

Crisis with Iraq

A LESSON PLAN

Editor's Note: An important debate has begun in the United States and abroad about U.S. policy toward Iraq and its leader Saddam Hussein. This lesson has been developed by the Choices for the 21st Century Education Program at Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies. It is designed to help teachers engage their students in consideration of this important international issue.

Considering Alternative Policy Options

The policy options presented in this material are not intended as a menu of choices. Rather, they are framed in stark terms to highlight very different policy approaches, each driven by different underlying values, each with pros and cons, risks and tradeoffs.

Break your class up into four groups. Assign three of the groups a policy option (one for each group). Their task will be to review their assigned option, consider the values that underlie it and

its pros and cons, and then develop a short presentation to give to the class. This presentation should make the best possible case for this option. (If your class is large, you may also want to assign some students the role of representatives of other nations. They can be asked to present their views on the options after all of them have been presented.)

Assign the remaining group the role of U.S. President and his advisers or of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Their task will be to review each of the options presented in the material and prepare challenging questions to ask of the advocates of each option after their presentation.

Articulating Student Views

After all of the groups have presented their assigned options and the U.S. President or Senate group has asked questions to clarify the options, give all of the students an opportunity to come to terms with their own views on this issue.

Suggested Background Resources

Intervention in Iraq? The U.S. debates whether to oust Saddam Hussein

www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east/iraq/index.html
This PBS site includes reports, interviews, and debates on the subject.

Shifting Sands: Balancing U.S. Interests in the Middle East

www.choices.edu/edsummaries/mideastpage.html
This unit includes background readings on the history of the Middle East as well as the current issues in the news.

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What should we do? Have them articulate their own considered judgments on the issue by framing their "Option 4." It may help them to use the questions provided with the options as an organizing tool.



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Crisis with Iraq ❖ Policy Options

As you frame your “Option 4,” think about the following questions:

- ▶ What is the history of U.S. relations with Iraq?
- ▶ What are the U.S. interests at stake?
- ▶ How immediate is this issue?
- ▶ What steps should the United States take in the coming weeks and months?
- ▶ How does the war on terrorism fit into discussion about this issue?
- ▶ How does the Israeli-Palestinian conflict fit into discussion about this issue?
- ▶ What should our long-term goals be?
- ▶ What values are important to you?
- ▶ What are the pros and cons of this option?

Option 1: Act Alone to Remove Saddam Hussein from Power

Line of Reasoning: Since the 1991 Gulf War ended, Saddam Hussein has shown that he is the same dangerous dictator that he was before the U.S.-led action against him. In fact, he has continued to amass weapons of mass destruction to use against his neighbors and our allies. These actions are in direct violation of the Gulf War cease-fire and cannot be tolerated. Since 1998, Saddam Hussein has prevented the UN weapons inspectors from completing their task of dismantling his nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons programs. In doing so, he is disregarding international law. We also know that he has already used weapons of mass destruction against his own people. Enough is enough. It is time for the world's lone superpower to act preemptively—with or without the support of other nations. We should seize the opportunity to strike with all our might to remove Saddam Hussein from power and wipe out his weapons programs. An all-out military effort will provide the opportunity to do what we did not do in the Gulf War—remove Saddam Hussein and make room for new leadership in Iraq.

Goals

- ▶ Destroy all weapons of mass destruction, cripple Iraq's capability to produce such weapons in the future, remove Saddam Hussein from power, and demonstrate to any other rogue states that such reckless behavior will not be tolerated.
- ▶ Send a message to other dangerous countries and terrorist groups that the United States is willing to carry the burden even when others flinch.

U.S. Policies to Achieve These Goals

- ▶ Launch a military campaign against Iraq, alone if necessary. Although the campaign may start with air strikes, removing Saddam Hussein will probably require the use of ground troops as well.
- ▶ Encourage and support Iraqi resistance groups in their efforts to gain control.

Underlying Beliefs

- ▶ As the only remaining superpower, it is up to the United States to take the lead. A volatile dictator and his weapons of mass destruction threaten an entire region as well as U.S. security. We cannot leave this problem to a future administration; the risks will only get greater with time and the cost will only get higher. Although we may not be appreciated now for taking such a strong stand, we will be when our mission is successful.
- ▶ The principle of state sovereignty and non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries should not prevent the United States from eliminating tyrants who threaten us or the rest of the world. The time has come to make preemption the new norm for intervention.

Criticisms

- ▶ Acting unilaterally would harm the alliances necessary for the war on terrorism.
- ▶ Overthrowing a foreign leader would set a dangerous precedent, whereas requiring him to live up to his international obligations is a normal expectation in today's interdependent world.
- ▶ There is no convincing proof that the threat is imminent. We should not race into unilateral action when there is time to work with others to address the threat.
- ▶ This unilateral military action to remove Saddam Hussein from power would cost the lives of many Americans.
- ▶ A unilateral military campaign would heighten resentment against Americans, making us more likely targets of terrorism at home and abroad.
- ▶ If attacked, there would be a danger that Iraq might use weapons of mass destruction against U.S. troops or other states in the region, in particular, Israel.
- ▶ Military action would further destabilize a region already torn by violence and end any chance of success for the Middle East peace process.
- ▶ The financial cost of unilateral military action would be enormous and could be better spent on helping the ailing U.S.

economy or improving the condition of the world's poor.

- ▶ Military action against Iraq would harm innocent Iraqi civilians and worsen their already dire humanitarian situation.
- ▶ Interfering in the internal affairs of a sovereign state violates principles of international law that we support.
- ▶ International law prohibits the use of force except in self-defense or with UN approval.

Option 2: Work with the International Community to Eliminate Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction

Line of Reasoning: The Iraqi government is a rogue government that threatens its own citizens, the rest of the Middle East, and the world. Something must be done to stop Saddam Hussein's blatant disregard for international law and world safety. However, the United States should not take unilateral action that violates international law in order to force Saddam Hussein from power. Action taken against Iraq should be decided upon and enforced by the UN. After the Gulf War, UN inspectors did more to reduce Saddam Hussein's chemical and biological weapons programs through their work than did six weeks of massive bombing during the actual war. Saddam Hussein's 1998 decision to prevent the UN inspectors from continuing their work was in clear violation of the Gulf War cease-fire agreement and therefore international law. The United Nations must be allowed back into Iraq to continue inspecting and dismantling these weapons of mass destruction. It is both unwise and unacceptable for the United States to act alone in deciding to take up arms against Iraq. The United States must work together with the UN to establish a long-term policy toward Iraq that enjoys the broadest possible support from the UN member-states, including all five permanent members of the Security Council. Any military action should be entered into only as a result of new UN Security Council resolutions.

Goals

- ▶ Work with the UN and within the bound-

aries of international law to stop Iraq from threatening its neighbors or others.

- ▶ Arrange for the return of UN weapons inspectors to Iraq.
- ▶ Strengthen the processes for regional and international cooperation on security issues.

U.S. Policies to Achieve These Goals

- ▶ Encourage countries that have good relations with Iraq, such as Russia, to apply their mediation skills to help negotiate the return of UN weapons inspectors as well as Iraqi compliance with the remaining terms of the cease-fire agreement.
- ▶ Work with the members of the UN Security Council (particularly Russia, France, China, and Britain) to tighten controls (for example, export, financial, and border controls) on Iraq. A willingness to compromise would strengthen the ability of the international community to cooperate in the future.

Underlying Beliefs

- ▶ Saddam Hussein is not only a threat to U.S. interests in the Middle East, but also a threat to international order. If we make it clear that we will not act alone, it will encourage other countries to come together to decide upon appropriate action to compel Iraq to meet international standards of behavior. We must place our trust in the international community.
- ▶ We are living in an increasingly interconnected world. We cannot afford to isolate ourselves. We must consistently build the foundations of international cooperation, which will require effort and compromise. It would be shortsighted to do otherwise.

Criticisms

- ▶ Saddam Hussein continues to work on his chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons programs while we waste time debating how to deal with him.
- ▶ Even if the UN can reestablish weapons inspections, Saddam Hussein will continue to cheat as he did when the inspectors were there before.
- ▶ There is no proof that the United States is directly threatened by Iraq or its weapons, so why should we be making ourselves so visible right now?
- ▶ Any UN actions that include the United States would require significant U.S. involvement, which would heighten resentment in the region and put us at greater risk from terrorism or from unconventional counterattack.
- ▶ The UN has not proven effective in pre-

vious efforts to stop Iraq from producing weapons of mass destruction.

- ▶ Saddam Hussein has already used weapons of mass destruction against the Kurds of Northern Iraq and won't hesitate to use them again. He is a terrible danger to all in the region and needs to be removed from power.
- ▶ Conflicting political interests within the UN would prevent a unified and meaningful response to a real and present danger.
- ▶ Saddam Hussein intentionally fuels instability in the region by sponsoring terrorism against Israel. He needs to be removed from office if the Middle East peace process is to move forward.
- ▶ As long as Saddam Hussein is in power, it will remain impossible to conduct effective weapons inspections in Iraq.
- ▶ Appeasement has proven to be an ineffective way of dealing with dictators.

Option 3: Reduce Our Foreign Policy Profile

Line of Reasoning: Although the United States has interests in the Middle East, no vital ones are directly or immediately threatened by Iraq. Saddam Hussein is more of a threat to his neighbors than he is to us. We want to see Saddam Hussein's biological, chemical, and nuclear capability controlled. However, following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, it would be unwise to take the lead on this issue. Our high-profile foreign policy programs have bred much resentment against us and created enemies who are intent on doing us harm. Expanding our international efforts now would only increase our vulnerability by increasing this resentment against us. We must lower our foreign policy profile and turn our attention to our own needs here at home, particularly homeland security. If we continue to single out Iraq, we run the risk of acting in opposition to most of the states in the region and fanning hatred of the United States. This would make us vulnerable to more terrorism. It would also threaten the flow of oil to our country. We should step back and encourage the states in the Middle East to play a more active role in dealing with Saddam Hussein.

Goals

- ▶ Reduce our visibility in the region to avoid becoming a target of further terrorism and violence.
- ▶ Improve relations with Iraq's neighbors.

U.S. Policies to Achieve These Goals

- ▶ Reduce the U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf.

- ▶ Let the Middle East states know that we consider this to be first and foremost a regional problem. Let them know we will support them if asked but that we will not take a leading role.

Underlying Beliefs

- ▶ Meddling in the affairs of other nations and peoples inevitably creates resentment against us.
- ▶ We should not send troops abroad or engage in air strikes unless the United States or its allies are under immediate threat and no other options exist to protect them.
- ▶ Military action might cause Saddam Hussein to use his weapons of mass destruction.

Criticisms

- ▶ If we do not take action to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq, we or our allies would eventually become targets of his weapons of mass destruction.
- ▶ Any successful UN engagement in the Middle East would probably depend on support from the United States. If the United States backed out, then world security would be jeopardized.
- ▶ It is unrealistic to think that the states in the region have the political will or the resources to take the leading role to address this issue. They would feel too vulnerable to retaliation.
- ▶ The United States cannot disengage from the Middle East—our economy depends on the oil we receive from the region.
- ▶ If we do not take action, we would once again let this dangerous dictator walk away unscathed. Others would learn only one lesson: they can operate outside the rule of law and get away with it. In the post September 11th environment, this position is irresponsible.
- ▶ After September 11, the way to reduce the threat of terrorism is to directly confront state sponsors of terrorism like Iraq.
- ▶ Nations around the world count on the United States to contain threats to a region's stability. We cannot just walk away from our role as a force for world stability.
- ▶ Like it or not, as the most powerful nation on Earth, the United States has the moral responsibility to confront threats to the safety of the world.
- ▶ Reducing our foreign policy profile and disengaging from international affairs would not solve any problems; it would only make them worse. ☹

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