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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.
- 3 Much would also depend on the legal context in which any military action took place and the degree of involvement of the UN Security Council, both in authorising military action and in any post-conflict peace-building.

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

- 4 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.
- 5 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.
- 6 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

- 7 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.
- 8 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.
- 9 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 could 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.
- 10 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.
- 11 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

- 12 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.

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The Kurds might wait for a regime to

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establish itself in Baghdad and start negotiations about some sort of federal structure. Turkey would be extremely hostile to this

Iran and Syria might also be tempted to intervene.

- 14 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 would be suspicious of an increase in Iranian influence and have no desire to see the installation of a clerical regime.
- 15 It is unlikely any uprisings would be successful unless Saddam's military structures had collapsed and/or they received significant external assistance. But even if successful, the outcome would probably be chaos. No one group would gain overall control of the country. Tribal and guerrilla powerbrokers would seize territory and resources. Iraq's neighbours, in particular Iran, might find it hard not to get sucked in.
- 16 There would be intense pressure for the international community 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

- 17 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 two scenarios. 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.
- 18 This should help the coalition 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
- There would also be pockets of Saddam loyalists.

The UK's desiderata

- 19 The scenarios give an indication of a range of possible outcomes. Our preliminary assessment is that the fourth scenario is the most likely outcome, perhaps involving elements of the second and third.

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- 20 Timing would be important. 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 anything more than a minimum level of casualties, the momentum for far-reaching regime change would be almost unstoppable. The international law context would also be critical – particularly the legal basis for any use of force against Iraq and the ongoing role of the UN Security Council.
- 21 Much would lie outside our control. In most circumstances, the decisive voice would be that of the US. But we should be able to influence 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 delivered both in private and via the media should play an important part.
- 22 Given these considerations it is important we have the clearest possible sense of our objectives for Iraq. The UK has a fundamental interest in a stable region providing secure supplies of oil to world markets. This implies four overarching priorities for Iraq:-
- **The termination of Iraq's WMD programme and the permanent removal of the threat it poses.**
 - **A more inclusive and representative government in Iraq.**
 - **A viable Iraq which does not pose a threat to its neighbours.**
 - **The termination of Iraqi support for international terrorism.**
- 23 We have a number of second order objectives which we would wish to achieve if possible. These include ensuring that Saddam and key members of his regime are brought to justice; and ensuring British companies benefit from any post-war reconstruction contracts.

How can we achieve these objectives?

- 24 Detailed work will need to be done separately on how best to ensure the permanent elimination of Iraq's WMD programme. This should cover, 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.
- 25 The remainder of this paper focuses on how we can achieve the other more political objectives, which in turn could contribute to the reduction of the WMD threat. There are various fundamental, interconnected

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questions:-

Territorial integrity?

26 Iraq is an artificial creation,

But its fragility can be exaggerated. The country has shown a remarkable resilience given its recent history.

27 The question of territorial integrity will inevitably be raised in many post Saddam scenarios. Some 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. Iraq's territorial integrity has been underscored in a number of Security Council resolutions.

28 There are strong practical 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).
- b) Given the border disputes and ethnic and religious linkages between Iraq and many neighbouring states, it is unrealistic to expect them not to interfere in any break-up.
- c) Statelets would be small, unstable, militarily weak and potentially oil rich. This could lead to long-term instability.
- d) 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.

29 But the international community should not seek to enforce Iraqi unity, if the Iraqis themselves go in another direction by agreement.

What about Kurdistan?

30 Depending on how the situation unfolded

, we would face increased calls for Kurdish self-determination/independence. We might even be presented with a fait accompli.

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Regime change?

32 The UK has stated that regime change is not one of our objectives. But if ground-war started it would rapidly become an almost 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.

33 It is less clear how much of any remaining 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 entirely would mean the removal of most of the structures of authority in Iraq. This could inhibit political and economic reconstruction.

How much of Iraq's governmental structures would survive Saddam?

34 Saddam has shaped Iraq's governmental structures over the past 30 years with the aim of unchallenged personal authority. It is difficult to predict the extent to which these structures would survive his fall from power, even without active measures to remove them.

35 Much would depend on how long and extensive any military campaign was. But it is possible to draw some general conclusions:-

- a) Ba'th Party: The Ba'th Party pervades Iraqi life in much the same way as the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. All senior officials are Ba'thist. It also has a similar security and monitoring role, with Ba'th party members in many key jobs. It has an extensive network of offices across the country. It has important levers of control at a grass roots level, including eg the distribution of rations.

The national Ba'th superstructure would almost certainly collapse if Saddam fell as a result of military action, with the leadership seeking refuge. At lower levels, Ba'th structures might continue given the secretive cell based organisation of the party. But any new administration would need to find alternative ways of carrying out some of the Ba'th party's local functions.

- b) Regional/Local Government: Iraq has always been a highly centralised state with little regional autonomy. There are 15 regional governors in

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Baghdad-controlled Iraq. They are all senior figures in the regime, but they do not have a policy-making function. Real local power lies with the Ba'th party regional leadership. There is limited supporting bureaucracy. It is unlikely this could take on a more extensive regional administrative function without a radical overhaul.

- c) Army/Security Forces: The armed forces and security services, of which there are at least seven, are held together by a complex web of personal loyalties to Saddam. All senior figures are Saddam's placemen. The lower level positions in the regular army, but not the protection forces closest to Saddam, are filled on a more meritocratic basis.

If Saddam fell, particularly following US-led military action, tribal, regional and religious differences would probably come to the fore, causing splits within and between units. We would not expect the armed forces and security services to switch their allegiance to any new government en masse in the event of wholesale regime change. It is more likely that key tribal leaders would seek to establish tribal/regional power bases.

- d) Religious Structures: Though Saddam has promoted the role of religion since the Gulf conflict, Iraq is basically a secular state. Its religious structures are subject to strong political control. It is not clear whether there would be any enthusiasm, either inside Iraq or elsewhere, for clerical rule in Iraq or whether religion would be an effective rallying point for any post-Saddam administration.

A few Shi'a religious figures have managed to keep some distance from Saddam's regime and survive. They could play an important part in legitimising any new system, if they accepted Sunni political leadership.

Is there scope for representative government?

36 We need to develop a clear line on what sort of government we envisage 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. 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 government for the Iraqi people.

37 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

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government.

- b) Iraq has always been a highly centralised state, with little regional autonomy (other than the Kurdish Autonomous Zone). 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 violent opposition or secession.
 - e) The external opposition is weak and would probably not have sufficient legitimacy within Iraq to be credible.
 - f) Some of Iraq's neighbour regimes would not be keen to see the emergence of a democratic Iraq.
- 38 These issues would take time to resolve. 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 or the UN – perhaps through an international conference (but the Afghanistan model is not necessarily relevant).

Interim Government

- 39 Given the probable delay in putting longer term arrangements in place, the international community is likely to need to establish (and staff) an interim administration to run the country. This would need to be set up quickly and on a large scale. It would maintain stability and provide basic services, such as food rationing. It should probably have a UN mandate and would need strong support and participation from Arab countries. There are various models which could be adopted or drawn on, including the transitional administrations in Afghanistan, Cambodia, East Timor and Kosovo. We should start exploring what would be appropriate in an Iraqi context.
- 40 A significant international security presence would almost certainly be necessary to guarantee the security of the interim administration and any subsequent regime; and to maintain internal stability, protecting those who might otherwise be vulnerable to attack. This would need to be backed by the UN and any new Iraqi government. Strong US support

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would be critical to its success.

Conclusions

41 The conclusion of this analysis is that in order to achieve our overarching priorities (see paragraph 22) we should:-

- **continue to argue strongly that Iraq remain a unitary state.**
- **if possible avoid the root and branch dismantling of Iraq's governmental and security structures.**
- **accept that the political situation in Iraq after Saddam will almost certainly be messy and unstable. A new Government will possibly be military. We should argue for political reform, but not necessarily full democracy in the short term.**
- **aim, so far as possible, for the outcome to emerge from within, rather than being imposed from outside. But the international community may need to host a conference to help reach a decision on Iraq's future government.**
- **Plan on the basis that there will need to be a major international effort, possibly for an extended period, including an interim administration and an international security force.**



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