

# Disarming Iraq by Force: WMD Stakes and Scenarios

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## Anticipating Consequences

While a U.S.-led war with Iraq appears increasingly probable, anticipating the consequences of the impending military conflict is not a simple matter. For the United States and its allies, achieving victory will be far more difficult than merely defeating Iraq's armed forces on the battlefield and toppling Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime in Baghdad, as winning the war is apt to be considerably swifter and easier than securing the peace. Disarming Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) capabilities would be a major contribution to stemming WMD proliferation, which is critical to international and regional peace and security and the national security of the United States. Unfortunately, this benefit of war would likely come at considerable costs, including adverse security consequences.

This is so in part because the prospects for mass-destruction terrorism and weapons proliferation—and threats that WMD could be used for war or terror—depend not only on Iraq and the United States, but also on the actions and reactions of many parties around the world. Unfortunately, both North Korea and Osama bin Laden have already begun to exploit the coming war with Iraq in menacing ways.<sup>2</sup> But more directly, as explained below the Bush Administration's explicit intent to wage war for regime change in Baghdad maximizes prospects that chemical and biological weapons and ballistic missiles will be used against the United States, its armed forces, and its allies. Moreover, war may provide direct and indirect opportunities for al-Qa'ida and other international terrorist organizations to gain access to Iraqi biological and chemical agents.

Indeed, the potential stakes involved in the coming clash are enormous, and include a wide range of possible scenarios with both positive and negative consequences for U.S. and international security. Of these potential consequences, we can at best estimate in general, relative terms which will *most likely* happen, which *may* ensue, and which are *unlikely* to occur. However, systematically comparing likely, potential, and improbable costs and benefits can aid in anticipating the future course of events. This exercise also offers a pragmatic basis for judgment on favoring or opposing war as compared to alternative courses of action, with respect to WMD threats. A comprehensive evaluation would go beyond the narrow scope of this assessment to examine many other factors, including alliance relations, economic matters, international institutions, nonproliferation regimes, and humanitarian questions.

This paper outlines considerations on forcibly disarming Iraq of its capabilities to develop and wield WMD, divided into four sections. First, it outlines key empirical assumptions to ground the analysis that follows. Second, it offers schematic outlines of

positive and negative consequences that may ensue in the event of war, organizing these diverse possible developments in terms of their relative likelihood and benefits/costs. Third, it surveys actual and possible outcomes that have been or could be realized in disarming Iraq of WMD, and reviews measures that have been or could be undertaken to minimize WMD threats posed by Saddam Hussein's regime.

Fourth, on the basis of this analysis, it concludes that while all policy options entail significant risks, the likely negative outcomes of war outweigh likely positive benefits. Avoiding war would significantly reduce the likelihood of several possible and potentially catastrophic outcomes. On balance, quashing Iraq's WMD ambitions by force is an unnecessary gamble whose probable benefits do not warrant taking the inherent risks. A more effective course of action for reducing mass-destruction terrorism and weapons threats would be to bolster existing constraints on Iraq's WMD potential, while prioritizing efforts to address more pressing mass-destruction weapon and terrorism threats, notably: preventing a nuclear arms race in East Asia, eliminating al-Qa'ida terror cells, developing biodefense measures to protect against biological weapons and bioterrorism, and securing fissile material stocks and nuclear energy facilities in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere. These judgments are by no means self-evident, and Bush Administration officials and other analysts reach different conclusions.<sup>3</sup> But to initiate a war of globe-spanning consequence without recognition of the hazards involved and serious reflection on alternatives would be imprudent and irresponsible.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Assumptions and Expectations***

The analysis presented in this paper rests on five empirical assumptions. If future revelations or events disprove any of these assumptions, then the likelihood of the consequences sketched elsewhere in the paper may vary accordingly. These assumptions bear on the threats posed by Iraq and the prospects for and likely course of war, and lead to two near-term expectations regarding the risks and possible benefits of military conflict.

First, based on the information gathered and analysis conducted by the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM) and its successor, the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), as well as by the Iraq Action Team of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and other independent sources, it is prudent to assume that Iraq possesses at least small stocks of weaponized chemical and biological warfare (CBW) agents, and a limited range of delivery systems for disseminating CBW munitions either in military combat or in terror attacks against civilian populations. Fortunately, however, it is extremely unlikely that Iraq possesses nuclear weapons, and virtually certain that it possesses far fewer medium-range ballistic missiles than it did in 1991.<sup>5</sup> Second, we cannot expect moral scruples to restrain the behavior of Saddam Hussein and other top officials within the Iraqi regime, either in terms of complying with Iraq's obligations under international law, or respecting the human rights and providing for the security of the Iraqi people. Third, given Saddam Hussein's demonstrated staying power and the brutal effectiveness of his internal security apparatus, there is little reason for hope in the near term that he will be toppled by an internal coup d'état. Fourth, this assessment is written with the expectation that overt military hostilities will begin within a few weeks, or at most perhaps a few months. Fifth, given the vast disparity in military capabilities, a U.S.-led war will end in the swift and decisive defeat of Iraqi military forces and removal of Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq—if the conflict is contained within Iraq.

These five assumptions justify two expectations about the coming conflict. First, whatever ulterior motives may drive the Bush Administration's determination to press for forceful disarmament of Iraq, this conflict is profoundly related to Iraq's ambitions to acquire and wield weapons of mass destruction. If Iraq had never used chemical weapons or ballistic missiles against unarmed civilian populations; nor undertaken a vast nuclear weapons program in deliberate violation of its legal obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); nor sought to acquire, test, and weaponize a frightening range of lethal pathogens and toxins; nor defied for over a decade the legitimate demand of the international community that Iraq cooperate in verifying its disarmament of proscribed weapons, there would be zero chance that the world would be facing the present situation. Thus, whatever else might ensue, military defeat of Iraq would contribute to international security insofar as it curtails the WMD threats posed by a brutal and menacing state.

The second expectation warranted by the assumptions noted above is that current uncertainties as to the existence and specific dimensions of Iraqi WMD capabilities will soon be resolved. It is conceivable that military occupation may reveal that Iraq has no WMD capabilities whatsoever. However, Iraq's persistent, sophisticated, and costly denial-and-deception efforts strongly indicate that it continues to possess banned weaponry.

Far more likely is the prospect that when U.S. forces seriously threaten Hussein's military and political control over Baghdad, Iraqi forces will attempt to use chemical and perhaps biological weapons against U.S. and allied forces, despite the casualties these mass-murder weapons may cause among the Iraqi people, and regardless of the threat of massive U.S. retaliation.<sup>6</sup> Hussein will almost certainly attempt to strike Israel to try to provoke it into counterattacking, in order to create the appearance of a U.S.-Israeli war against an Arab state and thereby rally Arab sentiment in his defense. It is unclear whether Iraq still has the capability to hit Israel with ballistic missiles as it did in 1991, but it can deploy other delivery vehicles, including unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and human agents, which might be used to unleash chemical or biological agents in Tel Aviv or other Israeli cities.

However, if the use of CBW weapons is confined to strikes on targets within Iraq, such arms are unlikely to halt military operations or to inflict massive casualties on coalition forces adequately prepared for CBW attacks. Subsequently, most stocks and production facilities that are not expended or destroyed in conflict will be captured and disclosed by occupying forces. In any case, the conflict and its aftermath will illustrate the importance—though not necessarily the wisdom—of the WMD counterproliferation rationale for the war.<sup>7</sup>

### **Possible Consequences of War with Iraq**

As the two tables below attempt to convey in concise terms, a *very* wide range of consequences may result from a U.S.-led military campaign to forcibly disarm Iraq. Several caveats should be kept in mind in considering these tables. First, predicting future events is *extremely* difficult, these categorizations are quite general, and estimates of probability are highly sensitive to new information. Second, the overall outcome of war is apt to include positive and negative developments, the "balance" of which may be—or be seen to be—dominated by a few highly negative results. Moreover, specific and net impacts will likely change over time, and this static depiction does not capture the dynamic, path-dependent course of historical development. Third, these assessments of "severity" emphasize U.S. national security and other normative biases, and focus on WMD-related issues. These charts are by no means exhaustive, and many positive and negative consequences not listed

here may also ensue. Fourth, some potential consequences are mutually exclusive, while others have mirror-image opposites noted in both tables. Thus, this review is designed so that it is impossible for all outcomes listed here to be realized, and virtually certain than some of them would come to pass. Fifth, this is by no means the only method to systematically evaluate the policy option of war to disarm Iraq.<sup>8</sup> Finally, to underscore their limits, these estimates are not based on knowledge of classified information or U.S. and Iraqi war plans, and reflect the informed but nevertheless subjective judgment of a single analyst.

Given the inherent difficulty of predicting events, the most important observations to draw from this exercise are perhaps obvious. First, war to disarm Iraq will likely offer considerable benefits in reducing potential WMD threats, but will probably also entail significant security costs. Second, some potential negative consequences would be disastrous. In sum, the impending war is a risky venture.

***Favorable Consequences of War:  
Relative Benefits and Estimated Probability***

	<b>Major Benefits</b>	<b>Significant Benefits</b>	<b>Minor Benefits</b>
<b>Probable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iraqi NBC munitions and ballistic missiles located, captured, and destroyed</li> <li>• Iraqi non-acquisition of nuclear weapons ensured for foreseeable future</li> <li>• Saddam Hussein evicted from dictatorship over Iraq</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iraq prevented from future export of WMD</li> <li>• Middle East oil supplies assured at stable prices</li> <li>• New Iraqi regime gains control over WMD personnel and dual-use infrastructure; abjures WMD weapons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. gains battlefield experience with innovative weapons and tactics for disrupting WMD attacks</li> <li>• Iraq punished for treaty violations and defiance of UNSC resolutions</li> </ul>
<b>Possible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iraqi smallpox stocks discovered; if real, destroyed</li> <li>• Iraqi CBW munitions prove ineffectual, dampening interest in CBW elsewhere</li> <li>• Bush Administration's "imperial" ambitions curtailed by limited success, high costs, unintended effects of war</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. military demonstrates capability to fight and swiftly prevail despite NBC attacks</li> <li>• Iraq WMD personnel relocate to Western countries</li> <li>• Demonstration of U.S. might and determination bolsters coercive diplomacy with other "rogue" states</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iraqi military quickly disintegrates without fighting</li> <li>• Iraqi population grateful for liberation from Saddam's rule</li> <li>• EU prompted to develop unified, effective defense and foreign policies</li> <li>• Longstanding conflict in UNSC over Iraq is ended</li> </ul>
<b>Unlikely</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S.-defined "state sponsors" of terror end support for terrorism</li> <li>• Middle East autocracies transform into effective, constitutional democracies</li> <li>• Human and economic costs of war catalyze global shift from fossil fuels toward renewable energy sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Rogue states" voluntarily terminate all of their WMD programs</li> <li>• Saudi Arabia and Pakistan end support for terrorism</li> <li>• Iraqi people gain effective, constitutional democratic governance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNSC regains authority over legitimate use of force to preserve international peace and security</li> </ul>

***Adverse Consequences of War:  
Relative Severity and Estimated Probability***

	<b>Least Severe</b>	<b>“Medium” Severity</b>	<b>Most Severe</b>
<b>Probable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• War exacerbates anti-American sentiment among Europeans and other allies</li> <li>• Iraqi CBW use against U.S. troops inflicts limited casualties, impedes operations</li> <li>• New Iraqi regime retains WMD personnel and dual-use infrastructure, posing latent threat over medium term</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Al-Qa’ida conducts terrorist attacks to coincide with war</li> <li>• U.S. viewed as causing high casualties among Iraqi civilians</li> <li>• Inadequate U.S. and international support for reconstruction of Iraq</li> <li>• U.S. must occupy Iraq for years to maintain stability and pro-U.S. regime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Korea exploits U.S. and UNSC focus on Iraq to build nuclear arsenal</li> <li>• Enduring outrage among Arab and Muslim populations broadens social base for terrorism against Americans</li> <li>• WMD know-how, munitions, or technologies leak from Iraq to terrorist organizations or “rogue” states</li> </ul>
<b>Possible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iraqi CBW attacks on Israel inflict some casualties, but Israel limits its retaliation</li> <li>• Postwar revenge attacks on U.S. forces occupying Iraq, perhaps with CBW</li> <li>• Fear of U.S. preemption prompts “rogue” states to accelerate WMD programs to attempt to deter U.S. attack</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High U.S. military casualties in urban fighting</li> <li>• U.S. installs compliant dictatorship that gives oil contracts to U.S. firms, belying disarmament and liberation rationales for war</li> <li>• Third-party exploitation of the crisis (e.g., more diversionary anthrax letters; Sharon expels Palestinians)</li> <li>• War disrupts oil exports from Middle East, damaging economies worldwide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iraqi CBW attack against Israel inflicts mass casualties, provoking massive retaliation and creating appearance of U.S.-Israeli war against Iraq</li> <li>• Iraq attacks American cities and/or those of U.S. allies with CBW agents, potentially including smallpox or other contagious pathogens</li> <li>• Easy victory emboldens Bush Administration to wage even more dangerous wars, beginning with North Korea</li> </ul>
<b>Unlikely</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Iraqi regime retains substantial WMD assets</li> <li>• War distracts U.S. leadership and diverts U.S. military and intelligence assets from fighting al-Qa’ida</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Countering U.S. unilateralism, allies and other states cut intelligence cooperation in fight against al-Qa’ida</li> <li>• Iraq fragments into three regions, boosting Iran’s influence and triggering instability within Turkey</li> <li>• China, India, or Pakistan mimic U.S. “preemptive” doctrine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saudi, Egyptian, Pakistani and/or other governments toppled by Islamic extremists sympathetic to al-Qa’ida</li> <li>• Iraq halts U.S. war through the threat or use of WMD</li> <li>• Israeli or U.S. nuclear retaliation against Baghdad, killing tens or hundreds of thousands of civilians</li> </ul>

## Past and Possible Future WMD Outcomes in Iraq

To gain perspective on Iraqi WMD threats and how they can be addressed effectively, it is useful to consider the wide range of outcomes that already have been or still could be realized with respect to disarming Iraq. Iraqi ambitions to acquire weapons of mass destruction date at least to the mid-1970s. Since then, the United States and other actors in the international community have adopted a variety of general strategies and specific policies toward Iraq's WMD capabilities, invasions of neighboring Iran and Kuwait, and use of chemical weapons and ballistic missiles. In the 1980s, Iraq's WMD programs, military aggression, and violations of international law and human rights were largely ignored and in some respects tacitly encouraged by leading countries, including the United States.<sup>9</sup> The era of international support for Saddam Hussein ended abruptly in 1990, when Iraq's invasion of Kuwait provoked formation of an international military coalition led by Iraq's former patrons to forcefully expel Iraqi troops from Kuwait. Since 1991, the UN Security Council has taken the historically unprecedented step of formally banning Iraq's possession of WMD capabilities and requiring that Iraq cooperate in allowing UN inspectors to verify Iraq's disarmament.

The table on pp. 8-9 below outlines five actual and four possible policy outcomes—arrayed on a scale from best to worst—with respect to achieving Iraq's verified disarmament of WMD capabilities. Highlighted rows indicate *possible* outcomes that could have or may still come to pass, while those in plain text review *actual* outcomes from the 1980s to the present. These are general characterizations that do not capture significant variations within time periods, and refer to transitory rather than “final” outcomes. The theoretically absolute best and worst cases are excluded here as unrealistic; given developments over the last two decades neither pure nonproliferation nor unfettered WMD proliferation are feasible possibilities for Iraq. Note also that in the table these outcomes are defined in terms of WMD capabilities, *not* in terms of the probability of their use.

Comparative review of these outcomes suggests four observations regarding war as compared to the inspection system and the other measures presently constraining Iraq. First, Iraq's WMD ambitions have long posed a bedeviling challenge for the international community, a problem for which there is no perfect or facile solution and every policy alternative involves some risk. Even the best feasible outcome contains some dangers of mass-destruction weapons proliferation. It should be recognized that both voluntary and involuntary disarmament entail proliferation risks, although of considerably different magnitude. Given the centralization of power and information within Iraq, a firm and sustained commitment by Saddam Hussein to implement a policy of voluntary, verified disarmament would offer the best prospects for minimizing WMD risks in Iraq. However, lacking omniscient and omnipotent control over all Iraqi scientists, technicians, and military personnel, even voluntary disarmament would still pose some risks of “brain drain” of weapons expertise and perhaps small-scale retention of chemical or biological agents by rogue elements within the Iraqi state, whether for criminal or terrorist purposes.<sup>10</sup>

This risk would be far greater under conditions of involuntary disarmament, in which external actors outside the Iraqi state must identify, locate, track, account for, and disarm all WMD-related information, personnel, equipment, materials, munitions, and facilities. These tasks are likely to be very difficult in the chaos of war and its aftermath in Iraq, as the Iraqi state collapses. When war disrupts centralized authoritarian control over Iraqi WMD assets, individuals and small units will likely loot whatever portable resources may be at hand and

attempt to flee from occupying forces. To avoid detention and trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity, key weapons specialists will likely take flight to get abroad, where their expertise is highly coveted by states and non-state actors seeking WMD. In sum, by disarming Iraq by force, U.S. and allied troops will most probably capture and render harmless the bulk of Iraqi WMD capabilities, but will likely fall short of seizing every WMD asset. Production facilities and stockpiles will almost surely be identified and deactivated, but some experts, sensitive information, chemical munitions, and disease cultures may not be secured. Whatever CBW munitions remain in Iraq could be used in revenge attacks against allied troops, and any WMD assets taken from Iraq may eventually be acquired by other proliferant states or by terrorist organizations. In the event of war, minimizing this proliferation risk will be critical to reducing the postwar prospects for mass-destruction terrorism and weapons proliferation.<sup>11</sup>

Second, of potential future outcomes, involuntary disarmament through military occupation holds the highest risk that Hussein will actually use any mass-destruction weapons at his command. Unfortunately, the specific orientation of U.S. policy on war with Iraq—i.e., explicit determination to forcibly remove the Ba'athist regime from power and to kill or capture its leadership—maximizes both the prospects that in the event of war Iraq would use whatever chemical, biological, and missile capabilities it possesses, and that international terrorist organizations may gain access to these weapons. Denying Iraqi leaders any prospect for survival undercuts deterrence and self interest-based constraints on transfer of WMD munitions to third parties, because in the event of war the Iraqi leaders themselves would no longer have anything to lose.

In the coming conflict, Iraqi leaders may attempt to use WMD in several ways: as a last-ditch blackmail effort to hold U.S. or allied civilian populations at risk; to incite an Israeli counterattack; to inflict casualties and slow operations of U.S. ground forces in Iraq; to repress an uprising by Kurds or Shiites among the Iraqi population; or as revenge for the regime's destruction and Saddam Hussein's death. The first four of these potential uses might be deterred by retaliatory threats, but the latter may no longer be possible. Had the Bush Administration publicly defined the U.S. role in a war as limited to the circumscribed objective of Iraq's disarmament of WMD capabilities, direct attacks by Iraq and its provision of WMD munitions to third parties for revenge would be less likely.

In any case, any Iraqi attempts to inflict mass casualties through WMD attacks against coalition forces would probably fail. But if Iraq were to succeed in killing thousands—either through attacks against troops or in terror strikes against civilian populations in Israel, the United States, or other countries—then U.S. and Israeli leaders would likely consider nuclear retaliation against Iraqi military and leadership targets.<sup>12</sup> As many key sites are located in Baghdad, their destruction could not be effected without killing many of the city's five million civilian inhabitants. Given Saddam Hussein's grandiose egoism and ruthlessness, on facing his own death it is conceivable that he might deliberately seek to provoke this or other nightmarish scenarios. In the event of war to disarm Iraq, avoiding this worst-case scenario would be a moral, political, and security imperative for U.S. and allied leaders.

## WMD Proliferation and Disarmament Outcomes in Iraq

Ranking	Outcomes Regarding Verified Disarmament	Supporting Measures	Comments
Best	Complete, cooperative disarmament of WMD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ UNMOVIC &amp; IAEA inspections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Remains possible, but given Iraqi behavior since 1991 appears extremely unlikely</li> <li>▪ E.g., South Africa policy of verifying its nuclear disarmament, 1991-94</li> </ul>
2 <sup>nd</sup> best	Military occupation imposing complete, involuntary disarmament	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Intelligence tracking of postwar diffusion of WMD personnel, data, materials, and technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bush Administration plan, and current proposal before UNSC</li> <li>▪ E.g., allies' policy against Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan in WWII</li> </ul>
3 <sup>rd</sup> best	Rigorous implementation of UNSC 1441; but with only limited, involuntary, and deceptive cooperation on disarmament by Iraq	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Deterrence of WMD use by threat of massive retaliation</li> <li>▪ Military containment, e.g., by enforcing no-fly zones</li> <li>▪ Military deployments to coerce compliance with UNSC 1441</li> <li>▪ Controls on Iraqi imports of WMD technologies</li> <li>▪ Intelligence surveillance</li> <li>▪ "Smart" economic sanctions</li> <li>▪ Political pressure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Measures implemented during January-March 2003</li> <li>▪ Effectiveness could be enhanced through "coercive inspections,"<sup>13</sup> but this would put inspectors' lives at considerable risk, and might provoke military conflict</li> <li>▪ Expanded military deployments and other elements may not be sustainable over the long term</li> <li>▪ Over time, this outcome may not be sustained and could degenerate to 3<sup>rd</sup> worst outcome below</li> </ul>
4 <sup>th</sup> best	UNSCOM/IAEA Action Team implementation of UNSC 687 and related resolutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Deterrence of WMD use by threat of massive retaliation</li> <li>▪ Military containment, e.g., by enforcing no-fly zones</li> <li>▪ Controls on Iraqi imports of WMD technologies</li> <li>▪ Intelligence surveillance</li> <li>▪ Economic sanctions</li> <li>▪ Political pressure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Outcome in 1991-1998; effectiveness varied, was not sustained over long term</li> <li>▪ However, far more effective than Operation Desert Storm in directly implementing and indirectly motivating Iraqi disarmament of WMD assets</li> </ul>



<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Outcomes Regarding Verified Disarmament</b>	<b>Supporting Measures</b>	<b>Comments</b>
	No international inspections to verify implementation of UNSC 687 and related resolutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Deterrence of WMD use by threat of massive retaliation</li> <li>▪ Military containment, e.g., by enforcing no-fly zones</li> <li>▪ Controls on Iraqi imports of WMD technologies</li> <li>▪ intelligence surveillance</li> <li>▪ Economic sanctions</li> <li>▪ Political pressure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Outcome during 1998-2002</li> <li>▪ Absence of international inspectors presumably enabled intensified efforts to develop WMD</li> <li>▪ Coupled with limited military strikes against missile facilities and other Iraqi military targets, in December 1998 Operation Desert Fox</li> <li>▪ “Smart” sanctions instituted in May 2002 to minimize impact on civilian population while still impeding WMD imports and other military acquisitions</li> </ul>
4 <sup>th</sup> worst	Military destruction of <i>known</i> Iraqi WMD assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Deterrence of WMD use by threat of massive retaliation</li> <li>▪ Operation Desert Storm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Because most Iraqi WMD facilities and other assets were either unknown or not effectively targeted, key production facilities, weapons stockpiles, and other assets survived the limited 1990-1991 war</li> </ul>
3 <sup>rd</sup> worst	Renewed WMD programs, but at limited scale compared with 1980s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Deterrence of WMD use by threat of massive retaliation</li> <li>▪ Military containment, e.g., by enforcing no-fly zones</li> <li>▪ Controls on Iraqi imports of WMD technologies</li> <li>▪ Intelligence surveillance</li> <li>▪ Economic sanctions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Barring voluntary disarmament or military occupation, likely outcome over medium- to long-term future</li> <li>▪ As an additional supporting measure, the United States would retain capabilities to attack and destroy large-scale nuclear and missile facilities, as well as any chemical or biological weapon facilities identified by intelligence sources, defectors, etc.</li> <li>▪ Nevertheless, this outcome entails some long-term risk that covert Iraqi procurement and development efforts may enable acquisition of nuclear weapons</li> </ul>
2 <sup>nd</sup> worst	Massive, clandestine WMD programs and undeterred use of chemical weapons and ballistic missile against civilians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ International acquiescence to Iraqi use of chemical weapons</li> <li>▪ Military, political, and economic engagement by US and others</li> <li>▪ Weak controls on Iraqi technology imports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Outcome during 1980s-1990</li> <li>▪ Engagement policy was part of U.S., Western European, and Sunni Arab efforts to defeat and contain Iran after 1979 Revolution</li> </ul>
Worst	Massive, overt production of arsenal of nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missiles, as well as advanced chemical and biological weapons and delivery vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Deterrence of WMD use by threat of massive retaliation</li> <li>▪ Controls on Iraqi imports of WMD technologies</li> <li>▪ Intelligence surveillance</li> <li>▪ Economic sanctions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Iraq could check U.S. and other international actors’ deterrent capability, and invade Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, or other countries with expectation that no allied coalition would form in response</li> <li>▪ If Iraq had not provoked Operation Desert Storm by invading Kuwait in 1990, this outcome might have been realized by the mid-1990s</li> <li>▪ No longer likely, given U.S. intelligence and military capabilities to detect and destroy the large-scale facilities required for robust nuclear and missile programs</li> </ul>

Third, while many opponents of war with Iraq apparently fail to recognize that the threat of force has been critical to winning even limited Iraqi cooperation, leading advocates of war mischaracterize the scope and effectiveness of the measures presently arrayed against Iraq. Comparing the 1998 and 2003 crises in the UN Security Council over compelling Iraq's disarmament, it appears that the Bush Administration's threat to unilaterally wage war against Iraq was instrumental to winning unanimous support for UNSC Resolution 1441.<sup>14</sup> This resolution is in many respects *much* stronger and potentially more effective than past mandates, and according to chief UN Inspector Hans Blix among many other observers, the threat of war has been essential to coercing partial Iraqi compliance with its obligations under UNSC 1441.<sup>15</sup> It is not clear whether the millions who have marched against war appreciate the contribution that *threatening* war has made in compelling Iraq's compliance with international law and reducing the WMD threats that Iraq poses to the world.

However, leading proponents of war, notably U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, wrongly deprecate the utility of present measures in containing Iraqi WMD threats. In lobbying for war, Rumsfeld recently belittled current measures against Iraq—which include deterrence of WMD use by threat of massive retaliation; enforcing no-fly zones over Iraqi territory; massive military deployments in countries surrounding Iraq; intelligence surveillance and international inspections of suspect facilities; and economic sanctions and controls on Iraqi imports of sensitive technologies—as “doing nothing.”<sup>16</sup> This misrepresents the considerable potency of existing measures confronting Iraq.

This suggests a fourth observation on WMD outcomes. While far from ideal, the current situation is significantly better than any yet realized in coping with the Iraqi WMD challenge. In this regard, it is unfortunate that the positions taken by France, Germany, the Pope, and anti-war demonstrators may have undermined the credibility of the threat of force against Iraq, and thereby weakened Iraq's incentives to comply with UNSC 1441. Likewise regrettable, the Bush Administration's apparently unswerving determination to go to war may “make the best the enemy of the good,” or more precisely, make the second-best outcome of involuntary disarmament the goal that undercuts the third-best, that of military containment and compellence with robust inspections and intelligence surveillance.

Indeed, the current set of policies to monitor, contain, deter, and weaken Iraq are considerably potent. One way to grasp their effectiveness is to recall the 1990-1991 Gulf War. In that conflict, the allied campaign Operation Desert Storm made major direct and indirect contributions to disarming Iraq of its WMD capabilities, by physically destroying some production and storage facilities and impeding the operations of others. But due to difficulties in identifying and effectively targeting Iraqi WMD sites, Desert Storm itself proved much less effective than did the UN disarmament efforts that it enabled during the 1991-1998 period, in terms of the number of facilities, munitions, and other Iraqi WMD assets located and physically disarmed. Although the effectiveness of the current package of measures is surely limited by Iraqi concealment activities, their cumulative scope and depth is significantly more powerful than those employed during 1991-1998. On balance, Iraq's ability to develop, test, and deploy WMD has never been as tightly restrained as it is today.

The present outcome, however, is problematic in three important ways. First, it is unlikely to achieve complete, verified Iraqi disarmament in the near term, if ever; it is costly to sustain and could degenerate over the medium- to long-term to a weaker set of constraints; and it entails running some risk that covert Iraqi procurement and development activities might eventually enable acquisition of nuclear weapons. Relying on inspections to

find and verify destruction of WMD assets would likely be a slow and frustrating process that may never ensure Iraq's complete disarmament of WMD. If the past twelve years are any indication, it would be very difficult for UNSC members to sustain the present array of measures against Iraq. Since 1991, Baghdad has demonstrated an adroit capability to sow dissension in the Security Council through a variety of gambits, including persistent foot-dragging coupled with last-minute partial concessions, and political allocation of major contracts to foreign firms.

Hence, unless UNSC members sustain more enduring determination than they have managed in the past—or shocking revelations or renewed Iraqi aggression again provokes unity in the UNSC—the contemporary “third-best” outcome is prone to deteriorate over time to the “third-worst” outcome in the table below. As noted, the latter would entail some long-term risk of Iraqi nuclear breakout, which if realized would destabilize the Middle East and stimulate WMD proliferation in the region; harm U.S. and allied security and political interests; and potentially enable Iraq to once again engage in military aggression but with much less concern for arousing a countervailing coalition. However small and distant in time the risk of a nuclear-armed Iraq might be, given the past behavior of the Iraqi regime this future possibility is grounds for very serious concern. Fortunately, however, Iraq's acquisition of nuclear weapons is not inevitable, and through effective measures this outcome could most likely be forestalled for at least several years, if not indefinitely.<sup>17</sup>

### **Conclusion: An Imprudent and Unnecessary War**

In the 1940s, war was indispensable to stopping the atomic bomb program of Nazi Germany, and in the 1990s, military force was critical to holding at bay the nuclear ambitions of Ba'athist Iraq. Today, preventing Iraq from acquiring nuclear weapons remains an international imperative, and military occupation would effectively eliminate the possibility of this threat materializing for the foreseeable future.

If this were the only security threat involved, if severe adverse consequences of war could be assuredly limited, and if no viable alternative policy were feasible, then the future possibility of an Iraqi atomic bomb would be a compelling reason for forcefully disarming Iraq. However, as this assessment attempts to detail, at present these conditions do not hold. Preventive war against Iraq could have major negative as well as positive consequences, and may precipitate a number of “worst-case” scenarios, the most likely of which include nuclear weapons production by North Korea and intensified al-Qa'ida recruiting for terrorist attacks against the United States. Existing measures arrayed against Iraq—deterrence, containment, intelligence surveillance, economic sanctions, import controls on sensitive technologies, and intrusive inspections under UNSC 1441—pose major constraints on Iraqi WMD capabilities. In combination, as long as these measures continue to be backed by the threat of force, they are probably sufficient to forestall the worst Iraqi WMD threats indefinitely.

Under these circumstances, it would be prudent to maintain—or better, to strengthen—the present set of measures to weaken, monitor, and contain Iraq short of war. Such a course of action would still involve significant risks, and might eventually fail to constrain Iraqi WMD ambitions. But while such an effort would require considerable determination and resources to sustain over time, the United States has a proven track record of organizing and sustaining strong alliances for decades to successfully contain far worse threats than that posed by the defiant but aging tyrant of Baghdad.

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<sup>2</sup> For a concise analysis of North Korean exploitation of the impending war with Iraq, see: Michael R. Gordon, "A Tale of Two Crises," *New York Times*, 17 February 2003, [http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/17/international/middleeast/17CND\\_DISP.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/17/international/middleeast/17CND_DISP.html).

In Osama bin Laden's broadcast on al-Jazeera on 11 February 2003, he rhetorically positioned himself and his transnational terrorist network, al-Qa'ida, to exploit a U.S.-led war against Iraq. Condemning Saddam Hussein as an infidel, he called upon Muslims in Iraq and elsewhere to wage a jihad on behalf of God and for the Iraqi people, and against the United States, Israel, and "treasonous and agent Arab governments." For the transcript, see: "Bin Laden Tape: Text," BBC News-World Edition, 12 February 2003, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/2751019.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2751019.stm).

Through the timing and targeting of future terror attacks, al-Qa'ida would likely aim seek to demonstrate that while the leaders of Arab and Muslim states are unable to prevent U.S. war against Baghdad, he and his men can still inflict carnage upon the "crusaders." Hopefully, however, the capture of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and disruption of other al-Qa'ida cells and operations will make such attacks impossible.

<sup>3</sup> See especially the work of Kenneth M. Pollack: "Why Iraq Can't Be Deterred," *New York Times*, 26 September 2002, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/26/opinion/26POLL.html>; "A Last Chance to Stop Iraq," *New York Times*, 21 February 2003; *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq* (New York: Random House, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> For U.S. Senator Robert Byrd's impassioned but fruitless appeal for Senate debate on war with Iraq, see: Robert C. Byrd, "We Stand Passively Mute," speech on the floor of the United States Senate, 12 February 2003, [http://www.senate.gov/~byrd/byrd\\_newsroom/byrd\\_news\\_feb/news\\_2003\\_february/news\\_2003\\_february\\_9.html](http://www.senate.gov/~byrd/byrd_newsroom/byrd_news_feb/news_2003_february/news_2003_february_9.html).

<sup>5</sup> For a somewhat dated attempt to summarize estimates of Iraqi WMD threats based on open-source information, see: Michael Barletta, Jeffrey Fields, and Erik Jorgenson, "Iraq: Nuclear, Biological, Chemical, and Missile Capabilities and Programs" (Monterey, CA: Center for Nonproliferation Studies, September 2001), <http://cns.miis.edu/research/wmdme/iraq.htm>.

For recent official U.S. and British estimates, see: Director of Central Intelligence, *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, October 2002), [http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/iraq\\_wmd/Iraq\\_Oct\\_2002.pdf](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/iraq_wmd/Iraq_Oct_2002.pdf); Joint Intelligence Committee, *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction-The Assessment of the British Government* (United Kingdom: Stationary Office Limited, September 2002), <http://www.ukonline.gov.uk/featurenews/iraqdossier.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> For recent discussions of possible Iraqi use of WMD in the event of war, see: Michael R. Gordon, "Iraq Said to Plan Strategy of Delay and Urban Battle," *New York Times*, 16 February 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/16/international/middleeast/16IRAQ.html>. See also: Lowell E. Jacoby, "Global Threat," statement before Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (Washington, DC: Defense Intelligence Agency, 11 February 2003), [http://www.dia.mil/Public/Testimonies/statement\\_010.pdf](http://www.dia.mil/Public/Testimonies/statement_010.pdf), p. 4; George J. Tenet, Director of Central Intelligence, unclassified letter to Senator Bob Graham, Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 7 October 2002, <http://www.gwu.edu/%7Eensarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB80/wmd13.pdf>; Walter Pincus, "U.S. Effort Aimed at Iraqi Officers: Stopping Biological Weapons is the Goal," *Washington Post*, 30

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September 2002, p. A1; Dana Priest, "Analysts Discount Attack by Iraq: Counterattack is Called Possible," *Washington Post*, 9 October 2002, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A63775-2002Oct9?language=printer>; George C. Wilson, "Worst Case: Iraqi War Goes Nuclear," *National Journal*, 12 October 2002; Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., "Hussein Considers Possible Responses to U.S. Attack," *Global Security Newswire*, 29 October 2002, [http://www.nti.org/d\\_newswire/issues/2002/10/29/2p.html](http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2002/10/29/2p.html); Mark Mazzetti and Kevin Whitelaw, "Six Deadly Fears: The U.S. Military is Confident of Victory in Iraq, But at What Price?" *U.S. News & World Report*, 7 February 2003; Bill Gertz, "Saddam Seen Using Proxy Groups to Attack U.S.," *Washington Times*, 25 February 2003, p. 3.

For extended analysis, see: Steven E. Miller, "Gambling on War: Force, Order, and the Implications of Attacking Iraq," *War with Iraq: Costs, Consequences, and Alternatives*, Carl Kaysen et al. (Cambridge, MA: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, November 2002), pp. 7-50, [http://www.amacad.org/publications/monographs/War\\_with\\_Iraq.pdf](http://www.amacad.org/publications/monographs/War_with_Iraq.pdf); Avigdor Haselkorn, "Iraq's Bio-Warfare Option: Last Resort, Preemption, or a Blackmail Weapon?" *Biosecurity and Bioterrorism*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2002, <http://www.liebertpub.com/bsp/haselkorn.pdf>.

On Iraqi use of chemical weapons in war with Iran, and on Iraq's preparations to use WMD during the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War, see: Javed Ali, "Chemical Weapons and the Iran-Iraq War: A Case Study in Noncompliance," *Nonproliferation Review* 8(1) Spring 2001, pp. 43-58, <http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/npr/vol08/81/81ali.pdf>; Timothy V. McCarthy and Jonathan B. Tucker, "Saddam's Toxic Arsenal: Chemical and Biological Weapons in the Gulf Wars," *Planning the Unthinkable: How New Powers Will Use Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Weapons*, Peter R. Lavoy, Scott D. Sagan, and James J. Wirtz, eds. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 47-78.

<sup>7</sup> Since 1980, Iran, Israel, and the United States have all attempted to militarily preempt Iraq's WMD capabilities. See: Michael Barletta and Erik Jorgensen, "Reported Conventional Military Attacks on NBC Facilities in the Middle East" (Monterey, CA: Center for Nonproliferation Studies, May 1999), <http://cns.miis.edu/research/wmdme/preempt.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> For another systematic approach to evaluating preventive war to disarm Iraq of WMD capabilities, see: Charles Knight, "First Strike Guidelines: The Case of Iraq," Briefing Memo No. 25 (Cambridge, MA: Project on Defense Alternatives, revised 20 February 2003, originally 16 September 2002), <http://www.comw.org/pda/0209schneider.html>; which applies the framework developed in: Barry R. Schneider, *Radical Responses to Radical Regimes: Evaluating Preemptive Counter-Proliferation*, McNair Paper No. 41, (Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, May 1995), <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/macnair/mcnair41/mcnair41.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> For a concise summary of U.S. support for Saddam Hussein, see Michael Dobbs, "U.S. Had Key Role in Iraq Buildup," *Washington Post*, 30 December 2002, p. A1, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A52241-2002Dec29?language=printer>. For a review of declassified U.S. documents from that era, see: Joyce Battle, ed., "Shaking Hands with Saddam Hussein: The U.S. Tilts toward Iraq, 1980-1984," Electronic Briefing Book No. 82 (Washington, DC: National Security Archive, 25 February 2003), <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB82/>.

<sup>10</sup> As the post-Soviet experience illustrates, even the best-intentioned disarmament efforts involve some "legacy risks," due to possible leakage of WMD materials, personnel, and information. Once technologies are developed, capabilities created, and materials and weapons produced, it can be very difficult to ensure that everything is accounted for and completely disposed of in a safe and secure manner. Only nonproliferation—defined as the non-development and non-acquisition of WMD capabilities—entirely avoids this risk.

<sup>11</sup> On possible WMD dispersion in wartime Iraq, see: William C. Potter, "Invade and Unleash?" *Washington Post*, 22 September 2002, p. B7, <http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/other/unleash.htm>; Daniel

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Benjamin, "In the Fog of War, a Greater Threat," *Washington Post*, 31 October 2002, p. A23, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A43673-2002Oct30?language=printer>; Bryan Bender, "Threat Assessment: War Could Forge Iraqi Links with al-Qaeda," *Global Security Newswire*, 12 November 2002, [http://www.nti.org/d\\_newswire/issues/newswires/2002\\_11\\_12.html#3](http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/newswires/2002_11_12.html#3).

Even following military occupation of Iraq, many of the verification tasks currently undertaken by UN weapons inspectors would still be necessary to locate, account for, and disarm WMD assets in Iraq. See: Jeffrey W. Knopf, "Iraq War Will Not End Inspection Challenges," *Strategic Insight* (Monterey, CA: Center for Contemporary Conflict, Naval Postgraduate School, 1 March 2003), <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/rsepResources/si/mar03/middleEast.asp>.

<sup>12</sup> On possible U.S. use of nuclear weapons in Iraq, see: Paul Richter, "U.S. Weighs Tactical Nuclear Strike on Iraq," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 January 2003, <http://www.latimes.com/templates/misc/printstory.jsp?slug=la%2Ddfg%2Dnuke25jan25001440&section=%2Fnews>; William M. Arkin, "The Nuclear Option in Iraq: The U.S. Has Lowered the Bar for Using the Ultimate Weapon," *Los Angeles Times*, 26 January 2003, <http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/suncommentary/la-op-arkin26jan26.story>; Bradley Graham, "As U.S. Girds for Worst in Iraq, Retaliation Isn't Clear-Cut Issue," *Washington Post*, 29 January 2003, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A57395-2003Jan28?language=printer>; Nicholas Kravetz, "Bush Approves Nuclear Response," *Washington Times*, 31 January 2003, <http://www.washtimes.com/world/20030131-27320419.htm>.

On U.S. efforts to avert Israeli retaliation against Iraq, see: Barbara Opall-Rome, "White House Offers Israel Unprecedented Warning of Attack on Iraq to Keep Israel on Sidelines," *DefenseNews.com*, 9 October 2002; Carla Anne Robbins and Karby Leggett, "How the U.S. Plans to Keep Israel on Iraq War Sidelines," *Wall Street Journal*, 3 March 2003, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> For a proposal to conduct "coercive inspections," see: Jessica T. Mathews, et al., *Iraq: A New Approach* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 2002), <http://www.ceip.org/files/pdf/Iraq.Report.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> For a comparison of the 1998 and 2002 crises in the UN Security Council, see: Jackson Diehl, "Facing the 'Unholy Axis,'" *Washington Post*, 24 February 2003, p. A21, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A55841-2003Feb23.html>.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Security Council, "Resolution 1441" (New York: United Nations, 8 November 2002), <http://www.un.org/Docs/scres/2002/sc2002.htm>; "Blix Credits U.S. War Threat for Winning Iraq Inspections," *Washington Post*, 24 February 2003, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A55166-2003Feb23.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Rumsfeld's phrase appeared in this context: "Let me be clear: no one wants war. No, war is never a first or an easy choice. But the risks of war [are] to be balanced against the risks of *doing nothing* while Iraq pursues the tools of mass destruction." Italics added here to indicate the phrase quoted in this paper. See: Donald Rumsfeld, "Secretary Rumsfeld Address to the Munich Conference on European Security Policy," news transcript (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 8 February 2003), [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Feb2003/t02082003\\_t0208sdmunich.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Feb2003/t02082003_t0208sdmunich.html).

<sup>17</sup> In October 2002, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency released the following assessment of Iraq's nuclear weapons potential (emphasis in original): "The acquisition of sufficient fissile material is Iraq's principal hurdle in developing a nuclear weapon. *Iraq is unlikely to produce indigenously enough weapon-grade material for a deliverable nuclear weapon until the last half of this decade. Baghdad could produce a nuclear weapon within a year if it were able to procure weapon-grade fissile material abroad. Baghdad may have acquired uranium enrichment capabilities that could shorten substantially the amount of time necessary to make a nuclear weapon.*" In brief, the CIA warned of Iraq's nuclear potential that "if left unchecked, it probably will have a nuclear weapon during this decade." See: Director of Central Intelligence, *Iraq's*

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*Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, October 2002), pp. 6, 1, [http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/iraq\\_wmd/Iraq\\_Oct\\_2002.pdf](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/iraq_wmd/Iraq_Oct_2002.pdf).

As this CIA assessment was made before the design and implementation of UNSC 1441, it did not consider the question of whether the strengthened inspections regime would be sufficient to check Iraqi nuclear ambitions.