production, combined with the end of sanctions and the depredations of Saddam Hussein (i.e., excessive military spending, cronyism, and corruption), could fuel a strong economic recovery that would enable all of Iraq's ethnic groups to prosper. According to the Bush Administration, ideally over a two year period, a new constitution would be written and elections would be held, beginning with local officials and culminating finally with a vote on national leaders.

A politically stable and prosperous (by current standards) Iraq could make a significant difference in the Islamic civil war. A peaceful Iraq would not pose a threat to its neighbors, including Iran. This might further erode popular support for the mullahs, who have used the threat of Iraq to help mute internal dissatisfaction with their rule. This post-Hussein Iraq would

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[20] The breakup of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union are cases in point, as are ethnic conflicts in Africa (e.g., Rwanda) and in Asia (e.g., Indonesia).

[21] Department of Energy, *Country Analysis Briefs: Iraq*, October 2002, http://www.eia.gov/emeu/cabs/iraq. Iraq's production for 2001 averaged 2.45 million barrels per day.

[22] Bill Powell, "Iraq We Win. Then What?" *Fortune*, November 25, 2002, p. 60.

cease support for terrorists, and by its success, threaten the autocratic rule of other revisionist states such as Syria and Libya.

There is, however, a plausible scenario that is far less rosy than the one presented above. Many Iraqis harbor resentment against the United States for the hardships that have resulted from the sanctions imposed after the Gulf War. It is far from clear that US forces will be welcomed with open arms. Moreover, as A.C. Bedford wrote over 80 years ago, Iraq is a country of "warring tribes."[23] Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party, dominated by the Sunni minority, suppressed the other major ethnic groups—often ruthlessly—for decades. It may not be possible for the Kurds and Shi'ites to set aside their animosities and desires for revenge once Hussein is toppled.

It may prove even more difficult to bring about stability if the economic recovery is slow, or if the US victory is won at the cost of alienating one or more of these groups (e.g., through high civilian casualties). Should that occur, the post-war US occupation could more closely resemble its participation in the Multinational Force in Beirut in the early 1980s, than its role in Germany and Japan following World War II.

Once again, the point is worth making that neither a rapid, decisive US victory nor a stable, prosperous post-Hussein Iraq can be taken for granted. Achieving both would contribute significantly toward achieving the US security objectives outlined earlier in this paper. However, should US forces find themselves attempting to stabilize a country coming apart at the seams, the benefits accrued from ending Saddam Hussein's regime and its quest for weapons of mass destruction could be outweighed by growing instability in the region.

It is also important to emphasize that a large and sustained US military presence could be required in Iraq for many years after the end of the war. Estimates of the size and duration of the military presence the United States will need to maintain in the country after the war vary dramatically. It is possible that a relatively small presence will be required, and that most US forces could be withdrawn after only a relatively short period of time. But even under the best of circumstances, the US presence in Iraq is likely to dwarf the size of the US presence in peacekeeping operations in the Balkans and elsewhere. Furthermore, numerous observers, including many in the Bush Administration, have, in the past, strongly criticized those operations for their cost and purported negative impact on US military readiness.

Moreover, while it is *possible* that only a relatively small US peacekeeping and occupation force would be needed in Iraq over the long term, it is also possible that a very sizable US presence, perhaps as many as 100,000 or more troops, would need to be stationed in Iraq for a period of years. Much would depend on the extent to which US friends and allies would be willing to contribute to the operation. And much would also depend on the nature of US goals for Iraq. The more ambitious the goals, the more sizable and long term the presence may have to be. Since the Bush Administration's goals for post-war Iraq appear quite ambitious—including the establishment of a democracy and the maintenance of a single, unified state—the most prudent assumption is probably that a relatively large US military presence will need to be maintained in

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[23] Ibid.

the Iraq for an extended period after the war. Such a presence may not, in fact, prove necessary. But, in considering the merits of a launching a preventive attack against Iraq, it is probably best to assume that a large and sustained presence will, in fact, be needed.

RELATED POST-CONFLICT ISSUES

The Arab-Israeli Conflict. An impressive US victory over Iraq might well strengthen Washington's hand in pressing both sides for a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The offer made by the Barak Government in 1999 could form the basis for a final agreement.[24] The United States would also have to insist upon dealing with a Palestinian leadership that is truly interested in peace. This means finding a successor to Yasir Arafat. On the other hand, a protracted conflict, or a short, successful war that appeared to lack strong international support, could undermine US efforts to resolve the conflict.

The Axis of Evil. A US victory in Iraq could dissuade other states, such as Iran and North Korea, from acquiring nuclear weapons. Or it might, as noted above, convince them that they must redouble their efforts to field weapons of mass destruction. Much may hinge on whether North Korea successfully develops and fields nuclear weapons. If so, the lesson may be that Hussein's defiant path toward nuclear armament should be avoided, while North Korea's approach of seeming compliance (some might say extortion) might prove the "path of choice" for proliferants. In any event, disarming Iraq of its nuclear weapons program should, at a minimum, make the process of covertly developing such weapons a more difficult proposition for would-be adversaries of the United States. It may buy time for the United States to develop more effective diplomatic and military means for addressing the problem.

Saudi Arabia. The long-term prospects for the Saudi monarchy do not appear promising, even in the event of a US victory. Indeed, if the United States and its allies are able to set the conditions for some form of popular rule in Iraq, while also regenerating that country's oil production capabilities, the consequences could prove highly injurious for the Saudi monarchy, which remains authoritarian. Substantial increases in Iraqi oil production could seriously erode Riyadh's oil revenues, making it difficult for the regime to provide the subsidies that appease both its own people, and various terrorist organizations, like al Qaeda.

The Major Powers. Any war with Iraq will likely exert significant long-term influence on the United States' relationship with the world's major powers. A UN resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq will help restore some of the luster to Washington's tarnished relationship with some of its principal NATO allies, particularly France and Germany. Importantly, it would also obligate them to the long-term success of the enterprise. This could be especially important when, as seems likely, the United States casts about for economic and military support during the long period of stability operations that is almost certain to follow any war to depose Saddam

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[24] Israeli Prime Minister Barak offered the Palestinians the entire Gaza Strip area and roughly 95 percent of the West Bank. Recently, President Bush has called for the establishment of a provisional Palestinian state which would shortly thereafter become a formal state following a complete settlement of outstanding Israeli-Palestinian issues. The proposal's basic outlines have been accepted by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Hussein. Maintaining allied support will also be important in the long-term war against terrorism and in future attempts to deal with other prospective proliferants.

Finally, the United States is a principal architect of the current international system, as well as a major beneficiary of that system. Thus, to the extent it does not compromise vital US interests, Washington has a strong incentive to support and sustain the current international system, to include its mechanisms for resolving disputes. A great power (i.e., UN) resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq will also be important in that it signals a US willingness—up to a point—to submit its key security issues to the process of the one international body in which all the major powers participate.

IV. CONCLUSION

Preventive wars and attacks are relatively rare in history, and for good reason. Any war is a risky proposition. Choosing to assume that risk by initiating conflict is something that states have done typically with great reluctance. Nevertheless, the failure of deterrence in dealing with radical Islamic terrorists and serious concerns over the long-term effectiveness of containment when it comes to rogue states and their development of nuclear weapons has led the Bush Administration to consider the case for placing greater reliance on preventive war than was the case in the last half of the 20th century.

The case for launching a preventive war against Saddam Hussein is strong. In dealings with him, American notions of deterrence and containment have not consistently proven effective. He has taken serious risks over the years, on occasion to the point of recklessness. He has used chemical weapons to kill thousands of fellow Muslims, including his own people. Furthermore, despite economic and political sanctions, he almost certainly has continued to pursue the development of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

Moreover, it is far from clear that the current sanctions regime, which was experiencing severe erosion prior to 9/11, will prevent him from achieving his goal. Nor is it clear that the current intrusive inspection regime, enabled by a major US diplomatic effort and show of military force, can be sustained beyond the near term. In short, time may not be on the side of the United States.

In addition, the Bush Administration has, for better or worse, put US credibility on the line, much as the Kennedy Administration did during the Cuban Missile Crisis when it publicly declared the Soviet move to place nuclear-armed missiles in Cuba to be unacceptable. The administration's public pronouncements add weight to the pressure on Hussein. They also threaten to erode US credibility if Iraq is not clearly disarmed. In the administration's parlance, the Iraqi regime's behavior must change or the United States will change it. Few objective observers believe the former is possible while Saddam Hussein is in charge.

On the other hand, launching a preventive war against Iraq incurs significant risks. History shows that although some preventive wars have been successes, others did not necessarily produce the outcomes sought by those states that undertook preventive war. The risks associated with a preventive war against Iraq war can be mitigated—although hardly eliminated—by the United States pursuing it through a coalition approach which is sanctioned by the United Nations and by pursuing the campaign along the lines of the Fast Squeeze option.

Winning the war would leave the United States with the perhaps even more difficult task of winning the peace. The keys to success here will likely center upon the US military's ability to secure a quick and decisive victory; coalition participation in stability operations that enable Iraq's economic recovery; the emergence of a successor regime that is capable of attracting the support of Iraq's diverse population; and a willingness to stay the course for what is likely to be an extended period of military presence.

A preventive war against Iraq and the stability operations that follow will present daunting challenges, even for the world's sole superpower. In confronting these problems, it is easy to look for better alternatives. Unfortunately the two principal alternatives, a continuation of the strategy of deterrence and containment or an enduring, highly intrusive inspection regime, are either not likely to be effective, may not be realistically possible, or both. By their statements and actions, both the Bush Administration and a bipartisan coalition in Congress seem to realize this. Should they choose the difficult course of preventive war, however, they should do so under no illusions that the path to victory will be as smooth as it was in 1991, or that the peace that follows will be easily secured.