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Foreign &
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See David,

Scenarios for the Future of Iraq after Saddam

You asked for some initial thinking on a post Saddam Iraq. I enclose a first draft of a paper produced jointly by our Directorate for Strategy and Innovation and Research Analysts setting out some possible scenarios, and discussing what our objectives should be. It has not yet been fully cleared internally. There are a number of issues which need to be thought through more carefully. We aim to produce a final version of the paper by the end of next week.

We are planning to send a team to Washington to engage the Americans on some of these issues, including those covered in the Regional Consequences paper I am sending you separately, and to explore their thinking. We are also considering raising them with other Close Allies.

Yours sincerely,

(Mark Sedwill)
Private Secretary

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SCENARIOS FOR THE FUTURE OF IRAQ AFTER SADDAM

Introduction

- 1 This paper looks at various scenarios in which Saddam Hussein loses power in the context of war; it considers our priorities for a successor regime in Iraq and how we should achieve them.

Scenarios

- 2 Saddam could lose power in many different ways. We have identified four broad scenarios to stimulate thinking about how we would react and what our priorities are. The reality would almost certainly be messier. The scenarios could easily merge into one another. How we and the wider international community would react would depend among other things on when Saddam lost power, the extent to which the military campaign had progressed, the level of casualties and the damage to critical infrastructure.

Saddam is killed by a member of his inner circle or steps down

- 3 One of Saddam's immediate circle could assassinate him and take over his position. It has often been suggested this might happen. So far, Saddam has killed all who have tried. His inner circle almost certainly consider him best able to protect their interests. In a war in which the US was bent on regime change this judgement might change. But Saddam's personal security arrangements are extremely effective.
- 4 Alternatively, Saddam might step down, promoting a proxy leader who he would try to control from behind the scenes. This is unlikely. It is doubtful he trusts anyone enough, and it would weaken the regime. If Saddam was not formally in control, someone might take the opportunity to carry out a personal vendetta.
- 5 The US would be highly unlikely to accept either outcome, since in either case the regime would remain essentially unchanged, and in the second Saddam would remain de facto in charge. But the timing could be crucial. If an attack was well advanced, the US would be unlikely to hold off. If not, it could prove tricky, particularly if accompanied by genuine co-operation with weapons inspectors and a credible attempt to comply with the UNSCRs. There would be a great push from the Arab world and elsewhere to rehabilitate Iraq.

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Military Coup

- 6 A General or a senior figure from the intelligence services could stage a coup, taking over government and leaving many of the current structures in place. This could be pre-emptive (eg provoked by international political pressure) or take place during or after a military campaign. This would probably amount to partial regime change. The leading figure would almost certainly be a Sunni and possibly from Saddam's hometown of Tikrit.
- 7 A coup would be risky. There are no obvious alternative power bases which a leader could tap into. Saddam's placemen permeate the military and security structures. An attempt could easily result in inconclusive bloody fighting between various factions, unless Saddam were killed early on and/or the coup leaders secured the support of key military units, like the Republican Guards or Air Force.
- 8 Even if successful, a junta would face intense internal pressures. Without immediate moves to increase the representation of Shi'a, Kurds and non-Tikriti Sunnis in the regime, there could be frustration amongst Iraqis at having to face more of the same. This might lead to uprisings. Rebellions in the Shi'a south and Kurdish north could pose threats to any regime if the security and military apparatus did not have the same discipline it has now.
- 9 The junta would probably look to do a deal with the UN on WMD and the UNSCRs to facilitate the lifting of sanctions. Improving economic conditions in Iraq would be its best hope of staving off discontent and remaining in power. It is questionable whether it would be fundamentally any more pro-Western than its predecessor.
- 10 There would be strong international pressure for Iraq to be rehabilitated. Arab regimes would be relieved at the prospect of a stable Iraq, but wary of the junta's longer-term intentions. They would not want to see Iraq destabilised further. External opposition and outside commentators would be critical if there were no moves to a more representative, civilian regime.

Popular Insurgency

- 11 Another possible outcome is a series of popular uprisings. These are more likely to take place during or in the aftermath of any military campaign when the situation in Iraq would be at its most fluid and after regular army units had fragmented.
- 12 One possibility is that Kurdish forces would move further south and west, taking the towns of Kirkuk and possibly Mosul, perhaps in alliance with

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members of the army. The Kurds might then wait for a regime to establish itself in Baghdad and start negotiations about some sort of federal structure. Turkey would be extremely hostile to this and would only refrain from intervening in northern Iraq under coalition pressure. Iran and Syria might also be tempted to intervene.

- 13 The Shi'a in the south might also rebel, as they did in 1991. Iran could provide support, either by sending in troops or providing equipment. This would provoke a strong reaction from the Arab world (eg Saudi Arabia). But many Iraqi Shi'a consider rule from Tehran less attractive than rule from Baghdad.
- 14 It is unlikely any uprisings would be successful unless Saddam's military structures had collapsed and/or they received significant external assistance. But if successful, the outcome would probably be chaos. No one group would gain overall control of the country. A series of local revolts could be sparked off. Tribal and guerrilla powerbrokers would seize territory and resources. Reprisals against those who worked with the previous regime would be rife. Thousands would try to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. Iraq's neighbours might find it hard not to get sucked in.
- 15 There would be intense pressure for international intervention to mediate a solution. A compromise would have to be made between appeasing local strongmen and ensuring a stable representative structure. External opposition groups would campaign to have a role in this, but would have little credibility.

Externally-driven regime change

- 16 The final scenario is that coalition forces take over Baghdad and eject Saddam's regime. The end of Saddam's regime in this way could lead to many of the elements described in the previous scenario – uprisings, reprisals. But in this scenario the coalition should have far more influence in shaping events. It would have large numbers of forces in many sensitive areas, and it would have won a clear military victory. The Iraqi population would probably be relatively passive.
- 17 This should help it maintain stability. But it would not necessarily be easy – particularly if the coalition had armed and/or relied on the support of Kurdish and Shi'a groups and they had taken control of certain areas in the fighting. There would also be pockets of Saddam loyalists.

The UK's desiderata

- 18 These scenarios give an indication of a range of possible outcomes. Much would lie outside our control. But we should be able to influence

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developments, through our close relationship with the US, our diplomatic activity in the UN and elsewhere and our likely role in any military campaign. The messages we deliver both in private and via the media will play an important part.

- 19 Timing would also be critical. The international climate would be different depending on whether Saddam fell before or after the fighting started. Certainly once the US had committed its forces and suffered casualties, the momentum for far-reaching regime change would be almost unstoppable.
- 20 Given these considerations it is important we have the clearest possible sense of our objectives for Iraq. We have four overarching priorities:-
- The termination of Iraq's WMD programme and the permanent removal of the threat it poses.
 - A more inclusive, participatory and effective government in Iraq.
 - A stable region providing secure supplies of oil to world markets. This means a viable Iraq which does not pose a threat to its neighbours.
 - The termination of Iraqi support for international terrorism.
- 21 We have a number of second order objectives which we would wish to achieve if possible. These include the bringing of criminal proceedings against Saddam and key members of his regime; and ensuring British companies benefit from any post-war reconstruction contracts.

How should we achieve our objectives?

- 22 We need to think through how achievable these objectives would be. The viability of any post war order in Iraq would depend in large measure on the extent of damage to the infrastructure and people. There are also various fundamental, interconnected political questions:-

What do we want from regime change?

- 23 Although we have explicitly stated that regime change is not one of our objectives, once war started it would be an inevitable outcome. The US would not settle again for a 1991 style solution. The question then arises of what constitutes the regime. It would certainly mean the removal of the whole of Saddam's family and inner circle. INDICT's list of the top dozen war criminals would be a good starting point. Further evidence would almost certainly emerge about others.

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24 It is less clear how much of the wider military and governmental structures we would want to see dismantled. This apparatus has facilitated much of what Saddam has done. His influence permeates the system. But removing it would mean the removal of almost all of the structures of authority in Iraq. This could cause economic breakdown and strife. It might be better to leave it substantially intact and to encourage more incremental reform over the medium term.

Is there scope for representative government?

25 We need to develop a clear line on what sort of government we want to see in Iraq. Some Americans have openly stated they want to see the establishment of democracy. We have avoided this position, because it is in an unrealistic ambition in the short-term. We have stressed the importance that the Iraqis choose their own form of government.

26 There are a number of difficult issues here:-

- a) Iraq has been ruled largely by coercion for the past 30 years and more. It has no successful experience of representative or democratic government.
- b) Iraq has always been a highly centralised state, with little regional autonomy (other than the Kurdish Autonomous Zone which has not been a conspicuous success). Trying to deliver effective devolution could lead to splits.
- c) Although Islamic extremism is not a strong force in Iraq, a more representative or even democratic Iraq would not necessarily be pro-Western, given Iraq's recent history.
- d) The Sunni minority elite would probably feel threatened by a more representative system. Conversely, if the Shi'a and Kurds did not have a significant say in how the country was run and sufficient representation in the key jobs in the military and civil administration, this would increase calls for secession.
- e) None of Iraq's neighbour regimes would be keen to see the emergence of a democratic Iraq.

27 These issues would take time to resolve and discussions would need to involve a wide range of parties. They highlight the risks involved in any attempt to impose a new political system in Iraq. To the extent possible, the Iraqis themselves should have the primary role in determining their future government and external intervention should appear to come from within the Arab world.

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- 28 Even if democracy is not a short-term option, presentationally it will be important for the international community to show that intervention is leading to better governance for the Iraqi people.
- 29 In the immediate aftermath, there is likely to be a need for an interim administration to run the country until longer-term arrangements are put in place. The external opposition are weak and would not have sufficient domestic support. There is no obvious figure who could pick up the reins immediately. This suggests that the international community would need to establish (and staff) an interim administration itself to maintain stability and supervise the preliminary reconstruction of Iraq. It should probably be under UN auspices. It would be essential for it to have strong support and participation from Arab countries. If conflict started, we should start exploring ideas with some of them (eg Egypt, Saudi Arabia).
- 30 A long-term international peace-keeping presence would probably be the only way to guarantee the stability of the interim administration and any subsequent regime.

How important is territorial integrity?

- 31 Iraq is an artificial creation, lacking the ethnic, religious and cultural cohesion which is often associated with successful states. But the fragility of Iraq can be exaggerated. The country has shown a remarkable resilience given its recent history.
- 32 The question of territorial integrity will undoubtedly be raised in many post Saddam scenarios. Some in US neo-conservative circles are eager to redraw the map of Iraq and other parts of the Middle East. This is an unrealistic objective which would be vehemently opposed throughout the Arab world.
- 33 There are strong reasons why we should defend Iraq's unity:-
- a) Iraq's disintegration would increase internal pressure on other states in the region, resurrecting some difficult issues (eg resentments of the Shi'a within Saudi Arabia's eastern province or even the possible creation of Arabistan, uniting Arab Shi'a in southern Iraq and Iran). Given the ethnic and religious linkages between Iraq and many neighbouring states, it is unrealistic to expect them not to interfere in any break-up.
 - b) Statelets would be susceptible to external meddling – small, unstable, militarily weak and potentially oil rich. This could lead to long-term instability.

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- c) There are no clear fault lines along which Iraq could fragment. The three Ottoman vilayets could not realistically form the basis of a divided Iraq – they are no more logical than Iraq itself and contain diverse groupings cutting across the dividing lines. The unequal distribution of Iraq's oilfields (largely in the south, with none in the central area) would also make division difficult. Any central authority in Baghdad would fight hard to retain control of key regions.

Kurdistan?

- 34 Depending on how the situation unfolded, we could face increased calls for the creation of a Kurdistan. We might even be presented by a fait accompli.

35

Other Issues for Consideration

- 36 There are a number of other issues which would need to be considered in greater detail in our approach to a post-war Iraq:-

- a) Economic: It would be important to offer the Iraqi people both immediate humanitarian relief and a credible prospect of increasing prosperity in the not too distant future. The latter means establishing a market economy with the appropriate institutions to support it, and avoiding the massive distortions which plague most other oil-rich economies in the region. The chances of doing this would depend on the extent of destruction. But a decade of sanctions has already taken its toll. It would be important that Iraq should not be ham-strung at the outset by laying prior claim to so much of its oil revenue that it had inadequate resources to fund its development. Careful thought would have to be given to the burden of debt service, of Gulf War compensation payments, and of payment of any new reparation claims that might arise.
- b) Security: Any new regime would be highly vulnerable to attack, particularly if some of the existing security structures were dismantled. It would need to be able to defend itself and prevent meddling by others in the region. This is likely to mean an ongoing security guarantee from the US and her allies – of Iraqi territory, of the regime itself and of any international security force (cf ISAF). This could be

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politically sensitive.

- c) Weapons of Mass Destruction: Terminating the threat posed by Iraqi WMD is a key objective. We would need to identify and agree (inter alia): how to identify, control and decommission Iraq's WMD facilities; what long-term monitoring arrangements should be put in place; how to instigate confidence building measures to control WMD on a regional level and reduce Iraq's desire/need for WMD; and how to stop others from gaining access to Iraqi WMD expertise and materiel during or after any conflict.
 - d) The diaspora: An estimated 3 million Iraqis live abroad, many of them highly-trained doctors, engineers, businessmen, oil industry managers and other technocrats. Some Kurds with the security of a foreign passport have started to return and invest in northern Iraq. How do we get the Iraqi diaspora - not just the external opposition - to get involved in rebuilding and reinvesting in the country?
 - e) Longer term reconciliation: Would there be a need for a longer term Truth and Reconciliation Commission? Would this work in an Iraqi context (without a Mandela figure)?
- 37 These issues will need to be looked at separately. Work is already underway on some of them.

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