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## Postwar Scenarios in Iraq and Regional Re-ordering

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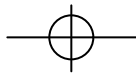
A war aimed at overthrowing the Iraqi regime is, at the time of writing, by no means inevitable. Yet, it makes sense to think about its possible repercussions. One cannot accurately predict the dynamics that will be triggered by a war. The best one can do is develop individual elements of possible scenarios. In the following, this will be done with regard to the course of the war itself, its impact on neighbouring countries, postwar developments in Iraq and mid-term regional domino effects. Whether or not a war will be fought with a UN mandate will not have a major influence on these scenarios.

### The course of war

Military planners need to consider worst-case scenarios. According to such a scenario, American troops will be involved in long and heavy fighting, Iraq will fire medium-range missiles at Israel, Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, Israel will retaliate, the US or Israel will use nuclear weapons, and the number of war casualties will amount to tens or hundreds of thousands. Such a scenario, however, is not very likely. It probably underestimates the rationality of Iraq, Israel and other actors and overestimates the potential of the Iraqi forces and their preparedness to fight.

Most probably, war as such will be the simpler part of the problem. Under a more likely scenario, resistance to an invading army will be

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minimal. Large parts of the Iraqi army will not be willing to fight. Iraq is not going to attack Israel and it is either not going to use chemical or biological weapons at all or use them as previously done against foreign troops or internal adversaries. There will be little to prevent US troops from rapidly reaching Baghdad and bringing other major cities and Iraq's oil fields under control.

Yet, in this scenario, it is also likely that the Iraqi leadership will attack potential supporters of an invading army as long as it can do so. Such attacks will be directed against densely populated Shi'ite areas in the south and cities in the Kurdish zone in the north of the country. Furthermore, if Kurdish Peshmerga attempt to conquer the city of Kirkuk, fighting around this area will probably erupt. Baghdad and the oilfields will still be under US (or Allied) control shortly after the beginning of an invasion. However, there will be large refugee flows in the south (towards Iran and Kuwait) and in the north (towards Iran, the Kurdish mountainous region and Turkey). Turkish military involvement and fighting between Kurds and Turks cannot be excluded.

### Regional side-effects

There also exists a worst-case scenario with regard to the immediate regional effects of a war against Iraq. Arab leaders, in particular, often stress it. According to this scenario, Western-oriented Arab states are going to face serious anti-regime protests. This could lead to the overthrow of the Jordanian monarchy and to a destabilisation of Saudi Arabia and Egypt. States such as Syria and Iran could directly or indirectly intervene in favour of Iraq.

More likely is a different scenario, which is less dramatic, at least regarding the Arab states and Iran. In this scenario, especially if the war comes to an end in a relatively short time, one can indeed expect anti-American demonstrations and attacks on American and European interests in the region. All these states, however, including Jordan, which will be under more pressure than the others, will eventually be able to handle the crisis. The Jordanian leadership will seek to reach a truce with the most important opposition forces. Based on the premise that the cohesion of state and society is more important than solidarity with the Iraqis, such a truce will neutralise parts of the political spectrum. Remaining anti-regime forces will be repressed with military means, if need be. However, there will be terror attacks on Western interests in countries like Jordan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Morocco.

Whether or not a war against the Iraqi regime will be covered by a UN

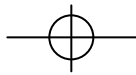
mandate will barely make a difference to the "Arab street". For the governments of Arab states though, as for Teheran, it will be much easier to show a degree of cooperation with the United States if there is such a mandate: Saudi Arabia will then offer its military bases (the smaller Gulf monarchies will do so anyway); Jordan, Iran and possibly Syria will allow search and rescue operations on their territory. These states will pursue this form of cooperation out of self-interest – not only to keep up advantageous relations with the United States, but also in order not to be targeted after an Iraqi defeat and to be accepted as an interested party in any future re-organisation of Iraq.

This scenario would be incomplete without considering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Here, in the shadow of a war in the Gulf, an escalation of violence has to be expected. There are forces on both sides, especially within Hamas and among the extremist parts of the Israeli government, who are just waiting to intensify the conflict. According to this scenario, Prime Minister Sharon will use new Palestinian attacks, especially a frequently predicted "mega-attack", to lead a decisive move against the Palestinian leadership and what remains of the quasi-state structures in the Palestinian areas. This move could also include the deportation of hundreds, if not thousands, of leading Palestinian cadres. The Israeli premier has already openly declared that he expects the United States not to hinder Israel if it were to strike decisively against "Palestinian terror" before or during the war.

Acts of war on the Israeli-Lebanese border and ultimately between Israel and Syria seem less probable, but cannot be excluded. Even without that, however, US diplomacy would have to make enormous efforts – more than anything the Bush administration has been willing to show so far – to calm the situation. It is doubtful whether Washington can accomplish this whilst leading a war against Iraq.

### After Saddam Hussein

Even American military planners expect that an overthrow of Saddam Hussein and his regime will be followed by more than one "night of the long knives". The comparatively high level of education in Iraq does not guarantee that Iraqis would defer from seeking revenge, individually or collectively, for the systematic repression of the Kurds and the Shi'ites, the brutal collective punishment of families of regime adversaries or other deeds of the Hussein regime. An allied or American occupation force will therefore not only have to prepare for the control of strategic facilities and the logistical problems of caring for refugees and organising food supplies, it will also have to act as an internal police force in Iraq, trying to cope with anarchic violence within Iraqi society.



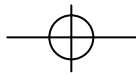
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If we assume that the United States does not intend to rule directly over Iraq for several years, that is, via a military administration and without an Iraqi leadership, two plausible scenarios can be imagined. The first could be called a "Karzai scenario": in it, the United States will control the oilfields and other strategic locations militarily. A US High Commissioner will install a civil government in Baghdad. This would likely be a coalition government, possibly under the leadership of an exiled politician (Ahmad Chalabi, the founder of the Iraqi National Congress, would definitely be a candidate), and would, as such, be relatively weak. To ensure the survival of this government, the High Commissioner will have to replace large parts of the political and military elites. The government will only control parts of the country, control of the provinces remaining in the hands of tribal groups. The government will also soon be defamed as a lackey of the US, and parts of the predominantly nationalistic bureaucracy will resist the effective implementation of policies. There will likely also be attacks in the provinces on representatives of the government and the occupying power, organised by the remains of the Baath party (which today has two million members). In view of such difficulties, the willingness of the US to support a weak client government in Iraq will gradually decrease.

The second scenario could be called the "man-with-the-moustache" scenario. It could come into effect directly after a victory over Saddam Hussein, or later, after the failure of a "Karzai" option. According to this scenario, the United States will opt for a high ranking Sunni military leader to take over the administration of Iraq. The latter could find recognition and support within the military establishment, the remnants of the intelligence services, and the bureaucracy. Names of exiled officers (former chief of staff Khazraji or the generals of the Republican Guard Salihi und Shahwani) have already been discussed. Such a leader who – if only to gain nationalist credentials – will not allow the Kurds to become too autonomous or have access to Kirkuk, would also suit the interests of neighbouring Arab states and Turkey. He will present himself as a pro-Western and secular ally in the fight against terrorism and suggest re-establishing Iraq as the cornerstone of regional stability in the Gulf. He might even offer to make Iraq an outpost against Iranian "fundamentalism". He will be no democrat, but a manageable partner, a little bit like the young Saddam Hussein.

### Middle Eastern dominos

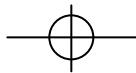
Some influential members of the Bush administration adhere to what could be called a new domino theory. It basically claims that once Saddam Hussein has been defeated, all other "dominos" on the regional game board



will fall into place. A war against Iraq and a change of regime in Baghdad will certainly have regional effects, but no one can pretend to know how the dominos are going to fall. Scenarios of mid-term regional dynamics are the most problematic as they depend on short-term developments whose outcomes are not yet clear.

According to a first scenario built on this "domino" approach, the United States will intensify its efforts to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict after the defeat of Saddam Hussein. US credibility will have increased with that victory. America's clout in the region will convince Israel to cooperate or enable Washington to pressure Israel into cooperation. Palestinians and the Arab states will not be able to defy a reasonable solution. The Syrian Baathist regime will lose domestic legitimacy through the fall of its Baathist colleagues in Iraq. Moreover, the Syrian government will need American support to resume negotiations with Israel. In contrast to the period up to 2000, the US will now expect Syria to come up with certain advance concessions such as the disarming of the Lebanese Hizbollah, the eviction of radical Palestinian organisations from Damascus, and a change of its official anti-Israeli rhetoric. European and American pressure will also contribute to speeding up economic and political reform processes in Syria. If the Syrian leadership cooperates, it will keep its role as the *de facto* power in Lebanon; if not, Israel can increase its military pressure on Syria and its Lebanese allies. Faced with the US presence in neighbouring Iraq, Iran will also be prepared to withdraw its support for Hizbollah and to normalise relations with Washington. Should such pressure eventually lead to the demise of the Syrian or Iranian regime, more pro-Western forces will come to power. Finally, Saudi Arabia will recognise that the United States, through its control of Iraq, is no longer dependent on the kingdom as a possible swing producer of oil. After substantial investments in the Iraqi oil industry, the United States will be able to withdraw its support for the Saudi ruling family. The latter will be forced both to take on a clearly US-friendly stance and to allow certain domestic reforms towards greater pluralism.

This scenario is built on a good amount of wishful thinking or hubris. Historical experience in the Middle East does not support such optimism as regards the ability of external forces to enforce a regional order in the Middle East. Theoretically, one could assume that a regional shift of power that weakens Israel's enemies would also give Israel a greater sense of security and increase its willingness to withdraw from the Occupied Territories. Empirically, this assumption is questionable: a government that adheres to settlement construction in the Occupied Territories for ideological reasons will have little incentive to "reward" its weakened enemies by giving up territory. Therefore, another scenario seems more



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likely and realistic: Arab states will indeed be weakened, but Israeli intransigence will provide an encouragement for those forces in Arab states that viewed negotiations with the Jewish state with great scepticism in the first place. If the Palestinian Authority is further weakened, Israel will no longer find a partner that can speak for the Palestinians as a whole. Israel will then negotiate with individual mayors about local issues which may alleviate the occupation regime somewhat. Such a development would suit the interests of those in Israel who do not want the creation of a Palestinian state. They will gain a couple of years until the next intifada erupts.

Also, under this more realist scenario, Syria can be put under pressure to restrain the activities of Hizbollah. But it will not show particular flexibility in the peace process once domestic or international pressure increases. A continued stalemate in the peace process will strengthen conservative and reactionary tendencies throughout the Arab world. The Saudi government will not openly resist American plans for the region, but it will, like Iraq's other neighbours, give little support to a US administered coalition government in Iraq. Saudi reformers around the Crown Prince could be sidelined by forces who pretend to be pro-American, but have little interest in domestic change.

This is not a scenario of absolute catastrophe. It is just one without political change – without movement in the peace process and without decisive domestic change in the Arab states. The United States will have shown its preparedness to weaken its regional enemies and eliminate them if need be. However, the credibility of American and Western policies overall will not depend so much on the ability to enforce a regime change in Iraq as on the US' and Europe's willingness and ability to find an acceptable solution to the Middle East conflict. A peaceful solution to the conflict is one of the major prerequisites for political change in Arab countries.