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Saddam Hussein

"Saddam Is Iraq, Iraq Is Saddam"

The core profile of Saddam Hussein that follows was developed in August 1990 following the invasion of Kuwait. It was presented twice in December 1990 in testimony to hearings on the crisis in the Gulf to the House Armed Services Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Originally printed in the Congressional Record (December 5, 1990), it was subsequently published in 1991 as "Saddam Hussein of Iraq: A Political Psychology Profile" (Political Psychology 12, no. 2). A subsequent brief article, "Saddam Hussein: Afterword" (Political Psychology 12, no. 4), reviewed the course of events in light of the original profile. This is reflected on pages 223–25.

In October 2002, as the drums of war were beating ever more loudly, a major update was developed for a conference sponsored by the U.S. Air Force Counterproliferation Center (reflected on pages 225–38). It was subsequently augmented in collaboration with Amatzia Baram, a leading Israeli scholar on Iraqi history, and published in November 2002 as " 'Saddam Is Iraq, Iraq Is Saddam': A Profile of Saddam Hussein and Iraq's Strategic Culture," and distributed to senior U.S. officials. This essay was included in Know Thy Enemy: Profiles of Adversary Leaders and Their Strategic Cultures, edited by Barry Schneider and Jerrold Post (U.S. Air Force Counterproliferation Center, 2002).

Identified as a member of the "axis of evil" by President George W. Bush, Saddam Hussein's Iraq continues to pose a major threat to the region and to Western society. Hussein has doggedly pursued the development of weapons of mass destruction, despite UN sanctions imposed at the conclusion of the Gulf War in 1991. To deal effectively with Saddam Hussein requires a clear understanding of his motivations, perceptions,

and decision making. To provide a framework for this complex political leader, a comprehensive political psychology profile has been developed, and his actions since the 1991 Gulf War have been analyzed in the context of this political psychology assessment.

Saddam Hussein, president of Iraq, has been widely characterized as "the madman of the Middle East." This pejorative diagnosis is not only inaccurate but also dangerous. Consigning Saddam to the realm of madness can mislead decision makers into believing he is unpredictable, when in fact he is not. An examination of the record of Saddam Hussein's leadership of Iraq for the past thirty-four years reveals a judicious political calculator who, although he is by no means irrational, is very dangerous.

Saddam Hussein, "the great struggler," has explained the extreme nature of his actions as president of Iraq as necessary to achieve "subjective immunity" against foreign plots and influences. All actions of the revolution are justified by the "exceptionalism of revolutionary needs." In fact, an examination of Saddam Hussein's life and career reveals this is but the ideological rationalization for a lifelong pattern in which all actions are justified if they are in the service of furthering Saddam Hussein's needs and messianic ambitions.

Painful Beginnings—The "Wounded Self"

Saddam Hussein was born in 1937 to a poor peasant family near Tikrit, some one hundred miles north of Baghdad, in central-north Iraq. But the central lines of the development of Saddam Hussein's political personality were etched before he was born, for his father died of an "internal disease" (probably cancer) during his mother's pregnancy with Saddam, and his twelve-year-old brother died (of childhood cancer) a few months later, when Saddam's mother, Sabha, was in her eighth month of pregnancy. Destitute, she attempted suicide. A Jewish family saved her. Then she tried to abort herself of Saddam, but she was prevented from doing this by her same Jewish benefactors. After Saddam was born, on April 28, 1937, his mother did not wish to see him, strongly suggesting that she was suffering from a major depression. His care was relegated to Sabha's brother (his maternal uncle), Khayrallah Talfah Msallat, in Tikrit, in whose home Saddam spent much of his early childhood. At age three Saddam was reunited with his mother, who in the interim had married a distant relative, Hajj Ibrahim Hasan. Hajj Ibrahim, Saddam's stepfather, reportedly was abusive psychologically and physically to young Saddam.

The first several years of life are crucial to the development of healthy

self-esteem. The failure of the mother to nurture and bond with her infant son and the subsequent abuse at the hands of his stepfather would have profoundly wounded Saddam's emerging self-esteem, impairing his capacity for empathy with others, producing what has been identified as "the wounded self." One course in the face of such traumatizing experiences is to sink into despair, passivity, and hopelessness. But another is to etch a psychological template of compensatory grandiosity, as if to vow, "Never again, never again shall I submit to superior force." This was the developmental psychological path Saddam followed.

From early years on, Saddam, whose name means "the One who Confronts," charted his own course and would not accept limits. According to his semiofficial biography, when he was ten he was impressed by a visit from his cousin who knew how to read and write. He confronted his family with his wish to become educated, and when they turned him down, because there was no school in his parents' village, he left his home in the middle of the night, making his way to the home of his maternal uncle Khayrallah in Tikrit in order to study there. It is quite possible that in the approved biography Saddam somewhat embellished his story, but there is no mistaking his resentment against his mother and stepfather that emerges from it.

Khayrallah Inspires Dreams of Glory

Khayrallah was to become not only Saddam's father figure but also his political mentor. Khayrallah had fought against Great Britain in the Iraqi uprising of 1941 and had spent five years in prison for his nationalist agitation. He filled the impressionable young boy's head with tales of his heroic relatives—his great-grandfather and two great-uncles—who gave their lives for the cause of Iraqi nationalism, fighting foreign invaders. He conveyed to Saddam that he was destined for greatness, following the path of his heroic relatives and of heroes of the radical Arab world. Khayrallah, who was later to become governor of Baghdad, shaped young Saddam Hussein's worldview, imbuing him with a hatred of foreigners. In 1981, Saddam republished a pamphlet written by his uncle, "Three Whom God Should Not Have Created: Persians, Jews, and Flies."

Khayrallah tutored Saddam Hussein in his view of Arab history and the ideology of nationalism and the Ba'ath Party. Founded in 1940, the Ba'ath Party envisaged the creation of a new Arab nation by defeating the colonialist and imperialist powers and achieving Arab independence, unity, and socialism. Ba'ath ideology, as conceptualized by its intellectual founding father, Michel Aflaq, focuses on the history of oppression and division of the Arab world, first at the hands of the Ottomans, then the Western

mandates, then the monarchies ruled by Western interests, and finally by the establishment of the "Zionist entity." Thus inspired by his uncle's tales of heroism in the service of the Arab nation, Saddam has been consumed by dreams of glory since his earliest days, identifying himself with Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylonia who conquered Jerusalem in 586 B.C., and Saladin, who regained Jerusalem in 1187 by defeating the Crusaders. But these dreams of glory, formed so young, were compensatory, for they sat astride a wounded self and profound self-doubt.

Saddam was steeped in Arab history and Ba'athist ideology by the time he traveled with his uncle to Baghdad to pursue his secondary education. The school he attended, a hotbed of Arab nationalism, confirmed his political leanings. In 1952, when Saddam was fifteen, Gamal Abdel Nasser led the Free Officers' revolution in Egypt and became a hero to young Saddam and his peers. As the activist leader of Pan Arabism, Nasser became an idealized model for Saddam. Only by courageously confronting imperialist powers could Arab nationalism be freed from Western shackles.

At age twenty, inspired by Nasser, Saddam joined the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party in Iraq and quickly impressed party officials with his dedication. Known as a "street thug," he willingly used violence in the service of the party, and was rewarded with rapid promotion. Two years later, in 1958, apparently emulating Nasser, General Abdul Karim Qassem led a coup that ousted the Iraqi monarchy. But unlike Nasser, Qassem did not pursue the path of socialism and turned against the Ba'ath Party. The twenty-two-year-old Saddam was called to Ba'ath Party headquarters and given the mission of leading a five-man team to assassinate Qassem. The mission failed, reportedly because of a crucial error of judgment by Saddam. But Saddam's escape to Syria, first by horseback across the desert and then by swimming a river, has achieved mythic status in Iraqi history. During his exile, Saddam went to Egypt to study law, rising to the leadership ranks of the Egyptian Ba'ath Party. He returned to Iraq after 1963, when Qassem was ousted by the Ba'ath Party, and was elected to the National Command. Aflaq, the ideological father of the Ba'ath Party, admired young Hussein, declaring the Iraqi Ba'ath Party the finest in the world and designating Saddam Hussein as his successor.

Rivalry with Assad to be Supreme Arab-Nationalist Leader

Despite—or rather because of—fellow Ba'athist Hafiz al-Assad's success in taking control of Syria, Saddam confronted the new Syrian Ba'ath leadership at a party meeting in Iraq in 1966. The split and rivalry persist

to this day, for there can be only one supreme Arab nationalist leader, and destiny has inscribed his name as Saddam Hussein.

With the crucial secret assistance of the military intelligence chief, Abdul Razzaz al Nayef, Saddam mounted a successful coup in 1968 against the military leadership of Iraq, and the Ba'ath Party was again in control, with Saddam's senior partner, his cousin Brigadier General Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr, serving as president, and Saddam as the power behind the scenes. In "gratitude" for services rendered, within two weeks of the coup, Saddam arranged for the capture and exile of Nayef, and subsequently ordered his assassination.

This was a paradigm for the manner in which Saddam has rewarded loyalty and adhered to commitments throughout his career. He has a flexible conscience: commitments and loyalty are matters of circumstance, and circumstances change. If an individual, or a nation, is perceived as an impediment or a threat, no matter how loyal in the past, that individual or nation will be eliminated violently without a backward glance, and the action will be justified by "the exceptionalism of revolutionary needs." Nothing must be permitted to stand in "the great struggler's" messianic path as he pursues his (and Iraq's) revolutionary destiny, as exemplified by this extract from Saddam Hussein's remarkable "Victory Day" message of August 8, 1990, when Iraq occupied Kuwait:

This is the only way to deal with these despicable Croesuses who relished possession to destroy devotion . . . who were guided by the foreigner instead of being guided by virtuous standards, principles of Pan-Arabism, and the creed of humanitarianism . . . The second of August . . . is the legitimate newborn child of the struggle, patience, and perseverance of the Kuwaiti people, which was crowned by revolutionary action on that immortal day. The newborn child was born of a legitimate father and an immaculate mother. Greetings to the makers of the second of August, whose efforts God has blessed. They have achieved one of the brightest, most promising, and most principled national and Pan-Arab acts.

Two August has come as a very violent response to the harm that the foreigner had wanted to perpetrate against Iraq and the nation. The Croesus of Kuwait and his aides become the obedient, humiliated, and treacherous dependents of that foreigner . . . What took place on 2 August was inevitable so that death might not prevail over life, so that those who were capable of ascending to the peak would not be brought down to the abysmal precipice, so that corruption and remoteness from God would not spread to the majority . . . Honor will be kept in Mesopotamia so that Iraq will be the pride of the Arabs, their protector, and their model of noble values. (FBIS *Near East Report*, August 8, 1990)

Capable of Reversing His Course

Saddam's practice of revolutionary opportunism has another important characteristic. Just as previous commitments must not be permitted to stand in the way of his messianic path, neither will he persist in a particular course of action if it proves to be counterproductive for him and his nation. When Saddam pursues a course of action, he pursues it fully; if he meets initial resistance, he will struggle all the harder, convinced of the correctness of his judgments. But should circumstances demonstrate that he has miscalculated, he is capable of reversing his course. In these circumstances, he does not acknowledge he has erred but only that he is adapting to a dynamic situation. The three most dramatic examples of his revolutionary pragmatism and ideological flexibility are in his ongoing struggle with his Iranian enemies (whom he called "Persians," following his uncle's model).

HUSSEIN YIELDS TO IRAN TO QUELL THE KURDISH REBELLION

Saddam forced a mass relocation of the Kurdish population in 1970. In 1973, he declared that the Ba'ath Party represented all Iraqis, that the Kurds could not be neutral, and that the Kurds were either fully with the people or against them. Indeed, this is one of Saddam's basic principles: He who is not totally with me is my enemy. The Kurds were therefore seen as insidious enemies supported by foreign powers, in particular the Iranians. In 1973, the Kurdish minority, supported by the shah of Iran, rebelled. By 1975, the war against the Kurds had become extremely costly, with sixty thousand Iraqis killed in one year alone. Demonstrating his revolutionary pragmatism, despite his lifelong hatred of the Iranians, Hussein's urgent need to put down the Kurdish rebellion took (temporary) precedence. In March 1975, Saddam signed an agreement with the shah of Iran, stipulating Iranian sovereignty over the disputed Shatt al-Arab waterway in return for Iran's ceasing to supply the Kurdish rebellion.

The loss of the Shatt al-Arab waterway continued to rankle, and in September 1980, sensing weakness and confusion in the Iranian leadership after the Iranian Revolution, Saddam invaded Khuzistan Province, at first meeting little resistance. One of his first acts was to cancel the 1975 treaty dividing the Shatt al-Arab waterway. After Iraq's initial success, Iranian resistance stiffened and began to inflict serious damage not only on Iraqi forces but also on Iraqi cities. It became clear to Saddam that the war was counterproductive.

ATTEMPTS TO END THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

In June 1982, Saddam reversed his earlier militant aggression and attempted to terminate hostilities, offering a unilateral ceasefire. Khomeini, who by now was obsessed with Saddam, would have none of it, saying there would be no peace until Saddam Hussein no longer ruled Iraq. The Iran-Iraq War continued for another bloody six years, taking a dreadful toll estimated at more than a million. In 1988, an indecisive ceasefire was agreed on, with Iraq sustaining an advantage, retaining control of some seven hundred square miles of Iranian territory and control of the strategic Shatt al-Arab waterway. Saddam, who maintained half a million troops on the disputed border, vowed he would "never" allow Iran sovereignty over any part of the disputed waterway until Iran agreed to forgo its claim to it. Saddam declared he would not agree to an exchange of prisoners, nor would he withdraw from Iranian territory. But revolutionary pragmatism was to supersede this vow, for he desperately needed the troops that were tied up in the dispute.

On August 15, 1990, Hussein agreed to meet Iranian conditions, promising to withdraw from Iranian territory, agreeing to an exchange of prisoners, and, most importantly, agreeing to share the disputed Shatt al-Arab waterway. "Never" is a short time when revolutionary pragmatism dictates, which was important to remember in evaluating Saddam's 1990 vow to never relinquish Kuwait, and his continued intransigence to Western demands.

REVERSAL OF HOSTAGE POLICY

The decision to release all foreign hostages fits this pattern. Following the invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, Saddam systematically seized the citizens of the United States and many other nations. This occurred in both Kuwait and Iraq and continued for several months. Demonstrating how out of touch he was with world opinion, Saddam, trying to convey an image of himself as kindly father figure to the diplomat families he characterized as "guests," patted the head of an obviously terrified boy, making it clear that the families were there under duress. The image was featured on international media, and produced widespread horror.

Many of the hostages were moved to strategic sites in Iraq, including armaments factories, weapons research facilities, and major military bases, to be used as human shields. This mass act of hostage taking was condemned by nations throughout the world, and the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 644, demanding that Iraq release the hostages. Eventually realizing that this policy was counterproductive, Saddam eventually reversed himself and released the hostages, starting with the women

and children. By December of that year, all the Western hostages were freed, but many Kuwaitis remained in captivity.

As with other misdirected policies in the past, Saddam initially pursued his hostage policy with full vigor, despite mounting evidence that it was counterproductive. When it became clear to him that it was not protecting him from the likelihood of military conflict, as initially conceived, but was actually unifying the international opposition, he reversed his policy. His announcement followed an especially strong statement by Secretary of State James Baker concerning the use of "decisive force," but the anger of his former ally, the Soviet Union, was undoubtedly important as well. Moreover, the timing was designed not only to play on perceived internal divisions within the United States but also to magnify perceived differences in the international coalition, a demonstration of his shrewdly manipulative sense of timing.

A Rational Calculator Who Often Miscalculates

The labels "madman of the Middle East" and "megalomaniac" are often affixed to Saddam, but there is no evidence that he is suffering from a psychotic disorder. He is not impulsive, acts only after judicious consideration, and can be extremely patient; indeed he uses time as a weapon. Although he is psychologically in touch with reality, he is often politically out of touch with reality. Saddam's worldview is narrow and distorted, and he has scant experience outside of the Arab world. His only sustained experience with non-Arabs was with his Soviet military advisors, and he reportedly has traveled outside of the Middle East on only two occasions—a brief trip to Paris in 1976 and another trip to Moscow. Moreover, he is surrounded by sycophants who are cowed by his well-founded reputation for brutality and who are afraid to contradict him. He has ruthlessly eliminated those he has perceived as threats to his power and equates criticism with disloyalty.

In 1979, when he fully assumed the reins of Iraqi leadership, one of his first acts was to meet with his senior officials, some two hundred in number, of which there were twenty-one whose loyalty he questioned. The dramatic meeting of his senior officials in which the twenty-one "traitors" were identified while Hussein watched, luxuriantly smoking a Cuban cigar, has been captured on film. After the forced confessions by a "plotter" whose family had been arrested, the remaining senior officials were complimented for their loyalty by Saddam and rewarded by being directed to form the execution squads for the twenty-one disloyal officials.

In 1982, when the war with Iran was going very badly for Iraq and Saddam wished to terminate hostilities, Khomeini, who by then was person-

ally fixated on Saddam, insisted there could be no peace until Saddam was removed from power. At a cabinet meeting, Saddam asked his ministers to candidly give their advice. The minister of health suggested that Saddam temporarily step down and then assume the presidency again after peace had been established. Saddam reportedly thanked him for his candor and ordered his arrest. The minister's wife pleaded for her husband's return, saying her husband had always been loyal to Saddam. Saddam promised her that her husband would be returned. The next day, her husband's body was returned to her in a black canvas bag, chopped into pieces. This powerfully concentrated the attention of the other ministers who were unanimous in their insistence that Saddam remain in power, for it emphasized that to be seen as disloyal was not only to risk losing one's job but could forfeit one's life. Thus, Saddam is deprived of the check of wise counsel from his leadership circle. This combination of limited international perspective and a sycophantic leadership circle has in the past led him to miscalculate.

Hussein's Malignant Narcissism

Saddam Hussein's pursuit of power for himself and Iraq is boundless. In fact, in his mind, the destiny of Saddam Hussein and Iraq are one and indistinguishable. His exalted self-concept is fused with his Ba'athist political ideology. Ba'athist dreams will be realized when the Arab nation is unified under one strong leader. In Saddam's mind, he is destined for that role.

In pursuit of his messianic dreams, there is no evidence he is constrained by conscience; his only loyalty is to himself. When there is an obstacle in his revolutionary path, Saddam eliminates it, whether it is a previously loyal subordinate or a previously supportive country.

In pursuing his goals, Saddam uses aggression instrumentally. He uses whatever force is necessary, and will, if he deems it expedient, go to extremes of violence, including the use of weapons of mass destruction. His unconstrained aggression is instrumental in pursuing his goals, but it is at the same time defensive aggression, for his grandiose facade masks underlying insecurity.

Although Saddam Hussein is not psychotic, he has a strong paranoid orientation. He is ready for retaliation, and, not without reason, sees himself as surrounded by enemies. But he ignores his role in creating those enemies and righteously threatens his targets. The conspiracy theories he spins are not merely for popular consumption in the Arab world but genuinely reflect his paranoid mind-set. He is convinced that the United States, Israel, and Iran have been in league for the purpose of eliminating

him, and he finds a persuasive chain of evidence for this conclusion. His minister of information, Latif Jassim, who was responsible for propaganda and public statements, has probably helped reinforce Saddam's paranoid disposition and, in a sense, is the implementer of his paranoia.

It is this political personality constellation—messianic ambition for unlimited power, absence of conscience, unconstrained aggression, and a paranoid outlook—that makes Saddam Hussein so dangerous. Conceptualized as malignant narcissism, this is the personality configuration of the destructive charismatic, who unifies and rallies his downtrodden supporters by blaming outside enemies. Although Saddam Hussein is not charismatic, this psychological stance is the basis of his particular appeal to the Palestinians, who see him as a strongman who shares their intense anti-Zionism and will champion their cause.

Views Self as One of History's Great Leaders

Saddam Hussein genuinely sees himself as one of the great leaders of history, and ranks himself with his heroes: Gamal Abdel Nasser, Fidel Castro, Josip Broz Tito, Ho Chi Minh, and Mao Ze-dong, each of whom he admires for adapting socialism to his country's environment, free of foreign domination. He sees himself as transforming his society. He believes youth must be "fashioned" to "safeguard the future" and that Iraqi children must be transformed into a "radiating light that will expel" traditional family backwardness. Like Mao and Stalin, Saddam has encouraged young people to inform on their parents' antirevolutionary activity. As godlike status was ascribed to Mao, and giant pictures and statues of him were placed throughout China, so too giant pictures and statues of Saddam Hussein abound in Iraq. Asked about this cult of personality, he shrugs and says he "cannot help it if that is what they want to do."

Saddam Hussein is so consumed with his messianic mission that he probably overreads the degree of his support in the rest of the Arab world. He psychologically assumes that many in the Arab world, especially the downtrodden, share his views and see him as their hero. He was probably genuinely surprised at the nearly unanimous condemnation of his invasion of Kuwait.

Saddam Hussein at the Crossroads in 1990-91

It is not by accident that Saddam Hussein has survived for more than three decades as his nation's preeminent leader in this tumultuous part of the world. Although he is driven by dreams of glory, and his political perspective is narrow and distorted, he is a shrewd tactician who has a sense

of patience. He is able to justify extreme aggression on the basis of revolutionary needs, but if the aggression becomes counterproductive, he has shown a pattern of being able to reverse course when he has miscalculated, waiting until a later day to achieve his revolutionary destiny. His drive for power is not diminished by these reversals but only deflected.

Saddam Hussein is a ruthless political calculator who will go to whatever lengths are necessary to achieve his goals. But he is not a martyr, and his survival in power—with his dignity intact—is his highest priority. Saddam has been characterized by Soviet Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov and others as suffering from a "Masada complex," preferring a martyr's death to yielding. This is assuredly not the case, for Saddam has no wish to be a martyr, and survival is his number-one priority. A self-proclaimed revolutionary pragmatist, he does not wish a conflict in which Iraq will be grievously damaged and his stature as a leader destroyed.

Although Hussein's advisors' reluctance to disagree with his policies contributes to the potential for miscalculation, his advisors are able to influence the accuracy of his evaluation of Iraq's political and military situation by providing information and assessments. Moreover, despite their reluctance to disagree with him, the situation facing the leadership after the invasion of Kuwait was so grave that several officials reportedly expressed their reservations about remaining there.

As the crisis heightened in the fall of 1990, Saddam dismissed a number of senior officials, replacing them with family members and known loyalists. He replaced the petroleum minister, a sophisticated technical expert, with his son-in-law, Hussein Kamal. Moreover, he replaced General Nizar Khazraji, his army chief of staff, and a professional military man, with General Hussein Rashid, commander of the Republican Guards and a Tikriti. Tough and extremely competent, Rashid is both intensely ideological and fiercely loyal. It was as if Saddam was drawing in the wagons. This was a measure of the stress on him, suggesting that his siege mentality was intensifying. The fiercely defiant rhetoric was another indicator of the stress, for the more threatened Saddam feels, the more threatening he becomes.

Although Saddam appreciated the danger of the Gulf crisis, it did create an opportunity to defy the hated outsiders, a strong value in his Ba'athist ideology. He continued to cast the conflict as a struggle between Iraq and the United States, and even more personally as a struggle between the gladiators, Saddam Hussein versus George Bush. When the struggle became thus personalized, it enhanced Saddam Hussein's reputation as a courageous strongman willing to defy the imperialist United States.

On the other hand, when President George Bush depicted the conflict as

the unified civilized world against Saddam Hussein, it hit a tender nerve for Saddam, who has his eye on his role in history and places great stock in world opinion. If he were to conclude that his status as a world leader was threatened, it would have important constraining effects on him. Thus, the prospect of Iraq's being expelled from the United Nations and castigated as a rogue nation outside the community of nations would be very threatening to him. The overwhelming majority supporting the Security Council resolution at the time of the conflict must have confronted Saddam Hussein with the damage he was inflicting on his stature as a leader, despite his defiant rhetoric dismissing the resolutions of the United Nations as reflecting U.S. control of the international organization.

Defiant rhetoric was a hallmark of the conflict and lent itself to misinterpretation across cultural boundaries. The Arab world places great stock in expressive language. The language of courage is a hallmark of leadership, and great value is attached to the very act of expressing brave resolve against the enemy in and of itself. Even though a statement is made in response to the United States, when Saddam speaks it is to multiple audiences; much of his language is solipsistic and designed to demonstrate his courage and resolve to the Iraqi people and the Arab world. There is no necessary connection between courageous verbal expression and the act threatened. Nasser gained great stature from his fiery rhetoric threatening to make the sea red with Israeli blood. By the same token, Saddam probably heard the Western words of President Bush through a Middle Eastern filter. When a public statement of resolve and intent was made by President George Bush, Saddam may well have discounted the expressed intent to act. This underlines the importance of a private channel between leaders that will allow them to communicate clearly and unambiguously. The mission by Secretary of State James Baker afforded the opportunity to resolve any misunderstandings on Saddam's part concerning the strength of resolve and intentions of the United States and the international coalition.

Gulf Crisis Promotes Saddam to World-Class Leader

Throughout his twenty-two years at the helm of Iraq, Saddam Hussein had languished in obscurity, overshadowed by the heroic stature of other Middle Eastern leaders such as Anwar Sadat and Ayatollah Khomeini. But with the Gulf crisis, for the first time in his entire career, Saddam was exactly where he believed he was destined to be—a world-class political actor on center stage commanding world events, with the entire world's attention focused on him. When his rhetoric was threatening, the price of

oil rose precipitously and the Dow-Jones average plummeted. He was demonstrating to the Arab masses that he was an Arab strongman with the courage to defy the West and expel foreign influences.

Now that he was at the very center of international attention, his appetite for glory was stimulated all the more. The glory-seeking Saddam would not easily yield the spotlight of international attention. He wanted to remain on center stage, but not at the expense of his power and his prestige. Saddam would only withdraw if he calculated that he could do so with his power and his honor intact, and if the drama in which he was starring would continue.

Honor and reputation must be interpreted in an Arab context. Saddam Hussein had already achieved considerable honor in the eyes of the Arab masses for having the courage to stand up to the West. It should be remembered that even though Egypt militarily lost the 1973 war with Israel, Sadat became a hero to the Arab world for his willingness to attack—and initially force back—the previously invincible forces of Israel. Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi mounted an air attack when the United States crossed the so-called "line of death" in March 1986. Even though his jets were destroyed in the ensuing conflict, Qadhafi's status was raised in the Arab world. Indeed, he thanked the United States for making him a hero. Thus, Saddam could find honor in the 1990 confrontation over Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

His past history reveals a remarkable capacity to find face-saving justifications when reversing his course in very difficult circumstances. Nevertheless, it would be important not to insist on total capitulation and humiliation, for this could drive Hussein into a corner and make it impossible for him to reverse his course. He would—could—only withdraw from Kuwait if he believed he could survive with his power and his dignity intact.

By the same token, he would only reverse his course if his power and reputation were threatened. This would require a posture of strength, firmness, and clarity of purpose by a unified world, demonstrably willing to use force if necessary. The only language Saddam Hussein understands is the language of power. Without this demonstrable willingness to use force, even if the sanctions were biting deeply, Saddam Hussein is quite capable of putting his population through a sustained period of hardship.

It was crucial to demonstrate unequivocally to Saddam Hussein that unless he withdrew from Kuwait, his career as a world-class political actor would be ended. The announcement of a major escalation of the force level was presumably designed to drive that message home. The UN resolution authorizing the use of force unless Iraq withdrew by January 15,

1991, was a particularly powerful message because of the large majority supporting the resolution.

The message almost certainly was received. In the wake of the announcement of the increase in force level, Saddam intensified his request for "deep negotiations," seeking a way out in which he could preserve his power and his reputation. That President Bush sent Secretary of State Baker to meet one-on-one with Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz was an extremely important step. In the interim leading up to the meeting, the shrewdly manipulative Saddam continued to attempt to divide the international coalition.

Although he considers himself a revolutionary pragmatist, Saddam Hussein is at heart a survivor. If, in response to the world's unified demonstration of strength and resolve, he did retreat and reverse his course, this would only be a temporary deflection of his unbounded drive for power. It was a certainty that he would return at a later date, stronger than ever, unless firm measures were taken to contain him. This underlines the importance of strategic planning beyond the immediate crisis, especially considering his progress toward acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. If blocked in his overt aggression, he could be expected to pursue his goals covertly through intensified support of terrorism.

Saddam Hussein will not go down in the last flaming bunker if he has a way out, but he can be extremely dangerous and will stop at nothing if he is backed into a corner. If he believes his very survival as a world-class political actor is threatened, Saddam can respond with unrestrained aggression, using whatever weapons and resources are at his disposal, in what would surely be a tragic and bloody final act.

Why Saddam Did Not Withdraw from Kuwait

In the political psychology profile prepared for the congressional hearings on the Gulf crisis in December 1990, recapitulated above, it was observed that Saddam Hussein was by no means a martyr and was indeed the quintessential survivor. The key to his survival in power for twenty-two years was his capacity to reverse his course when events demonstrated that he had miscalculated. We believed he could again reverse himself if he concluded that unless he did so his power base and reputation would be destroyed, and if by so doing he could preserve them.

How can it be, then, that this self-described revolutionary pragmatist, faced by an overwhelming array of military power that would surely deal a mortal blow to his nation if he did not withdraw from Kuwait, entered into and persisted in a violent confrontational course? Cultural factors probably contributed to his calculation and miscalculation. Saddam may

well have heard President Bush's words of intent through a Middle Eastern filter and calculated that he was bluffing. He may have downgraded the magnitude of the threat, likening it to the characteristic Arab hyperbole. Even though he expected a massive air strike, he undoubtedly was surprised by the magnitude of the destruction wrought on his forces.

But more important, the dynamic of the crisis affected him. What began as aggression toward Kuwait was transformed into the defining moment of the drama of his life. Although he had previously shown little concern for the Palestinian people, the shrewdly manipulative Hussein had wrapped himself and his invasion of Kuwait in the Palestinian flag. The response of the Palestinians was overwhelming. They saw him as their hope and their salvation, standing up defiantly and courageously to the United States to force a just settlement of their cause. This caught the imagination of the masses throughout the Arab world, and their shouts of approval fed his already swollen ego as he went on a defiant roll.

Intoxicated by the elixir of power and the acclaim of the Palestinians and the radical Arab masses, Saddam may well have been on a euphoric high and optimistically overestimated his chances for success, for his heroic self-image was engaged as never before. He was fulfilling the messianic goal that had obsessed him—and eluded him—throughout his life. He was actualizing his self-concept as leader of all the Arab peoples, the legitimate heir of Nebuchadnezzar, Saladin, and especially Nasser.

His psychology and his policy options became captives of his rhetoric. He became so absolutist in his commitment to the Palestinian cause, and to not yielding Kuwait until there was justice for the Palestinian people and UN Resolutions 242 and 338 had been complied with, that it would have been extremely difficult for him to reverse himself without being dishonored. To lose face in the Arab world is to be without authority. Unlike past reversals, these absolutist pronouncements were in the full spotlight of international attention. Saddam had, in effect, painted himself into a corner. The Bush administration's insistence on "no face-saving" only intensified this dilemma.

Not only, then, had Saddam concluded that to reverse himself would be to lose his honor, but he also probably doubted that his power base would be preserved if he left Kuwait. He doubted that the aggressive intention of the United States would stop at the border of Iraq. For years he had been convinced that a U.S.-Iran-Israeli conspiracy was in place to destroy Iraq and remove him from power.

Earlier, Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz had said that "everything was on the table," but by late December the semblance of diplomatic flexibility had disappeared, and Saddam seemed intent on challenging the coalition's ultimatum. It is likely that Saddam had concluded that he could not

reverse himself and withdraw without being dishonored, and that he needed to enter the conflict to demonstrate his courage and to affirm his claim to pan-Arab leadership.

Saddam Hussein expected a massive air campaign and planned to survive it, forcing the United States into a ground campaign. He believed that the United States was suffering from a Vietnam complex as a result of the Vietnam War, was casualty averse and could not tolerate the spectacle of American soldiers being returned in body bags. As he had demonstrated in the Iran-Iraq War, he believed his battle-hardened troops could absorb massive casualties, whereas the weak-willed United States would not have the stomach for this, there would be political protest (as had occurred during the Vietnam War), and a political-military stalemate would ensue. By demonstrating that he had the courage to stand up against the most powerful nation on earth, Saddam's credentials as pan-Arab leader would be consolidated and he would win great honor. Saddam's political hero and model, Nasser, gained great honor for defying the imperialists in the 1956 Suez campaign. By announcing that he was nationalizing the Suez Canal, Nasser prompted Israel, Britain, and France to go to war to stop him from doing so. Though Nasser lost the war, he ultimately triumphed when President Eisenhower forced the three nations to withdraw from the land they had conquered.

Saddam hoped to consolidate his place in Arab history as Nasser's heir by bravely confronting the U.S.-led coalition. On the third day of the air campaign, his minister of information, Latif Jassim, declared victory. To the astounded press he explained that the coalition expected Iraq to crumble in two days. Having already survived the massive air strikes for three days, the Iraqis were accordingly victorious, and each additional day would only magnify the scope of their victory.

It was revealed in January that under Saddam's opulent palace was a mammoth bunker, fortified with steel and pre-stressed concrete. The architecture of this complex is Saddam Hussein's psychological architecture: a defiant, grandiose facade resting on the well-fortified foundation of a siege mentality. Attacked on all sides, Saddam remains besieged and defiant, using whatever aggression is necessary to consolidate his control and ensure his survival.

After the Gulf War

Iraqi domestic support for Saddam Hussein was drastically eroded after the Gulf War. By late 1996, a series of betrayals, failures, and disappointments had left him in a more precarious domestic position than at

any time since March 1991. There have been three main areas of change for Saddam Hussein since the conflict:

- Increased security vulnerabilities
- Strengthening international support
- Increased importance of WMD program

INCREASED SECURITY VULNERABILITIES

A governing principle of Saddam's leadership—ensuring his domestic stability and eliminating internal threats to his regime—has intensified in the postwar period and is his central concern. The three greatest threats to his domestic stability have come from a dramatically weakened military, fractures in tribal loyalties, and fault lines in his family.

Immediately after the Gulf War conflict was terminated in March 1991, Saddam Hussein's major source of support, the Iraqi army, was gravely weakened. Once the fourth largest army in the world, the Iraqi army, with its proud reputation as the most powerful military force in the Persian Gulf shattered, its ranks and materiel depleted, and its morale destroyed, represented a grave threat to his survival:

- The Iraqi armed forces, including the Republican Guard, became disillusioned with Saddam's leadership.
- The standard of living for soldiers had reached the lowest level ever.
- The "no-fly zones" over northern and southern Iraq were seen as a humiliating affront to the once-powerful military. Moreover, Kurdish control over the north was a painful reminder that Iraq was powerless and at the mercy of the United States.
- The UN-sponsored weapons inspections were a continuing humiliation and demonstration of Iraq's lack of control over its sovereignty.
- A rising tide of disillusionment, desertion, and resentment led to repeated coup attempts by different military factions.
- In March 1995, two regular army brigades suffered severe losses from clashes with the Kurds and the Iraqi National Congress (INC), further humiliating Saddam and the military.

FRACTURES IN TRIBAL LOYALTY

Within the larger Sunni tribal system there were signs of weakening solidarity. Of the five most important Sunni tribes that had been the core of Saddam Hussein's support, and were in leadership roles throughout the military, three were involved in coup attempts against him. A 1990 plot involved Jubbur members of the Republican Guards and regular army units. Officers of the 'Ubayd tribe were involved in coup plotting in 1993–

94. Al-Bu Nimr (of the Dulaym tribe) revolted against Saddam in 1995. Frictions within Saddam Hussein's own al-Bu Nasir tribe also compounded problems—by late summer in 1996, five "houses" within the tribe had grievances with him or his family. Although the Dulaymis and 'Ubaydis continue to serve in Republican Guard and key security positions, they have been removed from most sensitive positions and are closely watched. Overall, the threat of a large-scale tribal uprising remains remote, though Saddam is no longer able to trust his once loyal tribes.

FAULT LINES IN THE FAMILY

Uday. The temperament and unconstrained behavior of Saddam Hussein's oldest son Uday, who is thirty-eight, has been a continuing issue. He has a reputation as the "bad boy" of Iraq and is greatly feared by the people of Baghdad. Uday has been involved in several widely publicized incidents, but Saddam had regularly either overlooked Uday's excesses or, if the event was too public to ignore, dealt with it in the mildest manner. Before the conflict in the Gulf, there were reports of violent excesses involving Uday. In one incident in 1988, Uday, drunk at a party, used an electric carving knife to kill one of his father's aides. In a second dramatic public event that year, Uday, angry with his father's personal valet for his role in facilitating an affair Saddam was having with a married Iraqi woman (whose husband was rewarded for not objecting with the presidency of Iraqi Airlines), crashed a party being held in honor of Suzanne Mubarak, the wife of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak. Uday beat the valet to death in full view of all the guests. Saddam put Uday on trial for murder but, after the family members of the victim "pleaded for leniency," Saddam exiled Uday to Switzerland. A year later, after having been declared persona non grata by Swiss authorities, Uday returned to Iraq where he began reintegrating himself into Iraqi society.

In 1995, Uday reportedly shot one of his uncles in the leg and killed six "dancing girls" at a party, not coincidentally, the night before his brother-in-law, Hussein Kamal, defected. It is believed that Uday played a major role in causing the defection of Kamal, whom he saw as threatening his relationship with his father.

In 1996, an assassination attempt on Uday left him bedridden for at least six months with both his legs shattered. He was reportedly temporarily paralyzed following the assassination attempt. There have been some reports that he was left paraplegic from the injury and continues to be paralyzed from the waist down. There are rumors that he was left impotent, which, given the nature and location of the paralyzing spinal cord injury, may well be true. He remains in general poor health.

Hussein Kamal's Defection and Assassination: A Major Turning Point. Hussein Kamal, a cousin of Saddam Hussein, married Saddam's favorite daughter, Raghda. Hussein Kamal rose through the ranks of Saddam's inner circle with meteor-like speed, garnering him the resentment of the military core as well as that of other insiders. After having held several sensitive security positions, Kamal went on to found the Republican Guard and eventually became one of the few insiders who had access to Saddam Hussein, magnifying Uday's feelings of rivalry and jealousy. In August 1995, reportedly after having been threatened by Uday, Hussein Kamal and his brother Saddam Kamal, who also had married a daughter of Saddam's, fled with their wives to Jordan, where they received asylum. Hussein Kamal provided copious information to U.S. intelligence concerning Iraq's special weapons program, of which he had been in charge, greatly embarrassing Saddam Hussein and setting back his goal of ending the sanctions regime. Six months later, in February 1996, in what might be characterized as "assisted suicide, Iraqi style," both men and their wives returned to Iraq after Saddam Hussein provided assurances that they were forgiven and would be safe. Within forty-eight hours of their arrival in Iraq, both men were murdered. Uday reportedly played a key role in orchestrating the murder of Kamal and his brother.

Demotion of Uday. Saddam Hussein demoted and publicly humiliated Uday after Kamal's flight, demonstrating that he believed Uday was responsible for the conflicts in the family that led to the defection. He had Uday's collection of vintage cars torched and stripped him of his leadership role in restoring Iraq's military equipment. He forced Uday to abandon his command of Saddam's private army, the Fedayeen, which is dedicated to Saddam's protection. And, most importantly, Saddam elevated his younger son Qusay to the regime's most powerful security position. This demonstrated to all that even being a member of the immediate family, indeed Saddam's favorite child, will not protect one from Saddam's wrath if one's actions threaten the regime.

Qusay. Although Uday is part of Saddam's problem, Qusay is part of the solution. Since 1989, Saddam has been preparing Qusay to become czar of internal security. Qusay has worked closely with the former head of internal security, General Abd Hamid Mahmud (or Ihmid Hmud). They are in charge of the Special Security Organization (SSO), the most formidable security agency, and in charge of security inside all security agencies, including the Himaya and the Special Republican Guard (SRG). The president's security rests mainly on them, but they are also in charge of concealment and deployment of Iraq's nonconventional weapons.

Qusay is also the supreme authority when it comes to "prison cleansing," the execution of hundreds of political prisoners to make room for new ones in Iraq's crowded prisons. He also authorizes executions of military and security officers suspected of disloyalty. Starting in 2000, Qusay started receiving a great deal of coverage in the Ba'ath Party press and is now referred to as "Warrior Qusay." Supplanting Uday in the succession, he has been named Saddam's deputy "in the event of an emergency." Since 2001, Qusay has also been a member of the Regional Leadership (RL) of the Ba'ath party in Iraq and deputy secretary of its important Military Bureau (al-Maktab al-'Askari).¹ The promotion of Qusay to the RL is seen as the first step toward his inclusion in the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) and, eventually, his promotion to the RCC chairmanship and then to president of Iraq.

The family disarray culminating in the Hussein Kamal defection and assassination, and the decline of Uday and his replacement as director of security forces by Qusay, signaled a major change of strategy. No longer could Saddam Hussein unquestioningly rely on the loyalty of his family. He had to strengthen the Ba'ath Party and rely more centrally on long-standing party loyalists.

In late August 1996, Saddam Hussein authorized elements of the Republican Guard to attack the Kurdish city of Irbil following the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)'s securing of military assistance from Iran. The Republican Guard smashed the PUK and the U.S.-backed Iraqi National Congress. The seizure of Irbil was a major success for Saddam. This triumph, coming after a series of setbacks and reminders of their diminished status, restored the morale of the Republican Guard (and their faith in Saddam Hussein). It demonstrated that the regime was still very much in control and was a major power throughout the country. It also showed the fractionation and impotence of the opposition movements in Iraq, and was a powerful demonstration of the risk of rising against Saddam Hussein. This was a major turning point for the regime—had the Guard not taken Irbil, it is likely that Saddam's support would have been so undermined that his position would have been in grave jeopardy.

UN RESOLUTION 986

Facing an imminent economic collapse in 1996, Iraq was forced to accept UN Resolution 986, the so-called Oil for Food program, in November of that year. This represented a great humiliation because it glaringly infringed on the national sovereignty of Iraq, and indirectly on Saddam Hussein's personal honor. Saddam also feared that it would undermine international pressure to lift the sanctions imposed on Iraq following the Gulf War: as long as the suffering of the Iraqi people could be alleviated

through the resolution, the embargo could stay on forever. But eventually Saddam had no choice but to accept the recommendations of his economic advisers.

Resolution 986 also brought Iraq considerable advantages. The sale of oil greatly improved Iraq's international and regional standing. That the food and medicines distributed to the population alleviated the people's suffering was less important than the fact that, from now on, the Iraqi government could save the sums it had had to spend on food. The disadvantages were minor by comparison: credit for the increase in supplies went mainly to the regime, not to the United Nations. It did diminish the regime's ability to trumpet as loudly as before the suffering of the Iraqi people; thus, the crisis Saddam provoked with the UN in 1997 over UN weapons inspections may have been prompted by fear that the humanitarian issue would no longer be an issue and that the embargo would remain. (In reality, the Iraqi regime still trumpeted the suffering with considerable success, with the help of Western humanitarian groups.)

Iraq Gains International Support

In the events leading up to the 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf crisis, Saddam Hussein was extremely isolated, misjudging the impact of his actions not only on his Arab neighbors, the so-called near abroad, but also on major international actors on whose support he had previously been able to count, especially Russia and France. He had regularly seriously miscalculated both the risks of his actions and the degree of his support. His foreign policy initiatives after the Gulf War demonstrated a much surer and more sophisticated hand. Having learned from experience, he has worked assiduously to strengthen identified vulnerabilities.

Saddam Hussein's diplomatic efforts toward the "near abroad" have been quite effective. Having been surprised by the lack of support for Iraq during the Gulf crisis, Saddam has worked assiduously to rebuild relations with his regional neighbors. Because of its greater economic power as a result of increased oil sales, Iraq has become a crucial partner for these nations. Although Iraqi politics have been driven primarily by internal politics and factors, it has been external factors that have begun to open up new opportunities for Iraqi policies and to ameliorate Saddam Hussein's domestic problems.

Syria and Iran. The most telling example of Saddam Hussein's *modus operandi* when he feels weak and under great threat is provided by his tremendous resolve to mend his fences with his oldest Middle Eastern

rival, President Hafiz al-Assad of Syria, and his regime. The years 1997 and 1998 saw the beginning of a new relationship between Iraq and Syria. Saddam extended an olive branch to Assad, and the latter reciprocated in kind. Although ties were mainly limited to economic and diplomatic areas, this relationship was the beginning of Iraq's acceptance back into Middle Eastern politics.²

The two countries signed a free trade agreement. As a result of this agreement, mutual trade volume grew from \$500 million in 2000 to around \$1 billion in 2001.³ According to some reports, mutual trade in 2001 actually reached almost \$2 billion.⁴ By the middle of 2002, it was estimated that the annual value of trade exchange between the two countries would exceed \$3 billion.⁵

After being elected in 1997, Iran's president, Mohammad Khatami, sought to improve relations with the United States and Saudi Arabia, something that worried Saddam a great deal. However, because these efforts have been hindered by internal politics, those relationships have not had the expected impact, which left more room for an improvement of Iraqi-Iranian relations.

Turkey. Turkey's strong ties to the United States and insistence on working with it on Iraqi matters are a great source of frustration for Iraq. Turkish military forays into autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan, too, elicit bitter condemnations from Baghdad; even though Iraq is no longer in control of Kurdistan, such forays are seen as an infringement on its sovereignty. On the other hand, Turkish-Iraqi economic ties have seen a quantum leap since December 1996. Just before the invasion of Kuwait, Turkey's annual exports to Iraq were around \$400 million. In 2000, they reached almost the same annual rate as in 1990, \$375 million, and in 2001, they had almost doubled to \$710 million.⁶ It was estimated that Turkey would export \$2 billion worth of products to Iraq in 2002.⁷

Jordan. Although it did not participate militarily in the international anti-Iraqi coalition and was unwilling to confront Iraq politically, Jordan has consistently distanced itself from Iraq since the early 1990s. Much like Turkey, Jordan is getting the best of both worlds: it maintains excellent relations with the United States and Israel, including receiving U.S. economic aid; it thwarts, as best it can, Iraqi attempts to smuggle weapons through its territory to the Palestinians; and it continues to receive cheap oil from, and to trade with, Iraq. Saddam Hussein is fully aware of this practice, but he does not seem to care; for him, Jordan is an important avenue to the outside world. Even more important, securing Jordan's objection to an American attack against him is now his top priority. Jordanian

complicity with a U.S. offensive would mean Saddam Hussein's quick demise, as it would provide the United States with the most effective bridgehead from which to launch the attack and prevent Iraq from launching its missiles against Israel.

Saudi Arabia. After the first Gulf War, the Saudis remained opposed to the Iraqi regime and moved to improve relations with Iran as a counter to Iraq—in case the United States could not live up to its security commitments, or if the Saudi regime felt compelled by Islamic politics to ask American forces to leave the country. The first deviation from this stance occurred in December 1997, when Prince Abdullah called on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to “overcome the past with its events and pains.”⁸ This was interpreted as a call for rapprochement with Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Saudi Arabia, like other regional players, expected to boost exports to Iraq—from about \$200 million in 2000 to about \$600 million in 2001.⁹

Other Gulf States. In the spring of 2002, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) ratified a free-trade agreement with Iraq that had been signed in November 2001. The most significant feature of this deal is that the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council will merge their markets into a customs union in 2003. This will give Iraq access to the entire GCC market. By mid-2002, the UAE was already one of Iraq's biggest economic partners in the region.

The only Gulf state that by mid-2002 was still hostile to Saddam Hussein's regime was Kuwait: Despite Iraq's alternating offers of “friendship” and undisguised threats, Kuwait steadfastly refused to improve bilateral relations. Kuwaiti officials refused an Iraqi offer to visit Iraqi prisons to prove there are no Kuwaiti POWs being held and continue to be highly critical of the Iraqi regime. Kuwait also seems sympathetic to the idea of an American-inspired violent regime change in Baghdad. If so, Kuwait is the only Arab state to support such a military operation.

Egypt. Egypt was the main Arab participant in the anti-Iraqi coalition of 1990–91. And yet, Iraqi-Egyptian relations started to pick up significantly the moment Iraq's buying power surged. Trade became meaningful, and in January 2001 Iraq and Egypt signed a free-trade-zone agreement. According to Iraq's trade minister, Muhammad Mahdi Salih, the mutual trade in 2000 reached \$1.2 billion, triple the 1999 figure. The minister expressed the hope that in 2001 the volume would go beyond \$2 billion.¹⁰ Egypt is Iraq's fourth-largest trading partner, after France, Russia, and China.¹¹

The Far Abroad. Saddam Hussein's patient diplomacy toward Russia and France, both of which have significant economic interests in an Iraq freed of economic shackles—Iraq owes them a combined \$11 billion—have permitted him to challenge the weapons inspections regime with relative impunity, knowing these permanent Security Council members with veto power could be counted on to weaken reprisals against Iraq. China, too, has supported his beleaguered regime in international forums, as have Kenya and Egypt. These countries took up the fight that sanctions were hurting the Iraqi people more than the regime and that lifting sanctions was the only way to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people—creating a sense that the United States, not Iraq, was increasingly isolated.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

To Saddam Hussein, nuclear weapons, and weapons of mass destruction in general, are important—indeed critical. After all, world-class leaders have world-class weapons. Especially since the military was grievously wounded by the 1991 conflict, with a marked reduction in conventional strength, unconventional weapons have become all the more important. Moreover, defying the international community on this matter is a regular reminder to the military of his courage in defying the superior adversary and that he has not and will not capitulate.

Despite tactical retreats in October–November of 1997 and January–February of 1998, Iraq succeeded in winning important concessions on sanctions and weapons inspections. This was crucial in continuing to build Saddam Hussein's support among the Iraqi people—it was seen as a victory. The embargo is dissipating slowly, and yet Saddam Hussein did not have to give up his WMDs. Today the Iraqi people have a better standard of living, many aspects of the embargo are gone, Saddam has his WMDs, and his power elite believes it is stronger—resulting in solidifying his position in Iraq.

Indeed, when the weapons inspectors left Iraq in December 1998 and were not allowed back, this was a major victory for Saddam Hussein in the eyes of the Iraqi people. The United Nations had been forced out of Iraq, and Saddam Hussein was unscathed. The challenge of the UN inspections regime strengthened Hussein's internal support, diminishing the internal threat as he demonstrated his ability to weaken and challenge the international coalition, while retaining the coveted WMD program and weakening support for the sanctions regime. The divisions within the UN that Saddam Hussein helped promote were so deep that he concluded that he was essentially immune to UN reprisals for pursuing unconventional weapons programs. Since 1999, there have been no meaning-

ful coup attempts; those who might have challenged a leader perceived to be a loser did not dare challenge a leader who had successfully challenged the United Nations and the United States.

Change of Image in the International Community

Saddam Hussein has continued to work to increase his standing in the international community, seizing on opportunities to change his image, including bolstering his image within the Arab community.

Starting in the early 1990s, he began working to change his image as a secular leader. This "return to Islam" can be seen in his increased use of Islamic language, the introduction into Iraq of the Koranic punishment of severing the right hand for the crime of theft, forbidding the public consumption of alcohol, and decapitation with a sword for the "crimes" of prostitution, homosexuality, and providing a shelter for prostitutes to pursue their occupation. On the cultural level, a few million copies of the Koran were printed in Iraq and given away, and people are being forced to attend Koran courses in many walks of society, starting with the schools. In the same vein, a law issued in the late 1990s allowed the release of Muslim prisoners who memorized the Koran in jail.¹² Another component of the "Islamization" campaign is the construction of extravagant mosques—the new Saddam Mosque (construction began in 1999) is the largest in the Middle East after the one in Mecca.

Saddam Hussein has also fashioned himself as the patron of the Palestinian cause. He has increased the original "reward" that was paid to families of suicide bombers from \$10,000 to \$25,000. In addition, Iraq informed the Palestinian Authority and public that it had asked permission from the UN Security Council to dedicate one billion Euros (around \$940 million) from its New York escrow account to the intifada.¹³ There are other forms of support that, while not substantial, are still serving Saddam Hussein's propaganda machine. For example, a few of the Palestinians wounded in the intifada have been hospitalized in Baghdad.¹⁴ Also, Iraq sent a number of trucks through Jordan and the Jordan River bridges to the West Bank full of humanitarian goods. Israel allowed these trucks to cross over.

OTHER SIGNS OF GROWING INTERNATIONAL ACCEPTANCE

In August of 2000, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez bucked international convention and traveled to Iraq to meet with Saddam Hussein. He was the first head of state to visit Iraq since the Gulf War, signaling Iraq's growing acceptance in the international community. Two months later, Iraq was invited to attend the Arab League summit meeting for the first

time since the start of the Gulf crisis, indicating a thawing in Arab attitudes toward Iraq. In another sign of normalcy, Baghdad's international airport reopened in the fall of 2000. When a hijacked Saudi airliner landed in Baghdad in October 2000 and all passengers were released unharmed, there was a great deal of international praise for Saddam Hussein.

In January of 2001, humanitarian flights began arriving daily from abroad, and Iraqi airlines began operating (even in the "no-fly zones"). As oil production recovered to prewar levels, food rations increased, power cuts became less severe, and drinking water and sewer services dramatically improved. In a calculated step to garner international favor, Saddam Hussein offered to allow Kuwaiti officials to inspect Iraqi prisons in January of 2002 (although this offer was rejected). Finally, in March 2002, at the Arab League summit meeting in Beirut, Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah hugged and kissed Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, Saddam Hussein's deputy chairman of the RCC, in front of the world's TV cameras. This ended more than a decade of bitter hostility and was a visible symbol that Saddam Hussein's Iraq had been fully welcomed back into the community of Arab nations.

Saddam Hussein continued to strengthen his reputation both by his re-Islamization program and by his ostentatious support for the Palestinian people, further endearing him to his Arab neighbors. He has pledged \$881 million from oil revenues for the Palestinian people.

THE USE OF INTERNATIONAL CRISIS

Saddam Hussein has found that international crises help him retain power, and his string of foreign policy successes have allowed him to stunt the growth of internal opposition. Success is not limited to the elimination of domestic opposition; such elimination is only a precondition for achieving his continuing ambition of being recognized as the preeminent leader in the region and a worthy successor to Nasser. However, in order to be able to become a world-class leader, he needs, in the first place, to control the domestic scene; and in his mind, control means absolute control, namely the elimination of any opposition. To achieve that, he has always been ready to confront anybody, including world powers. The most damaging outcome of any crisis is one that shows him as a failure as a leader. Thus, Saddam regularly promotes international crises to shore up his internal position.

Although Saddam Hussein's position today is much weaker than it was on the eve of the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, he has demonstrated a more sophisticated leadership in addressing his internal security vulnerabilities and in diplomacy with his Arab neighbors and Turkey—the "near abroad"—as well as with the "far abroad." He has patiently and assidu-

ously worked to reduce his vulnerabilities and to strengthen his position, both internally and internationally.

Saddam's survival in power is his continuing goal. A rational calculator who can bob and weave and is astutely Machiavellian, he has shrewdly managed to sustain the loyalty of his military and to weaken international opposition. That he has been sophisticated and better attuned to the context of his leadership both internally and internationally does not lessen a still persistent danger—that when Saddam is backed into a corner, his customary prudence and judgment are apt to falter. On these occasions he can be very dangerous—violently lashing out with all the resources at his disposal. The persistent calls for regime change by the United States and others may well be moving him into that dangerous “back against the wall” posture. The setting afire of the Kuwaiti oil fields as he retreated in 1991 is an example that might well be repeated with his own Iraqi oil fields, as if to say, “If I can't have them, no one will.” Moreover, with his back to the wall it is probable that he would attempt to use chemical/biological weapons against Israel and against U.S. armed forces in the region. The question then will be the degree to which he can continue to sustain the loyalty of his senior military commanders or whether they can be induced to not obey Saddam in extremis in order to safeguard their own futures. Of one thing we can be sure, this is a man who “will not go gentle into that good night, but will rage, rage against the dying of the light.”

Postscript

At the time this updated political personality profile of Saddam was developed, the tension was palpable as war with Iraq seemed inevitable. But the international community was badly divided, with significant opposition to eliminating the threat posed by the Iraqi regime advocated by the United States and its principal ally, Great Britain. In the European community, France and Germany led the opposition, taking the position that the inspection regime required more time to carry out its mission. Russia too opposed military action against Iraq, as did China. Putting legitimate policy disagreements aside, and other factors of national interest, France, Russia, and China's opposition to military intervention can assuredly be credited in part to Iraq's patient and significant courting of the “far abroad” described in the profile.

Prior to the initiation of conflict on March 19, 2003, there was a systematic campaign to soften Iraq's air defenses, with targeted attacks in response to violations of the no-fly zone. And an effort was underway on a

number of fronts to weaken the ties between Saddam and his military leaders. In November 2002, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated publicly that the generals have an important role to play in the reconstruction of Iraq, but all bets are off if they get involved in weapons of mass destruction. This was followed several weeks later by a statement by President Bush to the effect that Saddam may well order his generals to use weapons of mass destruction against alliance forces. If he does so, the generals would be well advised to disobey those orders. Contact was made with the Iraqi defense minister suggesting he preserve the lives of his soldiers in a war they were sure to lose and encourage his forces not to fight. In the immediate lead-up to, and during the early weeks, of the conflict, the battlefield was leafleted with fliers advising that any regional commander who ordered the use of weapons of mass destruction would be held culpable for war crimes, and that claims of “just following orders” would not protect them from prosecution.

In the conflict, there was a surprising lack of resistance, with a pace of advance not contemplated, perhaps a reflection of some of the preparatory efforts cited above. I had thought it was likely that Saddam would order the use of weapons of mass destruction in a terminal spasm, and could well order that Iraqi oil fields be set afire, as he had in his exodus from Kuwait.

In the event, the feared chemical/biological weapons attack did not occur. Why not? The short answer is that we do not know. But let me suggest several possibilities. First, because of the split in the international community that led to the disarray in the United Nations and the decision of the United States and Great Britain to enter conflict outside of the UN umbrella, Saddam may have reflected that too early a use of these weapons would have dissolved the uncertainty he had fostered and promote international unity behind elimination of his regime. Then the extremely rapid advance of alliance troops and the collapse of Iraqi military resistance may have made it too late to use these weapons. Moreover, Saddam may well have ordered their use, but the military, responding to the effective information operations campaign, may well have concluded that it would be prudent, in terms of their own best interest, to not follow those orders. Chemical/biological and nuclear weapons have not yet been found, leading many to doubt their existence in the first place. We should recall, however, that the failure of weapons inspectors to find these weapons had nearly led to the lifting of sanctions prior to the 1995 defection of Hussein Kamal, who revealed the nature of the programs and where the weapons had been cached. There is no question that Saddam had been bent on pursuing chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons programs. He has had years to perfect concealment techniques, and the

United States at this time has not located any weapons sites. Whether they were dismantled just prior to the onset of conflict or will be still discovered has not yet been determined.

How many of Saddam's military leaders were "loyal at the barrel of a gun" is unknown. After 1991, those who raised their heads too early to signify their enthusiasm for the imminent overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime were hunted down ruthlessly and, with their families, were jailed, tortured, and executed. One could not expect early defections. And as long as the inner leadership, especially Saddam and his two sons Qusay and Uday remained on the loose, the fear of reprisal remained. In the conduct of the war, the targeting of the senior leadership conveyed that they were the principal target and paved the way for lower-level military officers to defect. With the killing in a firefight of Qusay and Uday, it was, for Saddam, literally "the end of the line." This had to have had a profound impact on Saddam, who had seen his leadership perpetuated through his sons.

On April 9, 2003, in Baghdad, the forty-foot statue of Saddam was toppled by American troops, a vivid visual metaphor for the fall of Saddam to come. On May 1, on the deck of the aircraft carrier *Abraham Lincoln*, President Bush dramatically declared the end of armed conflict, though the postwar period immediately proved difficult, with a daily toll of casualties from a determined and increasingly well-organized insurgency, with Ba'athist diehards strengthened by waves of *jihadists* from neighboring countries. Still, the statue was prophetic: On December 13, 2003, a more arresting image of the Arab strongman sped around the globe. Without a single shot being fired, a humiliated Saddam was captured by American forces. Pulled from a hole beneath a mud hut, he resembled nothing so much as a scruffy street person. He seemed totally defeated as he meekly yielded to an ensuing medical examination by his captors. Saddam, who had extolled the bravery of his sons—who had died in a storm of bullets rather than be taken alive—had given up without a fight. Saddam, a larger-than-life figure, who had strode like Colossus across the Middle East landscape, buttressing his grand ambitions with grand palaces throughout Iraq, a man who had held his people in a thrall of terror, revealed himself to be more like the Wizard of Oz: behind the great-man facade was a little man pulling the levers of power. How the mighty had fallen. This is what his followers saw and will not easily forget.

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Kim Jong Il of North Korea*In the Shadow of His Father*

An enigma to the West since its inception in 1946, North Korea remains cloaked in an aura of secrecy, xenophobia, and military preoccupation.¹ The only two leaders the country has ever known, Kim Il Sung and his son, Kim Jong Il, have been intensely distrustful of the outside world. This distrust has influenced not only how they see the world but also how they are perceived by the world.

Kim Il Sung: Founding Father of the Kim Dynasty

One cannot understand the personality and political behavior of Kim Jong Il without placing it in the context of the life and charismatic leadership of his father, Kim Il Sung, North Korea's first leader. One of the difficulties in assessing the personality and political behavior of Kim Il Sung has always been discerning the man behind the myth. The gap between the facts that scholars have been able to piece together and the hagiographic portrait presented to the people of North Korea is staggering. The same holds true for Kim Jong Il. Examining this gap is instructive, as it may reflect areas of sensitivity, the ideal versus the real. Consider the following description of Kim Jong Il's lineage taken from an official North Korean Web site:

The Great Mangyongdae Family

From old times it is said that a great man is produced by a great family. Marshal Kim Jong Il's family is praised as the greatest family unprecedented in all countries and in all ages.

Family is a base of a person's character. And the disposition and dignity a person gets from his family show his quality.

The greatness of Marshal Kim Jong Il is related with the greatness of his