

WAR WITH IRAQ IS NOT IN AMERICA'S NATIONAL INTEREST

As scholars of international security affairs, we recognize that war is sometimes necessary to ensure our national security or other vital interests. We also recognize that Saddam Hussein is a tyrant and that Iraq has defied a number of U.N. resolutions. But military force should be used only when it advances U.S. national interests. War with Iraq does not meet this standard.

- Saddam Hussein is a murderous despot, but no one has provided credible evidence that Iraq is cooperating with al Qaeda.
- Even if Saddam Hussein acquired nuclear weapons, he could not use them without suffering massive U.S. or Israeli retaliation.
- The first Bush Administration did not try to conquer Iraq in 1991 because it understood that doing so could spread instability in the Middle East, threatening U.S. interests. This remains a valid concern today.
- The United States would win a war against Iraq, but Iraq has military options—chemical and biological weapons, urban combat—that might impose significant costs on the invading forces and neighboring states.
- Even if we win easily, we have no plausible exit strategy. Iraq is a deeply divided society that the United States would have to occupy and police for many years to create a viable state.
- Al Qaeda poses a greater threat to the U.S. than does Iraq. War with Iraq will jeopardize the campaign against al Qaeda by diverting resources and attention from that campaign and by increasing anti-Americanism around the globe.

The United States should maintain vigilant containment of Iraq—using its own assets and the resources of the United Nations—and be prepared to invade Iraq if it threatens to attack America or its allies. That is not the case today. We should concentrate instead on defeating al Qaeda.

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