

## Crisis with Iraq: Options in Brief

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**NOTE:** These options were developed prior to the start of war with Iraq in spring 2003.

### **OPTION 1: Act alone to remove Saddam Hussein from power and eliminate his weapons of mass destruction.**

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Since the 1991 Gulf War ended, Saddam Hussein 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 consistently prevented UN weapons inspectors from completing their task of dismantling his nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons programs. His incomplete and misleading report to the UN Security Council claiming that Iraq has no weapons of mass destruction, makes it clear that he is continuing to disregard international law. He has already used weapons of mass destruction against his own people and against Iran. He started two wars that ended up disasters, both for the countries attacked and for Iraq. He supports anti-Israeli terrorists. What's to keep him from passing off his weapons of mass destruction to Al Qaeda or other anti-US terrorist groups? Enough is enough. He cannot be deterred or contained. 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 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.

### **OPTION 2: Work with the international community to eliminate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.**

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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 1991 Gulf War, UN inspectors did more to reduce Saddam Hussein's nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons programs 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 of international law. The recent UN resolution—agreed to by Saddam Hussein—for renewed inspections is a solid step in the right direction. The United States must stand with the world community in support of the continuing UN weapons inspection process as defined in the recent UN resolution on Iraq, collaborate with the other members of the UN Security Council to determine whether Iraq is in full compliance with the resolution, and work with the UN to establish a long-term policy toward Iraq. Any military action should only be entered into if other efforts to disarm Iraq fail and as a result of a new UN Security Council resolution.

### **OPTION 3: Reject war—at least now—and continue to contain and deter Saddam Hussein.**

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We have successfully contained Saddam Hussein for twelve years. We can continue to do so. A war with Iraq would not be a necessary war—at least not now, not yet. The issue is Saddam Hussein's arsenal—or potential arsenal—of weapons of mass destruction. Yes, Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons against his own people and against Iran. Both were unable to stop him. But he also had chemical weapons at his disposal during the first Gulf War and, even as his own army was being destroyed, he did not resort to using them against U.S. or allied forces. The Soviet Union maintained a vast nuclear arsenal throughout most of the Cold War period but was deterred by the threat of retaliation from using these weapons or sharing them with allies or anti-West terrorists. So too, Iraq can be deterred from using its arsenal or passing such weapons on to terrorists. If our goal is security for the region and the world, the wisest course of action is vigilant containment of Iraq as long as it is under the leadership of Saddam Hussein. The current UN weapons inspections are one important step in this program. Only if Iraq departs from rationality and attacks another state or otherwise acts in a hostile fashion toward other states, should we consider war.

### **OPTION 4: Reject the use of U.S. military force and reduce our foreign policy profile.**

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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 (to the extent it exists) controlled. However, following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 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 will 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 will make us vulnerable to more terrorism. It also threatens the flow of oil to our country. While the UN has stepped in to take the lead in this crisis, we are seen as the leaders in this effort. We should step back from this issue and encourage the states in the Middle East to play a more active role in dealing with Saddam Hussein.

**“Crisis with Iraq” was developed in fall 2002.** It is provided as a supplement to post-war editions of teaching resources on Iraq published by the Choices Program at Brown University. Online resources are updated frequently. The complete options for Crisis with Iraq are available from the archives section of Teaching with the News on the Choices web site.

**Lesson Plan, Extension Activities & Additional Web Links** are available from the Resources section of the Choices Program web site—[www.choices.edu/resources](http://www.choices.edu/resources)

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