

Saddam Hussein of Iraq: A Political Psychology Profile

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Introduction

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. Saddam has doggedly pursued the development of weapons of mass destruction, despite UN sanctions imposed at the conclusion of the Gulf crisis. 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 crisis analyzed in the context of this political psychology assessment.

Political Personality Profile

Saddam Hussein, president of Iraq, has been 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 34 years reveals a judicious political calculator, who is by no means irrational, but is dangerous to the extreme.

Saddam Hussein, “the great struggler,” has explained the extremity 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 100 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 12-year-old brother died (of childhood cancer) a few months later, when Saddam’s mother, Sabha, was in her eighth month of pregnancy. Destitute, Saddam’s mother attempted suicide. A Jewish family saved her. Then she tried to abort herself of Saddam, but was again prevented from doing this by her 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 re-united with his mother, who in the interim had married a distant relative, Hajj Ibrahim Hasan. Hajj Ibrahim, his step-father, 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 step-father 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 semi-official biography, when Saddam was only 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, since 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 step-father 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 his young charge 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 Hussein's worldview, imbuing him with a hatred of foreigners. In 1981, Saddam republished a pamphlet written by his uncle entitled "Three Whom God Should Not Have Created: Persians, Jews, and Flies."

Khayrallah tutored his young charge in his view of Arab history and the ideology of nationalism and the Ba'th party. Founded in 1940, the Ba'th party envisaged the creation of a new Arab nation defeating the colonialist and imperialist powers, and achieving Arab independence, unity, and socialism. Ba'th 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’thist ideology by the time he traveled with his uncle to Baghdad to pursue his secondary education. The school, a hotbed of Arab nationalism, confirmed his political leanings. In 1952, when Saddam was 15, Nasser led the Free Officer’s 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 20, inspired by Nasser, Saddam joined the Arab Ba’th 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, Army General Qassem led a coup which ousted the monarchy. But unlike Nasser, Qassem did not pursue the path of socialism and turned against the Ba’th party. The 22-year-old Saddam was called to Ba’th Party headquarters and given the mission to lead a five-man team to assassinate Qassem. The mission failed, reportedly because of a crucial error in 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’th Party. He returned to Iraq after 1963, when Qassem was ousted by the Ba’ths, and was elected to the National Command. Aflaq, the ideological father of the Ba’th party, admired young Hussein, declaring the Iraqi Ba’th 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’thist Hafez al-Assad’s success in taking control of Syria, Saddam confronted the new Syrian Ba’th leadership in 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 military intelligence chief Abdul Razzaz al Nayef, Saddam mounted a successful coup in 1968. 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 act 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

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, principals 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.

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 way of Saddam’s messianic path, neither should he persist in a particular course of action if it proves to be counterproductive for him and his nation. When he 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 rather 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 Persian enemies.

Yields on Shatt al Arab To Quell the Kurdish Rebellion

Saddam had forced a mass relocation of the Kurdish population in 1970. In 1973, he declared that the Ba’th 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, having cost 60,000 lives in one year alone. Demonstrating his revolutionary pragmatism, despite his lifelong hatred of the Persians, Saddam’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, 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 initial success, Iran 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, indicating that there would be no peace with Iraq until Saddam no longer ruled Iraq, and 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 upon, with Iraq sustaining an advantage, retaining control of some 700 square miles of Iranian territory and retaining control over the strategic Shatt al Arab waterway. Saddam, who maintained 500,000 troops in the disputed border, vowed he would "never" allow Iran sovereignty over any part of the waterway until Iran agreed to forgo its claim to the disputed waterway. 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 500,000 troops that were tied up in the dispute.

Reverses Policy on Disputed Waterway

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 vow of 1990 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. 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 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 in fact 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. *While 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 only traveled outside of the Middle East on two occasions – a brief trip to Paris in 1976 and another trip to Moscow. Moreover, he is surrounded by sycophants, who are cowed by Saddam’s well-founded reputation for brutality and who are afraid to contradict him. He has ruthlessly eliminated perceived 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 200 in number, of which there were 21 officials whose loyalty he questioned. The dramatic meeting of his senior officials in which the 21 “traitors” were identified while Saddam 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 were rewarded by being directed to form the execution squads.

In 1982, when the war with Iran was going very badly for Iraq and Saddam wished to terminate hostilities, Khomeini, who was personally 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, and the Minister of Health suggested Saddam temporarily step down, to resume the presidency after peace had been established. Saddam reportedly thanked him for his candor and ordered his arrest. His wife pleaded for her husband’s return, indicating that her husband had always been loyal to Saddam. Saddam promised her that her husband would be returned. The next day, Saddam returned her husband’s body 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 to Saddam is 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.

Saddam’s Psychological Characteristics: Malignant Narcissism

Exalted Self Concept: Saddam is Iraq, Iraq is Saddam

Saddam’s pursuit of power for himself and Iraq is boundless. In fact, in his mind, the destiny of Saddam and Iraq are one and indistinguishable. His exalted self-concept is

fused with his Ba’thist political ideology. Ba’thist dreams will be realized when the Arab nation is unified under one strong leader. In Saddam’s mind, he is destined for that role.

No Constraint of Conscience

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

Unconstrained Aggression in Pursuit of His Goals

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.

Paranoid Orientation

While 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 mindset. He is convinced that the United States, Israel, and Iran have been in league for the purpose of eliminating him, and finds a persuasive chain of evidence for this conclusion. His minister of information, Latif Jassim, who was responsible for propaganda and public statements, 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— which makes Saddam 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. While Saddam is not charismatic, this psychological stance is the basis of Saddam’s 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, ranking himself with his heroes: Nasser, Castro, Tito, Ho Chi Minh, and Mao Zedong, each of whom he admires for adapting socialism to his environment, free of foreign domination. Saddam 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, Saddam has

encouraged youth to inform on their parents' antirevolutionary activity. As God-like status was ascribed to Mao, and giant pictures and statues of him were placed throughout China, so too giant pictures and statues of Saddam abound in Iraq. Asked about this cult of personality, Saddam shrugs and says he "cannot help it if that is what they want to do."

Probably Over-reads Degree of Support in Arab World

Saddam Hussein is so consumed with his messianic mission that he probably over-reads 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 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. While 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. Able to justify extremes of aggression on the basis of revolutionary needs, if the aggression is counterproductive, he has shown a pattern of reversing his 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 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.

While Saddam's advisors' reluctance to disagree with Saddam's policies contributes to the potential for miscalculation, nevertheless his advisors are able to make significant inputs to the accuracy of Saddam's evaluation of Iraq's political/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 in Kuwait.

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 Chalabi, a highly sophisticated technical expert, with his son-in-law, Hussein Kamal. Moreover, he replaced his Army Chief of Staff General Nizar Khazraji, 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 Saddam, suggesting that his siege mentality was intensifying. The fiercely defiant rhetoric was another indicator of the stress on Saddam, for the more threatened Saddam feels, the more threatening he becomes.

While Saddam appreciated the danger of the Gulf crisis, it did provide the opportunity to defy the hated outsiders, a strong value in his Ba'ath 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's reputation as a courageous strongman willing to defy the imperialist United States.

When President George H.W. Bush depicted the conflict as the unified civilized world against Saddam Hussein, it hit a tender nerve for Saddam. Saddam 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 being expelled from the United Nations and of Iraq being castigated as a rogue nation outside the community of nations would be very threatening to Saddam. The overwhelming majority supporting the Security Council resolution at the time of the conflict must have confronted Saddam 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 the United States' 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 on expressive language. The language of courage is a hallmark of leadership, and there is great value attached to the very act of expressing brave resolve against the enemy in and of itself. Even though the 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 statement of resolve and intent was made by President George H.W. Bush in a public statement, Saddam may well have discounted the expressed intent to act. This underlines the importance of a private channel to communicate clearly and unambiguously. The mission by Secretary of State 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 Sadam to World Class Leader

Throughout his 22 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 upon 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 is 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 that the drama in which he was starring would continue.

Honor and reputation must be interpreted in an Arab context. Saddam 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. Qadhafi mounted an air attack when the United States crossed the so-called “line of death.” 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. His past history reveals a remarkable capacity to find face-saving justification 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 Saddam 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 civilized 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 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, 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 U.N. resolution authorizing the use of force unless Iraq withdrew by January 15 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 Saddam 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.

Considering himself a revolutionary pragmatist, Saddam is at heart a survivor. If in response to the 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 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 was by no means a martyr and was indeed the quintessential survivor. The key to his survival in power for 22 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 his power base and reputation.

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, 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 Western words of intent through a Middle Eastern filter and calculated that he was bluffing. It is also possible he 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 importantly, the dynamic of the crisis affected Saddam. What began as an act of naked aggression toward Kuwait was transformed into the culminating act of the drama of his life. Although he had previously shown little concern for the Palestinian people, the shrewdly manipulative Saddam had wrapped himself and his invasion of Kuwait in the Palestinian flag. The response of the Palestinians was overwhelming. They saw Saddam 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 Saddam's 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 U.N. 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. Saddam 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 Saddam from power.

Earlier, Foreign Minister Aziz had indicated "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 expected a massive air campaign and planned to survive it. In the succeeding ground campaign, he hoped to engage the U.S. "Vietnam complex." 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, 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. In the Arab world, having the courage to fight a superior foe can bring political victory, even through a military defeat. Sadat, for example, won great honor in 1973 by leading the attack against previously invincible Israel, even though Egypt lost the military conflict. Indeed, his enhanced prestige permitted him to approach Israel as equal negotiating partner, and ultimately led to the Camp David Accords. Saddam's political hero and model, Nasser, gained great honor for attacking the imperialists in the 1956 Suez campaign, even though he lost.

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 further 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'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.

Saddam After the Conflict

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 since the conflict:

- Increased Security Vulnerabilities
- Strengthening International Support
- Increased Importance of WMD Program

Increased Security Vulnerabilities

A principle of Saddam's leadership that has always been true – ensuring his domestic stability and eliminating internal threats to his regime - has intensified in the post-war period, and is Saddam's central concern. The three greatest threats to Saddam's domestic stability have come from a dramatically weakened military, fractures in tribal loyalties, and fault lines in his family.

Weakened Military

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

- The Iraqi armed forces, including the Republican Guard, became disillusioned with Saddam's regime.
- The standard of living for soldiers had reached the lowest level ever.
- The No-Fly Zone over the north/south was 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 Saddam's lack of control over Iraq's sovereignty.
- A rising tide of disillusion, desertion and resentment led to repeated coup attempts by different military factions against Saddam.
- In March 1995, two regular army brigades suffered severe losses from clashes with the Kurds and 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's support, and were in leadership roles throughout the military, three were involved in coup attempts against Saddam. 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 1993-1994. Al-Bu Nimr (of the Dulaym tribe) revolted against Saddam in 1995. Frictions within Saddam's al-Bu Nasir tribe also compounded problems – by late summer in 1996, five “houses” within the tribe had grievances with Saddam or his family. While 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's oldest son Uday, 38, has been a continuing issue. He has a reputation as the “bad boy” of Iraq, and is greatly feared among the population of Baghdad. He 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 of manner. Prior to 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 Saddam'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 the Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak. Uday beat the valet to death in full view of all the guests. As a result of this, Saddam put Uday on trial for murder but in response to the family members of the victim who “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, married Saddam's favorite daughter, Rghad. 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 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 to Jordan with their wives where they received asylum. Hussein Kamal provided copious information concerning Iraq's special weapons program, of which he had been in charge, greatly embarrassing Saddam and setting back his goals 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 provided assurances that they would be safe and forgiven. Within 48 hours of their arrival back in Iraq, both men had been murdered." Uday reportedly played a key role in orchestrating the murder of Kamal and his brother.

Demotion of Uday

Saddam 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. Saddam torched Uday's collection of vintage cars and stripped him of his leadership role restoring Iraq's military equipment. He forced Uday to abandon his command of Saddam's private army dedicated to Saddam's protection, the Fidaiyiin. 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

While Uday is part of Saddam's problem, Qusay is part of the solution. Since 1989, Saddam has been preparing Qusay for the duty of 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 SSO, the most formidable of all security bodies, and in charge of security inside all security bodies, 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 non-conventional 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 is also the one who authorizes executions of military and security officers suspected of disloyalty. Starting in 2000, Qusay started receiving a great deal of coverage by the Ba'th party 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'th 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 RCC and, eventually, his promotion to the RCC Chairmanship and President.

Strategic Shift

The family disarray culminating in the Hussayn Kamil defection and assassination, and the decline of Uday and his replacement as director of security forces by Qussay, signaled a major change of strategy. No longer could the loyalty of his family be unquestioningly relied upon. Rather it was necessary for Saddam to strengthen the Ba'ath party and rely more centrally on long standing party loyalists.

Redemption and Restoration of Morale Courtesy of the Kurds

In late August of 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 Guard "smashed" the PUK and the US-backed INC. The seizure of Irbil was a major success for Saddam. This triumph after a series of setbacks and reminders of their diminished status restored the morale of Republic Guard (and their faith in Saddam). It demonstrated 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. This was a major turning point for the regime in terms of restoring its power position – 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, Saddam was forced to accept UN Resolution 986, the so-called Oil-For-Food deal. This represented a great humiliation because it glaringly infringed on the national sovereignty of Iraq, and indirectly on Saddam's personal honor. Saddam also feared 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. On November 25, Iraq announced its acceptance of the Resolution.

There were considerable advantages as a result of accepting Resolution 986. 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, Saddam could save the sums he had had to spend on food for his impoverished people. The disadvantages were minor by comparison, for credit for the increase in supplies went mainly to the regime, not to the UN. It did diminish the regime's ability to trumpet as loudly as before the suffering of the Iraqi people; thus, it may well be that the crisis Saddam provoked with the UN in October-November 1997 over USCOM inspections was 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).

Strengthening International Support

In the events leading up to the 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf crisis, Saddam had been extremely isolated, misjudging the impact of his actions not only upon 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 in the interim have demonstrated a much surer and more sophisticated hand. Having learned from experience, he has worked assiduously to strengthen identified vulnerabilities.

Near Abroad

In his diplomatic efforts towards the “Near Abroad,” Saddam has 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. Relying heavily on his increased economic power generated as a result of increased oil sales, Iraq has become a crucial partner for these nations. While in the past Iraqi politics were driven primarily by internal politics and factors, it has been external factors that have begun to open up new opportunities for Iraqi policies and help to ameliorate Saddam’s domestic problems. His immediate neighbors (the Near Abroad) have had the greatest impact:

Syria

The most telling example of Saddam’s modus operandi when he feels weak and under great threat is provided by his tremendous resolve to mend his fence with his oldest Middle Eastern rival alive, President Hafiz al Asad and his regime. The years 1997-1998 saw the beginning of a new relationship between Iraq and Syria. Saddam extended an olive branch to Asad 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.ⁱⁱ

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.ⁱⁱⁱ According to some reports, mutual trade in 2001 actually reached almost \$2 billion.^{iv} By the middle of 2002, it was estimated that the annual value of trade exchange between the two countries would exceed \$3 billion.^v

Iran

After taking power in 1997, Iranian president Khatami sought to improve relations with the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, something that worried Saddam a great deal. However,

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 the U.S. on Iraqi matters are a great source of frustration for Baghdad. Turkish military forays into autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan, too, elicit bitter condemnations from Baghdad; even though Saddam is no longer in control of Kurdistan, such forays are seen in Baghdad as infringing on its sovereignty. Turkish-Iraqi economic ties saw a quantum leap since December 1996. Just before the invasion of Kuwait, Turkey's annual exports to Iraq amounted to around \$400 million. In 2000, it reached already almost the same annual rate as in 1990, \$375 million, and in 2001, it almost doubled to \$710 million.^{vi} By the end of 2001, it was estimated that Turkey would be exporting \$2 billion worth of products to Iraq in 2002.^{vii}

Jordan

While it did not participate in the international anti-Iraqi war 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 U.S. 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 continues to receive cheap oil from Saddam and to trade with Iraq. Saddam 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 importantly, securing Jordan's objection to an American attack against him is now his top priority. Jordanian complicity with a U.S. offensive will mean Saddam's immediate demise, as it will provide the U.S. with the most effective bridgehead from which to launch the attack and prevent him from launching his own missiles against Israel.

Saudi Arabia

Until March 2002, the Saudis remained opposed to the Iraqi regime and moved to improve relations with Iran as a counter to Iraq in the event that the United States could not live up to its commitments of security, or should the Saudi regime be compelled to ask the American forces to leave the country. The first deviation from this stance occurred in December 1997, when Prince Abd Allah called upon the Gulf Co-Operation Council (GCC) states to "overcome the past with its events and pains."^{viii} This was interpreted as a call for rapprochement with Saddam'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.^{ix}

Other Gulf States

In the Spring of 2002, the 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 (GCC) will merge their markets into a customs union in 2003. This will give Iraq open 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's regime was Kuwait: Despite Iraq's alternating offers of "friendship" and undisguised threats, Kuwait has 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. It seems that Kuwait is also 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, upon his visit to Cairo, 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.^x Egypt is the fourth largest trading partner for Iraq, after France, Russia and China.^{xi}

Far Abroad

Saddam's patient diplomacy towards Russia and France, both of which have significant economic interests in an Iraq freed of economic shackles with Iraq owing them a combined \$11 billion, have permitted him to challenge the UNSCOM inspections regime with relative impunity, knowing these permanent Security Council members with veto power could be counted upon to weaken reprisals against Iraq. China too has supported his beleaguered regime 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 Washington, not Iraq, was increasingly isolated.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

To Saddam, 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. .

Weapons Inspections

Despite tactical retreats in October-November of 1997, and January-February of 1998, Iraq succeeded in winning imported concessions on the sanctions front relating to weapons inspections. This was crucial in continuing to build Saddam's support among the Iraqi people – it was seen as a victory. The embargo is dissipating slowly, and yet Saddam 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 feels more empowered – resulting in solidifying Saddam’s position in Iraq.

Indeed, when UNSCOM left Iraq in December 1998 and was not allowed back, this was a major victory for Saddam in the eyes of the Iraqi people. The United Nations had been forced out of Iraq, and Saddam was unscathed. The challenge of the UNSCOM inspections regime strengthened Saddam’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 helped promote were so deep that Saddam concluded that he was essentially immune to UN reprisals for pursuing unconventional weapons programs, which have become all the more important to him given the weakening of his military in terms of personnel, conventional weaponry and material. Since 1999, there have been no meaningful 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.

Return To International Community/Change Of Image

Saddam 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, Saddam began working to change his image as a secular leader. This “return to Islam” can be seen in the increased Islamic language used by Saddam, the introduction into Iraq of the Qur’anic 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 Qur’an books were printed in Iraq and given free, and people are being forced to attend Qur’an courses in many walks of society, starting with schools. In the same vein, a law issued in the late 1990s made it possible to release Muslim prisoners who learned the Qur’an in jail.¹ Another component of the “Islamization” campaign is the construction of extravagant mosques - The new Saddam Mosque, (construction began in 1999) is one of the largest in the Middle East after the one in Mecca.

- Saddam 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 Security Council to dedicate one billion Euros (around \$940 million) from its New York Escrow to the Intifadah.² There are other forms of support that, while not substantial, are still serving Saddam’s propaganda machine. For example, a few of the Palestinians wounded

¹ Al-Quds al-Arabi (London), Jan. 10, 2001, p. 3, in FBIS-NES-Serial GMP 2001 0110000146, Jan. 10, 2001.

² AFP, Jan. 24, 2001.

in the Intifadah have been hospitalized in Baghdad.³ Also, Iraq sent a number of lorries through Jordan and the Jordan River bridges to the West Bank full of humanitarian goods. Israel allowed these lorries to cross over.

Other Signs of Iraq's Growing Acceptance in the International Community

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 Summit 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 re-opened in the Fall of 2000. When a hijacked Saudi airliner landed in Baghdad in October of 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 pre-war levels, food rations increased, power cuts became less severe, and drinking water and sewer services have been dramatically improving. In a calculated step to garner international favor, Saddam offered to allow Kuwaiti officials to inspect Iraqi prisons in January of 2002; this offer was rejected. Finally, in March of 2002, at the Beirut Arab Summit, Saudi Crown Prince Abd Allah hugged and kissed Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, Saddam'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's Iraq had been fully welcomed back into the community of Arab nations.

Saddam continues 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. Saddam has pledged \$881 million (USD) from oil revenues for the Palestinian people.

The Use Of International Crisis

Saddam has found that international crises are helpful to him in retaining power in his country, and his string of foreign policy successes have allowed him to stunt the growth of internal opposition. For Saddam, success is not limited to the elimination of domestic opposition; such elimination is only a pre-condition to achieve his continuing ambition to be 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 complete elimination of any opposition. In order to achieve that, Saddam has always been ready to confront anybody, including world powers. The most damaging outcome

³ [The Christian Science Monitor](#), Feb. 2, 2001.

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.

While assuredly Saddam'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 both in terms of internal security vulnerabilities, and in terms of diplomacy both with his Arab neighbors and Turkey, the "near abroad," as well as with his "far abroad." He has patiently and assiduously worked to reduce his vulnerabilities and to strengthen his position, both internally and internationally.

Conclusion

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 however 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 dangerous to the extreme – violently lashing out with all resources at his disposal. The persistent calls for regime change 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."

ⁱ Al-Hayat (London), June 18, 2001, p2, in FBIS-NES GMP20010618000048 , June 18, 2001.

ⁱⁱ For details of the period 1991-1998 see Baram, Building Toward Crisis, pp. 87-96

ⁱⁱⁱ HaAretz, Feb. 1, 2001.

^{iv} MENA Report.com, May 27, 2002.

^v Iraq Press, June 25, 2002.

^{vi} Turkish Daily News, June 26, 2002.

^{vii} Anatolia, Nov. 2, 2001.

^{viii} Jordan Times, Dec. 24, 1997

^{ix} Reuters, Jan 24, 2001, in Washington Kurdish Institute, Jan. 24, 2001.

^x Xinhua (the official Chinese News Agency), Feb. 14, 2001, in Washington Kurdish Institute, Feb. 14, 2001. MENA, in English, Jan. 18, 2001, in FBIS-NES- Serial GMP 2001 0118000178, Jan. 18, 2001.

^{xi} An interview by Salih to MENA, in English, Cairo, Jan. 18, 2001, in FBIS-NES Serial GMP 2001 011 8000028, Jan. 18, 2001.

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 the requirement advocated by the United States, and its principal ally Great Britain to eliminate the threat posed by the Iraqi regime from the European community, with France and Germany in particular leading the opposition, indicating that the inspection regime required more time to carry out their mission. . Russia too opposed military action against Iraq, as did China. Putting legitimate policy disagreements aside, and other factors of national interest, that France, Russia and China opposed military intervention can assuredly be credited in part to the patient and significant courting of the “far abroad” described in the profile.

In fact, 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 violation 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 Rumsfeld stated publicly that the generals have an important role to play in the reconstruction of Iraq, but of course if they get involved in weapons of mass destruction, all bets are off. 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 to not fight. In the immediate lead -up to the conflict, 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 help culpable under the war crimes act, 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 setting Iraqi oil fields afire as he had in his exodus from Kuwait.

In the event, the feared chem/bio 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 U*.S.-Great Britain decision 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 in the requirement to eliminate his regime. Then the extremely rapid advance of alliance troops and 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 it would be imprudent 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 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 CBRN weapons programs. Saddam has had years to perfect concealment techniques, and the administration at this time has not located any weapons sites. Whether they were dismantled just prior to the onset of conflict or will be discovered has not yet been determined.

At the end of the first Gulf conflict (1991), Saddam's conventional military capabilities were gravely weakened. Saddam required at least the appearance of weapons of mass destruction to maintain his powerful, threatening image in the region, and to maintain the loyalty of his military. Is it possible that this was a giant bluff to maintain his image of strength? Perhaps, but if so, at what a large cost, an estimated \$96 billion during the course of the sanctions regime, but nevertheless perhaps preferable to being the victim of a coup. Another intriguing possibility has been raised by David Kay, chief of the inspections team, who suggests that Saddam may well have not known that he did not have these weapons in his arsenal, for his scientific establishment may have been afraid to let him know the true state of their WMD programs.

How many of Saddam's military leaders were "loyal at the barrel of a gun" is unknown. After 1991, those who too early had raised their heads 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 possibility of fear of reprisal remained. In the conduct of the war, the targeting of senior leadership conveyed that they were the principal target and paved the way for lower level military 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 upon Saddam, who had seen his leadership perpetuated through his sons. An increasingly organized resistance to US occupation was mounted, with episodic audiotapes from Saddam Hussein encouraging "a holy war". Until Saddam was killed or captured, his shadow would continue to darken the political landscape.

It was predicted that Saddam would not take the path of Idid Amin, who recently died, waiting in exile. He remained concerned with his historical reputation and would not take any steps to diminish his stature as heroic pan-Arab leader. For the same reason, it was not anticipated that he would suicide as Hitler did in the last flaming bunker or permit himself to be taken alive, but would likely go out as his sons did, in a blaze of guns.

In fact, he was taken alive, and without a struggle. How ironic that it should have come to this: Saddam Hussein, who began life in a mud hut near Tikrit, ended his political career in a so-called "spider-hole" in the ground, beneath a mud hut near Tikrit. But considering Saddam's psychological makeup, his end was, if not inevitable, certainly fitting. From mud hut to mud hut, this represented the economic and psychological poverty at Saddam's core, his wounded self. Indeed, as the mud hut is the architectural motif for the inner layer of Saddam's psychology, in projecting the likely conduct of

Saddam Hussein in the second trial of the (new) century, after that of Slobodan Milosevic, it is necessary to understand his complex psychology. In these regards, it is useful to consider the three principal layers of Saddam's psychology, layers for which the architecture of his three principal residences provide an apt metaphor. The mud hut represents the wounded self at his very core. He has devoted his life and career to overcompensating for this profound insecurity.

The magnificent palaces dotting the Iraqi landscape can be seen as the architectural model for his dreams of glory, his compensatory grandiose self, with their inlaid woods, fine marble and gold accouterments in the bathrooms. But what underlay the palaces? In January of 1991, German architectural plans revealed details of a massive bunker that had been constructed beneath the Presidential palace. Built with pre-stressed concrete and steel, it was designed to withstand all but a direct nuclear blast. Bristling with weapons, fitted with sophisticated communications equipment, with a helicopter and disguised exit, the bunker had enough food and water to last for a year and a half. This was the architectural motif for the default position in his political psychology, a siege state, ready to be attacked, ready to defend.

But the Saddam Hussein we saw initially during his capture was neither the man in the bunker, nor the palace occupant. After he was assisted out of the spider-hole, he meekly bowed his head to have a medic examine his scalp for lice, obediently opening his mouth for a dental exam. This was, briefly, the shattered self. The importance of the images of a meek, humiliated Saddam giving up without a fight to his American captors cannot be overstated. The pictures of his capture showed to the world a broken man emerging from the hole beneath the mud hut, submitting without a fight to the will of his captors.¹

This is not to say that the image of a broken man would persist. Indeed, within hours, he had regained his composure, was in his characteristic defiant grandiose mode, and, identifying himself as the President of Iraq, imperiously asked who was negotiating with him. It was anticipated that this psychological default position would be manifest in court, which was abundantly confirmed in the July 2004 appearance.²

Defiant Defendant Saddam Hussein: Following in Milošević's Footsteps

A clean-shaven, well dressed Saddam Hussein walked into the courtroom on July 1, 2004, a rather remarkable change from six months earlier. The shattered self-image of a broken man pulled from a spider-hole near Tikrit would only serve as a temporary break in Saddam's grandiose facade. His defiant behavior in front of the Iraqi judge demonstrated a return to his default position and revealed striking parallels with Milošević's conduct in court. It was as if he carried with him a mental "textbook full of lessons" derived from years of testimony by Milošević.³

As the next trial of the century unfolds on the international stage, there exists a striking similarity, which we believe is not a coincidence, between the courtroom conduct of Saddam in his first court appearance and that of Milošević during his trial. Like Slobodan, the grandiose Saddam very much enjoys and craves his role as a major actor in the international arena. However, in the case of Hussein, that desire has been apparent

1. *Id.*

2. *Id.*

3. Simons, *supra* note 13.

from the early years of his career, unlike Milošević, who was a grey apparatchik until his transformation at age forty-six. In what was supposed to be a brief preliminary hearing, largely administrative in nature, the defiant dictator turned into his own political platform. Within twenty-six minutes, Saddam managed to exchange combative words with the judge, question the legitimacy of the court system, play up his hero image to Arab supporters, and invoke history to his defense. At one point, he even turned the table on the presiding judge, aggressively interrogating the judge on his position and credentials, and fuming at the news of the judge's appointment by the Coalition Provisional Authority.⁴ The first court appearance demonstrates his narcissistic desires to turn the courtroom into his world stage and maintain control over the proceedings. These striking parallels with Milošević are not merely a coincidence. There is reason to believe that Saddam was actively following the Milošević trial up until his capture in December 2003, just as he has closely observed the downfall of other powerful leaders.

Unlike Milošević, Saddam, whose attendance at Cairo University's law school was only nominal, is not well versed in jurisprudence and courtroom tactics. Nevertheless, he will almost certainly overestimate his own legal brilliance. Such behavior would mirror his controlling nature as commander-in-chief of the Iraqi armed forces, even though he had no requisite training in military leadership. Furthermore, even if he does identify a principle defense attorney, it is assuredly the case that he will be actively involved in his defense strategy.

Saddam's initial statement in the courtroom was a repetition of that same, now infamous, phrase that the captured dictator first uttered when he came out of the spider-hole: "I am Saddam Hussein, the president of Iraq."⁵ Convinced that he is still the ruler of the Iraqi people, Saddam outright denied the court's authority to strip him of his title, and rejected the legitimacy of the war in which he was captured. "I'm elected by the people of Iraq. The occupation cannot take that right away from me."⁶ His fixation with a proper title was apparent by his frequent interruptions to correct the judge, whom he cast as a shameful and disgraceful Iraqi. In one particular instance, as the judge rattled off the preliminary war crime indictments, Saddam's intent on being honored with the proper title led him to snap back: "I did all these things as president so don't strip me of that title."⁷ It is a striking reminder of the grandiose facade still at play and demonstrates his inability to cope with political reality. Moreover, it is an illustration of a narcissistic individual who is able to disregard and detach himself from the severity of the charges at hand, in order to make a basic point regarding the mere phrasing of his title.⁸

He refused to acknowledge the accusations of the Halabja gassing attack, mocking casually that he had "heard about that on the television reports."⁹ But it was the charge detailing Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait that ignited a fury within, provoking a chain of ill-mannered outbursts and body language. "In Kuwait I was protecting the Iraqi people from those Kuwaiti dogs who wanted to turn Iraqi women into 10-dinar prostitutes."¹⁰ Just as Milošević presented Kosovo as "the cradle of Serbian civilization" and "an integral part of the 'sovereign state of Serbia,'" Saddam used a similar argument for

4. Rory McCarthy, *I am Saddam Hussein, the President of Iraq*, THE GUARDIAN July 2, 2004, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,1252342,00.html>.

5. *Defiant Saddam Rejects Court, Charges*, CNN.COM, July 1, 2004, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/07/01/iraq.saddam/>.

6. *Id.*

7. McCarthy, *supra* note 30.

8. *Id.*

9. *Defiant Saddam Rejects Court, Charges*, *supra* note 32.

10. McCarthy, *supra* note 30.

Kuwait.¹¹ “I am surprised you are charging me with this. You are Iraqi and everyone knows Kuwait is part of Iraq.”¹² He spoke rather defensively of the aggressive actions taken against Kuwait, asserting that it was an agent of the U.S. and Israel. However, there was more to this courtroom display of incitement and rage. Underlying the invasion of Kuwait were Saddam’s self-serving interests to achieve his destined role as the heroic Arab leader, unifying the pan-Arab nation and defending against the aggression of the West.¹³ Saddam’s courtroom conduct thus far reveals his refusal to accept his inevitable fate and determination to instead cling to past dreams of glory. For example, when asked by the judge where he lived, the former dictator quickly replied, “I live in each Iraqi’s house,” a true testament to his grandiose self-concept.¹⁴

Saddam’s remark that “this is all a theater by Bush, the criminal, to help him with his campaign” is one indication of the type of defense testimony to come.¹⁵ The courts must anticipate a shifting of blame to the Western powers for Saddam will likely employ political invectives to attack the West’s double standards. This will require careful planning and consistent limit setting by the court or Saddam will again take over as he did during his brief court appearance in July 2004.

In the case of Saddam Hussein, an Iraqi special tribunal has won out over the Milošević-style, ad-hoc international criminal court. The Iraqi people feel strongly motivated to prove to the world, that as a nation of law, Iraq is capable of carrying out justice, against even its most brutal dictators. There is a strong desire to reestablish the pride of Iraq’s glorious past, when the Hammurabi code played an important role in the development of the law—a tradition that was set aside during the Saddam Hussein years.

Saddam has come a long way from the days of his humiliating capture, when he surrendered instantly with no resistance. But, this was but a temporary break in his grandiose facades. Defiant and unrepentant, he saw the trial as a way of returning to the international stage, seeking to reinstate his heroic legacy.¹⁶ Brought to trial on alleged false charges, he portrayed himself as a nationalist hero, who in service to his country has courageously defended his people from outside aggression. Saddam feels that his entire nation has been put on trial, not just Saddam the individual.

While Saddam will play an active role with his defense team, there is no indication that he will be defending himself and accordingly, in terms of the structure of the proceedings, he will not have the freedom that Milošević enjoyed.

As Saddam continues to dismiss the inevitable reality of his fate, he cling to his past, playing to his supporters and manipulating the trial proceedings. With the Milošević model in place, Saddam will continue to use the ongoing trial principally to seize the spotlight as his final act on the world stage. As the trial continues, with now new charges of crimes against humanity, it remains to be seen which layer of his psychology—the shattered self seen during his capture from the spider-hole, the psychological siege state, or the grandiose facade—will determine his courtroom conduct. Based on our understanding of Saddam Hussein’s political personality and the early indications from

11. DioGuardi, *supra* note 19.

12. McCarthy, *supra* note 30.

13. Jerrold M. Post & Amatzia Baram, *Saddam is Iraq: Iraq is Saddam*, in *KNOW THY ENEMY: PROFILES OF ADVERSARY LEADERS AND THEIR STRATEGIC CULTURES* 172, 182 (Barry R. Schneider & Jerrold M. Post, eds., 2002), available at http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/cpc-pubs/know_thy_enemy/postbaram2.pdf.

14. McCarthy, *supra* note 30.

15. *Defiant Saddam Rejects Court, Charges*, *supra* note 31.

16. Post, *Rathole Under the Palace*, *supra* note 2.

his preliminary appearance and his conduct in the courtroom thus far, we doubt that the meek and shattered self will again be seen, but believe a mien of grandiose defiance will be evident throughout the court proceedings, as he continues to plays to history and his radical Arab followers, demonstrating his courage in defying the West.