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Refugees from War in Iraq

What Happened in 1991 and What May Happen in 2003

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SUMMARY

The 1991 Gulf War produced nearly three million refugees. Almost all them left Iraq and Kuwait before the war started or after Desert Storm was over. The largest groups were Kurds and Shi'ites fleeing Saddam Hussein's vengeance after a failed post-war uprising, Palestinians driven out of Kuwait, and foreign workers who lost their jobs in Iraq and Kuwait.

The international community failed to anticipate the uprising against Saddam Hussein (even though the president of the United States called for it to take place) and was poorly equipped to deal with the massive humanitarian consequences. Ultimately, the victorious coalition intervened to save the Kurds by creating a safe area in the northern part of Iraq that solved the immediate humanitarian problem and enabled people to return home. No one intervened on behalf of the Shi'ites, most of whom were not able to find refuge in another country. Some estimates indicate up to 200,000 Shi'ites were killed between March and October 1991.

Refugee flows from a new Gulf war between Iraq and a US-led coalition are very scenario-dependent, but will not be a replay of 1991. Protected by the US and UK and controlling territory free from Saddam Hussein's control, the Kurds are the Iraqis least likely to be displaced in a new war. The other populations who moved en masse in the last war—the Palestinians, along with other Arabs and Asian guest workers—are no longer around to be displaced.

Fighting between a collapsing regime and its rebellious subjects poses the greatest risk to Iraqi civilians in a new war. The risk is particularly acute in the South, where grievances have intensified since 1991, but also in Baghdad which may now be a Shi'ite-majority city. Brutal tactics to repress opposition and revenge-taking by rebels could lead hundreds of thousands to leave their homes at least temporarily. Were Saddam Hussein to stage an effective defense of Baghdad—an unlikely event in the author's judgment—more than one million Baghdad residents could

The views expressed are personal ones and do not reflect the official policy or position of the National Defense University, the Department of Defense or the US Government, or the views of the Migration Policy Institute.

flee the fighting. In the worst-case scenario, Iraq's use of weapons of mass destruction could lead to millions of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Saddam Hussein's regime is the primary reason Iraqis have fled their homes and country. An effective alternative administration—whether by the US military, the UN, or a new Iraqi government—should enable IDPs and refugees to return to their homes. If, as is likely, the collapse of the Saddam Hussein regime is chaotic, it may take an occupation force or a new government some time to create conditions that will enable people to return home safely. This may be particularly true in the South, where Shi'ite rebels may have no functioning leadership structure.

In contrast, the quasi-democratic Kurdish administrations in the North will almost certainly emerge from a war unscathed, and possibly strengthened. Since Kurdish-controlled areas will be an easily accessible safe area for Iraqis, it could see a large influx of civilians during and after a war. The local authorities do not have the resources to cope with such an influx, and will require significant outside help. While the infrastructure to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian supplies is quite good in Iraqi Kurdistan, it would be useful if some supplies were in-country before the refugees arrived.

Certain categories of people will be especially vulnerable during and after regime change. These include the supporters of Saddam Hussein, Ba'ath Party members, and the security services, many of whom are responsible for human rights abuses and other serious crimes. Arabs resettled in Kurdish homes in Kirkuk, and other regime-held parts of Kurdistan, may find themselves suddenly homeless. Iraq has provided a base for radical and terrorist groups that likely will be targeted by the occupation forces of the US and its allies, or a new Iraqi regime.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Humanitarian supplies should be pre-positioned inside Iraqi Kurdistan to cope with a possible influx of Iraqis from government-controlled territory. Supplies can be stored in existing warehouses under

the auspices of NGOs, the Kurdistan Regional Governments, or (with an expansion of mandate) the United Nations.

2. Prophylactic and curative supplies should be stockpiled to deal with a possible use of biological and chemical weapons by the Iraqi regime against dissident Iraqis. At greatest risk are Shi'ites in the southern cities, who are likely to rebel against the regime as US forces approach. The Kurdish-controlled region is also vulnerable. In August 2002, Kurdish leaders formally asked the US Administration for antibiotics (including CIPRO), smallpox vaccines, and protective gear against chemical weapons attacks. While it is now too late to distribute supplies to the urban populations in Iraqi Kurdistan, it is still possible to deliver antibiotics to hospitals, to vaccinate Kurdish first responders, and to provide first responders and medical personnel with protective clothing. This should be done before the start of hostilities.

3. The United States and its allies should initiate discussions with Kurdish and Turkoman leaders regarding the return of displaced people to Kirkuk, and other areas now under government control that have historically had a large Kurdish and Turkoman population. The goal should be to devise clear procedures for returns, which then must be publicized to the displaced populations. A program for returns provides the best hope to avoid chaos and violence associated with spontaneous returns.

4. The US and allied military forces should establish procedures under which Iraqis fleeing the fighting or internal unrest can find sanctuary behind allied lines. Anti-regime Iraqis will need to be sheltered in a different location from fleeing supporters of the old regime.

5. A broad amnesty (for all but the top leadership) may be militarily useful in inducing those holding military and other positions in the current regime not to fight. However, an amnesty may further encourage Iraqis to administer summary justice to regime supporters. If there is an amnesty, it should be limited to Iraqi military personnel, and not include security personnel or Ba'ath Party officials. The US and its allies should publicize procedures under which Iraqis responsible for crimes will be tried, making clear that ad hoc justice is neither necessary nor tolerable.

6. Arrangements should be made to enable the orderly surrender of the Mojahideen-i-Khalq, the PKK (now Kadek), and other non-Iraqi armed groups operating in the country. Those involved in terrorism should be interned and eventually tried. The Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDP-I), which has operated in the north of Iraq for decades and whose leadership has been the victim of state-sponsored terrorism, should be left alone.

I: THE FIRST GULF WAR (1990–1991)

The 1991 Gulf War produced between two and three million refugees from Iraq, as well as significant movements of people from Kuwait and the other Gulf states. The largest single group of refugees was made up of Iraqi Kurds, 1.85 million of whom fled to the Turkish (450,000) and Iranian (1.4 million) borders in the aftermath of the failed March 1991 uprising. Palestinians constituted the second major group uprooted by the war, as 300,000 settled in Jordan after either being expelled from a liberated Kuwait and other Gulf states, or leaving an Iraq that no longer offered economic opportunities. More than 500,000 foreign workers lost their livelihoods as a result of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the ensuing war. These include several hundred thousand Egyptian laborers in Iraq, as well as Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans, Indians, and Filipinos who were the housekeepers, maids, construction workers, street cleaners, and manual laborers in Kuwait. Many of these departed Iraq and Kuwait via Jordan.

The war produced a smaller number of Iraqi Arab refugees. Some 37,000 Iraqis, mostly Shi'ites, became refugees in Saudi Arabia after the failed 1991 uprising. Up to 100,000 Iraqis escaped the fighting by going to Jordan, and to a lesser extent, Syria. Iran today hosts 530,000 Iraqi refugees, mostly Shi'ite Arabs, although many came long before, or years after, the Gulf War.

Most Iraqis who fled the country (or to the country's borders) did so after the Allied operations ended. They fled the regime's wrath after the March 1991 uprising in the North and South of the country collapsed. Stranded at the country's mountainous bor-

ders with Turkey and Iran, the Kurds died at such a rapid rate that the Allies had to re-intervene militarily in Iraq to find a solution. The Shi'ites did not have the same escape valve, and their suffering after the uprising was enormous. Those fortunate enough to make it to Iran (or Kuwait or Saudi Arabia) did not attract much attention, in part because these areas were much less accessible to western media.

Kuwait

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990 created the first group of refugees in the Gulf conflict. These included Kuwaitis caught outside their country and those who escaped across the desert after the invasion began, Asian guest workers who moved to camps in Iraq before being repatriated through Jordan, and Arab (mostly Egyptian) workers in Iraq who lost their livelihoods as a result of sanctions imposed on the country. These, too, mostly were repatriated by way of Jordan. A few thousand western men in Iraq and Kuwait were held as human shields at Iraqi military and industrial sites before finally being released in January 1991, just before the start of military operations.

After the liberation of Kuwait, most of its substantial Palestinian population left or was expelled. Kuwaitis saw Palestinians as a potential Iraqi fifth column, a perception abetted by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's decision to side with Iraq against Kuwait and by some high-level collaboration between the Iraqi occupation authorities and Palestinians in Kuwait (notably those managing the country's financial resources). Palestinians were also targeted in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, with a total of 300,000 resettling from the Gulf to Jordan.

After the liberation of their country, Kuwaitis did return home. Some of the Asian workers also returned to jobs in Kuwait, but many other jobs were lost permanently. The Arab laborers and professionals who had worked in Iraq prior to August 2, 1990 never returned.

The South

The Gulf War ended on February 27, 1991. On March 2, an Iraqi tank commander vented his frustration on one of the ubiquitous portraits of Saddam Hussein in the city of Basra, setting off a popular uprising in Iraq's second-largest city. Within a week, all the cities in the South were in rebel hands.

The immediate cause of the uprising was anger with Saddam Hussein for launching a catastrophic war, the second in 10 years. Historic and recent grievances gave it strength in the overwhelmingly Shi'ite South. Constituting 55 percent of Iraq's population, the Shi'ites have always been excluded from power by Iraq's Sunni Arabs.¹ In the 1980s, Saddam Hussein targeted the Iraqi Shi'ite clergy, fearing they wanted an Iranian-style Islamic revolution. (Khomeini had plotted his revolution while living for 18 years in exile in the holy city of Najaf in southern Iraq.) On top of their other grievances, Shi'ites also felt they had been the cannon fodder in the wars with Iran and the US.

As the uprising spread, Shi'ite mobs attacked Ba'athists, representatives of the security services, and others associated with Saddam Hussein's regime. Many met cruel deaths by mob justice. While it seems unlikely that anyone organized any part of the southern uprising, posters began to appear of Iran-based Iraqi Shi'ite clergy and of the Ayatollah Khomeini.²

The violent and religious character of the Shi'ite uprising helped deter other Arab Iraqis from staging their own revolts. By the middle of March, Saddam Hussein was able to regain control of the South, placing his cousin Ali Hasan Majid, notorious for his use of chemical weapons against the Kurds, in charge of operations. The revenge was characteristically brutal with public executions, bombarding of city centers, and the wholesale destruction of homes and mosques. By some estimates, up to 200,000 people died in the South between March and September 1991.

Some 40-100,000 Shi'ites made their way to Iran, while another 37,000 ended up in Saudi Arabia in the immediate aftermath of the failed uprising. Considering the magnitude of the repression, this was not a large refugee flow.

The North

On March 6, a Kurdish mob attacked the Ba'ath Party headquarters in the northern Iraqi town of Rania. Shortly thereafter, Kurdish militia financed by Saddam Hussein (and known locally as the "jash," or "little donkeys") changed sides to support the anti-Saddam Hussein uprising. By March 20, all the

Kurdish parts of Iraq—including the strategically and emotionally important city of Kirkuk—were in rebel hands.

Unlike the Shi'ites, the Kurds had a recognized political leadership—Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Masood Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)—that quickly asserted control over the North. As a result, the revolution in the North was much less violent than in the South, and by itself produced relatively few refugee or IDP flows.

On March 26, Iraq began its offensive to retake the North. Three days earlier, the Bush Administration had given Iraq permission to use helicopters against the Kurds. Their impact was devastating. The helicopters gave Iraq intelligence to target Kurdish peshmerga (guerillas whose name literally means "those who face death") and enabled Iraqi troops to cut off Kurdish units. Most importantly, the helicopters terrorized a Kurdish population that associated them with the delivery of chemical weapons.

Fearful of Saddam Hussein's revenge, the Kurds fled to the mountains along Iraq's borders with Turkey and Iran. Iraq completed its conquest of the main Kurdish cities by April 3, 1991. By April 7, about 450,000 Kurds were huddled on snowy mountainsides on the Iraqi side of the border with Turkey. Another 1.4 million were at, or near, the border with Iran.

Turkey refused to allow the Kurds into the country, but it did permit television cameras to record their suffering. The United States, along with European countries, moved to supplement the supplies being provided by the Turkish Army (and by Turkish Kurds). Initially, the US organized airdrops of pallets containing pre-packaged meals, tents, and rudimentary medical supplies. A few pallets killed Kurds on the ground. Some of the meals provided were at or past their use-by date, and others were considered culturally insensitive for including pork. By the end of April, the area was awash in food, much of it going to waste. (The author recalls landing on a helicopter pad of unused potatoes.)

The plight of the larger number of Kurds on the Iranian border received much less media attention, due to the area's comparative inaccessibility.

However, the humanitarian situation was also less severe. Iran admitted some groups of refugees and the physical conditions were generally less harsh than on the Turkish border. Also, the Iraqi military stopped (or were stopped by Kurdish peshmerga) well short of the border, allowing people to take refuge in villages and valleys rather than barren mountains.

Facing a deteriorating humanitarian situation and rising public outrage (but not wishing to re-engage militarily in Iraq), the US tried several half-measures for dealing with the crisis. One proposed plan would have stationed unarmed aid workers at feeding stations in the northern part of Iraq. Not surprisingly, the Kurds refused to return as long as Iraqi authorities remained in the area. Reluctantly, the United States and key allies (the UK, France, the Netherlands, and Turkey) created a safe area in the triangle formed by the cities of Amadiya, Dihok, and Zakho. Iraqi military and police were excluded from the area. Near Zakho, the US military erected a large tent city to accommodate refugees on their way home.

With the safe area established, the Kurds rapidly left the mountains for home. The safe area connected to an area in the east controlled by the Kurds from the time of the initial uprising. By October, the Kurds had taken control of the major cities of Sulaymaniyah and Irbil. The Zakho tent city was hardly used, underscoring the fact that the issues in the Kurdish crisis were security-related and political, not primarily humanitarian.

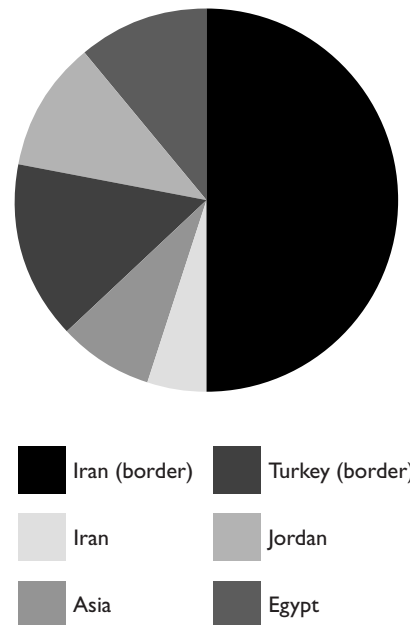
Lessons

The Allied coalition in 1991 failed to grasp the realities in Iraq, and therefore failed properly to prepare for the refugee flows. Both Kurds and Shi'ites had longstanding grievances against the Iraqi regime, of which the Bush Administration was well aware. In the buildup to Desert Storm, the administration highlighted the atrocities Saddam Hussein had committed against his fellow Iraqis, including the use of chemical weapons against the Kurds (atrocities ignored by previous US presidents). On February 15, 1991, in the midst of Desert Storm, President George H.W. Bush publicly called on the Iraqi people to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

Amazingly, the US administration never anticipated that Iraqi Shi'ites and Kurds (together making up 75-

80 percent of the Iraqi people) would try to do just that. In addition to deliberately letting the rebellion fail, the Bush Administration had no plan to deal with the humanitarian consequences of the failure. And, in spite of the fact that it was well-founded fear that drove nearly two million mostly urban Kurds to barren mountainsides, the Bush Administration initially treated the issue of Kurdish returns as a matter of food and shelter rather than of security.

Refugees and IDPs, 1990-1991



II: THE NEXT GULF WAR

War is inherently unpredictable. It is therefore impossible to say with any precision what refugee and IDP flows will follow a new Gulf war between a US-led coalition and Iraq. Just as it is clear that the war will be different from the 1991 war, so, too, will be the resulting humanitarian consequences.

The 1991 Gulf War had the limited objective of restoring Kuwait's independence. A new war will be aimed at removing Saddam Hussein (and his princi-

pal associates) from power. If it comes to war, Saddam Hussein will have no place to which he can retreat, and will face either a trial for multiple crimes or death. In short, he will have nothing to lose and therefore no reason to act with restraint. On the other hand, Iraq's capabilities are much degraded since the first Gulf War. Moreover, there is a growing expectation within Iraq of change, and this may make some Iraqi military commanders reluctant to execute orders that would cause mass casualties.

In 1991, the largest refugee flows were Kurds and third-country nationals. These flows are very unlikely to recur. The third-country nationals left in 1990 and have not returned.

The Kurds now live in a de facto independent state protected by a sizable Kurdish militia and US and British air power. In a war, Saddam Hussein would not have the military power to invade the North. He could create panic with a few chemical-weapon attacks on Kurdish cities, but probably could not take actions that would trigger another Kurdish exodus.

The conditions that created the uprisings in the South in 1991 continue to exist. Physical circumstances prevented large refugee flows from the South in 1991, despite the severe humanitarian consequences of the failed rebellion. Depending on how the war develops, a new uprising in the South could create large numbers of IDPs and refugees.

Fighting between Iraqi forces and those of the US and its allies, or internal rebellions, could trigger a major exodus from Baghdad and the Sunni Arab majority cities. Kirkuk is a particularly volatile place, since it is claimed by Kurds, Arabs, and Turkomen.

In most scenarios for a new Gulf war, the fighting is likely to generate more IDPs than refugees. The main factor causing people to want to leave Iraq in 1991 was fear of Saddam Hussein's vengeance. In a new war, most Iraqis will assume that the regime will fall. Therefore, they are likely only to want to avoid the fighting, rather than to flee the country permanently.

Assuming, as seems almost certain, that a coalition invasion will proceed from the South, the Shi'ite

majority areas will quickly come under the protection of coalition forces. As noted above, the Kurdish areas are very unlikely to produce significant refugees this time. These factors, combined with the reluctance of neighboring countries to accept refugees, will also reduce the number leaving the country as compared to 1991—except in the most catastrophic circumstances.

FACTORS AFFECTING REFUGEE AND IDP MOVEMENTS

The following are some of the factors that will affect refugees and IDP movements:

- **The intensity of the fighting.** A swift, low-casualty conflict is likely to produce fewer refugees than a prolonged war, especially one that involves urban warfare.
- **The willingness of neighboring states to accept refugees.** Turkey is adamant that it will not accept Iraqi refugees, and military operations may make it difficult for large numbers of people to reach Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, or Kuwait. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait likely will be unwilling to accept large numbers of refugees. Jordan has said it will not take in even more Iraqis, but probably will accept some. Syria, in contrast, has said it will accept refugees. Iran is geographically the most accessible country for most Iraqis, and has in the past been more open to receiving Iraqi refugees, at least on a temporary basis.
- **Revolution in the South.** In 1991, Shi'ite rebels took over all of southern Iraq including the major cities of Basra, Najaf, Karbala, and Nasiriyah. The uprisings could again take place in 2003, creating population movements of two kinds: (1) the flight of people associated with the old regime who fear retribution, and (2) the flight of civilians who fear brutal measures by the regime to put down the uprising.
- **The Kurds claim Kirkuk City and province as part of historic Kurdistan.** Since the 1958 revolution, successive Iraqi regimes have sought to change the ethnic make-up of oil-rich Kirkuk by settling Arabs in the province and displacing the Kurdish population. This trend has accelerated since 1991, and to date more than 300,000 Kurdish residents of Kirkuk have been expelled to the Kurdish-governed enclave. Kirkuk

City is also home to a sizable Turkomen population. Turkey is keen to prevent the Kurdish political parties from seizing Kirkuk (and thus acquiring the possible economic base for an independent state) and could use the presence of the Turkomen as a pretext to intervene.

- **Kirkuk could produce refugees and IDPs in several ways.** Kurdish IDPs from Kirkuk now living in camps in the Kurdish enclave likely will try to return home with the collapse of the Saddam Hussein regime. Kurdish leaders say they expect Arabs settled in the Kurds' homes will leave when the regime collapses; it is quite possible that returning Kurds will evict Arabs from their homes.
- **The two main Kurdish parties now say they will not try to take Kirkuk militarily, even though the reconstituted Kurdish parliament recently adopted a draft constitution that would make Kirkuk the capital of their region.** Should they change their position, this could set up conflict with Turkey, with the government in Baghdad, and possibly between the two Kurdish parties themselves. Any of these developments could create refugees and IDPs.
- **Mosul and Diyala.** The Kurdistan Regional Assembly claims parts of Mosul and Diyala provinces now under government control. As in Kirkuk, ethnic Kurds have been driven out of these areas and replaced by Arabs. None of these areas carry the emotional freight of Kirkuk, but still could be a source of conflict that produces refugees and IDPs.
- **Christians.** Iraq is home to some 800,000 Christians, principally orthodox Assyrians and Catholic Chaldeans. Most of Iraq's Christians live in the Kurdish-controlled region around Dihok and Shaqlawa, in Mosul, and in Baghdad. While the roots of the Iraqi regime are avowedly secular and the regime includes Christians in its top ranks, Christian minorities have suffered persecution at the hands of the regime. Furthermore, Saddam Hussein has tried in recent years to wrap himself in the mantle of Islam. How this will affect Iraq's Christians in a war (if at all) is unclear. In general, minorities tend to suffer disproportionately in times of war and internal disorder.
- **Sectarian Conflict.** While Iraq's modern history is one of repression of the Shi'ite majority by the Sunni Arab minority, both Shi'ites and Sunnis assert there is no history of sectarian conflict. Nonetheless, many in the Iraqi opposition fear that war will bring an explosion of Shi'ite reprisals. In particular, many fear that Shi'ites from the impoverished parts of Baghdad will loot the city before order can be restored.
- **The Kurdish enclave.** The Kurdish-ruled part of Iraq will be allied with the coalition forces against Saddam Hussein and will be a staging area for at least some military activities. The US is already working closely with the Kurdish leaders and will certainly leave the local administration intact through any war. With US protection, and a sizable Kurdish militia, Iraqi Kurdistan is likely to be the one safe part of Iraq in the coming war. As such, it may be the destination of choice for other Iraqis fleeing a war and revolution in the South.
- **Weapons of Mass Destruction.** The Iraqi regime used chemical weapons against Kurdish towns and villages in the 1987-1988 anfal campaign. Fear that they might be used again stimulated the mass exodus of Kurds to the Iranian and Turkish borders in 1991. Should Iraq use chemical or biological weapons this time around, it could produce mass panic. Iraq's ability to deliver weapons by air presumably will be severely limited in a new Gulf War, but two major Kurdish-ruled cities, Dihok and Irbil, are in easy range of artillery that could be used to deliver unconventional weapons. Chemical-weapons attacks in Kurdistan may lead people to move around within the Kurdish region, but not necessarily to flee to the borders. The provision of protective equipment and medicines to treat victims of chemical and biological weapons within Kurdistan would also limit the number of refugees the attacks might create.
- **The Shi'ites are another possible target for biological and chemical-weapons attack, in the event of another uprising.** Such use could lead to a stampede to safety either in territory controlled by the US-led coalition, or outside the country.
- **Coalition air strikes could release chemical weapons, and this could cause panic.** In the direst case, Iraq could launch chemical, radiological, or biological

weapons on an Israeli city and Israel might respond with a nuclear weapon. Such an event would certainly trigger mass flight among the survivors.

FOUR SCENARIOS:

How these factors play out depends on how the war evolves. The following are four possible scenarios that could generate refugees and IDPs. Obviously, these are educated guesses, and the actual course of events will be at least somewhat different. The scenarios are:

- Quick Iraqi Surrender
- Chaotic Iraqi Collapse
- Prolonged Iraqi Resistance in Urban Areas
- Catastrophic Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)

Quick Iraqi Surrender

From a refugee/IDP perspective, this is the best-case scenario. Coalition military operations quickly neutralize Iraqi resistance. Because of air strikes and special operations, Iraq has limited ability to retaliate against coalition forces, neighboring countries, or dissident Iraqis. Realizing that resistance is futile and fatal, much of the Iraqi army chooses not to fight. Air strikes damage Iraq's capacity to deliver WMD, and Iraqi commanders are unwilling to execute orders to use any remaining weapons of this type.

While neutralized as a fighting force, the Iraqi Army still controls population centers in the southern and central parts of the country. It is able to execute an orderly surrender to coalition forces. To avoid a siege of Baghdad, the Iraqi military removes Saddam Hussein and his top cadres. Coalition forces, working with local police and military, quickly take over control of major urban areas. While there are scattered cases of retribution against the old regime, these are kept to a minimum.

Implications for Refugees

This scenario would produce relatively few IDPs and refugees. Supporters of Saddam Hussein's regime would try to disappear, possibly attempting to make their way to the West. For regime supporters, Jordan, Turkey (via the Kurdish-controlled areas) and Syria are the most likely avenues for exit. These supporters

will include people with the financial resources to bribe their way into other countries (as well as across Kurdish territory). Representing the current Iraqi elite, many may have relatives in Europe and the United States. Many will have participated in grave human rights abuses, which should make western countries reluctant to offer them asylum or refugee status. Returned to Iraq, however, they would face trials and possibly serious penalties.

Other Iraqis (including those living in the Kurdish-controlled area) might try to use the looming conflict as a pretext to migrate to Europe, hoping that European countries would be unwilling to return people to a war zone even if they did not otherwise qualify as refugees.

Implications for IDPs

Civilians may move out of urban areas for fear of coalition air strikes and ground assaults. Other movements may occur to escape feared or actual internal unrest. This could include officials of the regime moving out of Shi'ite-majority cities, Sunni Arabs moving back to areas where they are a majority, and Arab settlers leaving Kirkuk.

Chaotic Iraqi Collapse

This case also involves a quick end to Iraqi military resistance. However, neither the Iraqi Army nor any other institution has the ability or the will to maintain order. Shi'ite uprisings take place in Basra, Najaf, Karbala, Nasiriyah, and other southern cities. In Baghdad, Shi'ites rebel and loot the city. Thousands die and hundreds of thousands are made homeless. There are also uprisings in the North, which in Mosul also involves conflict among Arabs, Turkomen, Christians, and Kurds. In the North, Kurds "spontaneously" return to Kirkuk, and Arab settlers flee. Coalition forces move into Iraqi cities, but in many places have no local authorities with whom they can work. Unwilling to take over police functions, the coalition cannot quickly re-establish law and order.

Implications for Refugees

The refugee flows in this scenario likely will be similar to those in the first scenario, comprising officials of the old regime and economic migrants capitalizing on the political chaos. Shi'ites escaping fighting in southern cities could create a sizable flow of refugees

to Iran, and perhaps a few will head for Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Implications for IDPs

Chaos could create massive numbers of IDPs temporarily fleeing unrest and fighting in the main Iraqi cities.

Prolonged Iraqi Resistance in Urban Areas

In the third scenario, the Saddam Hussein regime successfully employs a strategy of urban warfare in Baghdad, and possibly other parts of the Sunni Arab heartland. Rebellions and/or coalition forces quickly cost Saddam Hussein control of the South as well as Kirkuk and Mosul. However, loyal Republican Guard units stage a block-by-block defense of Baghdad, and possibly of Tikrit, Ar-Ramadi, and Samarra. Urban fighting costs several thousand coalition casualties, and tens of thousands of Iraqi casualties. A substantial part of Baghdad's four million people flee the fighting, and the homes and infrastructure that support two million people are destroyed.

Implications for Refugees

In addition to the refugee flows predicted under the previous two scenarios, prolonged urban fighting and the ensuing destruction of homes and infrastructure could lead more Iraqis to try to get out of the country, either to receive humanitarian assistance more efficiently or to start new lives elsewhere.

Implications for IDPs

Urban fighting will cause hundreds of thousands of people, or even several million, to try to flee Baghdad, and other cities in the Sunni Arab heartland. The actual number able to flee will depend, among other things, on the willingness of the regime to let civilians (whom it may regard as useful shields against coalition attack) escape from the cities. This scenario posits massive destruction, which means that IDPs are likely to need shelter and essential supplies long after the fighting ends.

The Catastrophic Scenario

In the fourth scenario, Saddam Hussein uses chemical, biological, and/or radiological weapons against Israel, the Kurds, Shi'ite rebels, and the Allied coalition. Thousands die in Israeli cities, and hundreds of thousands die in attacks on the Kurdish-held cities of

Dihok, Irbil, and Sulaymaniyah. Israel has warned it would respond to an Iraqi WMD attack on its soil, and has hinted at the use of nuclear weapons. Depending on the yield, an Israeli nuclear attack on Baghdad could kill between 500,000 and two million people.

Implications for Refugees

Unless promptly stopped by Coalition forces, the use of chemical or biological weapons against the Kurds could lead up to two million Kurds to evacuate Kurdish-held cities. While most will find shelter elsewhere in Kurdish-held territory, significant numbers may try to enter Turkey, Iran, or Syria—particularly if adequate medical treatment is not available in Iraqi Kurdistan. The use of chemical or biological weapons against Shi'ites in rebel-held southern cities could send millions fleeing to Iran, and some lesser number heading to Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. A retaliatory nuclear attack on Baghdad could lead some of the survivors to try to get out of Iraq for safety or to find medical treatment.

Implications for IDPs

Chemical weapons could empty the cities and towns in the areas where they are used. A nuclear attack would empty a city so attacked and might lead to a panicked exodus from any other city still controlled by the regime. Because of the persistent effects of chemical and biological weapons, and the destructive and radioactive effects of nuclear weapons, the use of any of these weapons could mean that populations remain internally displaced for a long period of time, with serious health and other consequences.

Which Scenario?

All evidence suggests that Saddam Hussein's regime is deeply unpopular with the vast majority of Iraqis. Eighty percent of Iraqis are Shi'ites, Kurds, or Christians—that is, from groups that the dictator has brutally repressed during his three decades in power. While he does have support from some Sunni Arabs, notably among his Tikrit-based tribe, others may not support him, especially if his cause seems lost. The Iraqi Army is clearly much weaker than the force that put up minimal resistance to the coalition in 1991. The great imponderable is whether the elite Republican Guards will remain loyal to Saddam Hussein, or also decide that there is no point perishing in defense of a lost cause. It seems most likely

that some Republican Guard units will fight for a time, while others will melt away.

A rapid collapse is much more likely than prolonged resistance. Based on the experience of 1991, however, chaos is more likely than an orderly surrender. Resentment against the regime is likely to boil over into inchoate violence in the southern cities and Shi'ite parts of Baghdad. While the Iranian-based Shi'ite resistance movement, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, clearly has support in the South, it is doubtful that it can exercise authority over many places in the immediate aftermath of a war. Coalition forces are likely to enter cities (possibly including Baghdad) that are in the midst of their own internal conflicts and score-settling. Mosul and Samarra may be somewhat less violent, but Kirkuk could become very bloody as displaced Kurds expel Arabs. We presume that Americans will quickly deploy to Kirkuk to keep Turkey from intervening, but the Americans may be incapable of preventing ethnic conflict in the city. In all scenarios, except the last, the Kurdish-controlled North is likely to be quiet.

With the US and its allies determined to remove his regime from power, Saddam Hussein personally will have no incentive not to use his weapons of mass destruction. Saddam Hussein appears to have very limited, if any, ability to attack Israel), and the coalition should be able to prevent him from delivering any such weapons by air. Furthermore, Iraqi military commanders will be reluctant to carry out orders actually to use WMD. It is possible, perhaps likely, that chemical weapons will be used in the war but not on a scale that would lead to massive refugee/IDP movements in the North or South. It seems unlikely that Saddam Hussein will be able to attack Israel with WMD, and unlikely that Israel will respond with a nuclear weapon to a small number of chemically loaded missiles. However, the risk of the catastrophic scenario is real if small.

Numbers

Predictions about numbers of refugees and IDPs are difficult to make and inherently speculative. Nonetheless, planners need numbers to prepare for various alternatives. The following table provides very preliminary estimates of refugee flows from Iraq and possible new IDPs within Iraq under the four scenar-

ios discussed above. It also assigns probabilities for each scenario.

Probability	Scenario	Refugees	IDPs
25 %	Quick Surrender	20,000	200,000
50 %	Chaotic Collapse	50,000	1,000,000
20 %	Urban Warfare	75,000	3,000,000
5 %	Catastrophic	4,000,00	11,000,000

THE KURDISTAN REGION

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq is not likely to be the site of any fighting between Iraq and the US and its allies. It is already free from Saddam Hussein and his repressive apparatus.

Kurdistan has two administrations. A Kurdistan Democratic Party Regional Government based in Irbil governs the northern part of the region, and a Patriotic Union of Kurdistan Government runs the eastern part out of Sulaymaniyah. In the 1990s, these two parties fought a civil war, but in recent years they have cooperated. With regime change looming in Iraq, cooperation between the parties has increased significantly. Both governments are likely to emerge from a war stronger.

Iraqi Kurdistan will be a safe area, and could attract large numbers of Iraqis fleeing war, Saddam Hussein's repression, and/or civil war. The Kurdish governments have only limited local resources to cope with such an influx, and will certainly require external assistance. As long as Turkey, Iran, and/or Syria cooperate, supplies do not necessarily have to be stockpiled inside Kurdistan before the refugees come. Infrastructure within Kurdistan is reasonably good and supplies can be delivered fairly quickly. Certainly supplies should be stockpiled nearby, and it would be useful to have some supplies inside Kurdistan itself. There are ample storage facilities inside Kurdistan maintained by the UN and international NGOs.

SPECIAL CASES

When the war ends, most IDPs and refugees should be able to return home, provided the destruction is not too extensive. Three groups may have special problems. These are (1) Arabs who had been settled in Kirkuk and other Kurdish areas, (2) political supporters of the Saddam Hussein regime and members of his repressive apparatus, and (3) members of non-Iraqi movements that have found haven and support within Iraq. The Kirkuk Arabs can be resettled within Iraq, presumably in their villages of origin.

The Ba'athists and members of the security services will face severe retribution. However, few countries will want to accept such people as refugees, given that many have been complicit in genocide, torture, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Establishing an effective judicial system to process these people will be key to avoiding mob justice.

Iraq is the base for a number of paramilitary and/or terrorist organizations, some of which have significant numbers of people, including family members. An Iraq dominated by the US and its allies will certainly want to take action against some of them, although every effort should be made to protect civilians associated with these groups from the effects of military action. The most problematic are (1) the PKK (the Kurdistan Workers Party), (2) the Mojahideen-i-Khalq, and (3) the Ansar al Islam. All have been designated terrorist organizations by the US State Department.

The PKK has used northern Iraq as a base of operations against Turkey, and its presence has provided a pretext for Turkey to deploy troops into Iraq's Kurdish region. While Barzani's KDP cooperated with Turkey in anti-PKK operations in the 1990s, there are PKK camps still present in Kurdish-controlled territory. Although the PKK has suspended military operations against Turkey since 1999, Turkey and the US may wish to eliminate the PKK presence. The PKK has at least 5,000 fighters and an unknown number of civilians in northern Iraq.

The Mojahideen-i-Khalq is an Iranian paramilitary group that has been supported by Saddam Hussein since the 1970s. It helped his regime put down the 1991 uprising in the North and it will be targeted by

a successor Iraqi government, and possibly by the coalition forces. While the PKK could conceivably move across the border to Iran, the Mojahideen-i-Khalq has no place to go. It numbers several thousand including civilians.

The Ansar al Islam is a radical Islamic group that has imposed a Taliban-style rule on several Kurdish villages adjacent to the Iranian border east of Halabja. It has links to al-Qaeda and is at war with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan whose Regional Government includes the villages occupied by Ansar al Islam.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDP-I) has operated in the northern part of Iraq for decades. While financially supported (at times) by Saddam Hussein, the KDP-I operates in Kurdish-controlled territory and has excellent relations with the two principal Iraqi Kurdish parties. The KDP-I is a democratic movement whose leaders have themselves been victims of Iranian-sponsored state terrorism. (Five of its leaders were assassinated by Iranian agents in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s). The KDP-I, which has never engaged in terrorism, should be left alone.

Endnotes

1 Sunni Arabs have held the top positions in the Iraqi government and military from the founding of the country, even though they make up not more than 20 percent of the population. Baghdad, once the stronghold of Sunni Arabs, probably has a Shi'ite majority.

2 There were different explanations for these posters. Some attributed them to Iranian agents or Iraqi Shi'ite groups residing in Teheran. Others said Saddam Hussein's agents had put up the posters to frighten Sunni Arabs and more secular Shi'ites.

The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit think-tank dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide. The institute provides analysis, development, and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at the local, national, and international levels. It aims to meet the rising demand for pragmatic responses to the challenges and opportunities that migration presents in an ever more integrated world. MPI produces the Migration Information Source website, at www.migrationinformation.org.

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