

A Survey of the Policies of the United States Towards Iraq Since 1998: From Inconsistency to Malaise

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Abstract

The policy of the United States towards Iraq since the commencement of Operation Desert Fox (16 December 1998) is both confusing, and confused. President Saddam Husayn of Iraq is succeeding in a propaganda war against the United States as Western allies are withdrawing their support for unremitting bombings and sanctions. Washington needs to take strong, decisive, and immediate action. It must either provide real material support for Husayn's ouster, or Washington must take the leadership role in trying to give the newly-formed United Nations weapons inspection commission (UNMOVIC), the necessary political and technical tools to renew its mandate because Iraq's development of weapons of mass destruction is currently unmonitored.

In the first section of my paper I will analyze the United States' declared policy or policies on Iraq, immediately prior to and after Desert Fox. I will also highlight the contradictions in these policies by comparing and contrasting Washington's official policies (stated at international forums) with the policies rooted in the Iraq Liberation Act of 31 October 1998. In the second section of the paper, I will review the policies of the United States leading to and after the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1284 (17 December 1999) which established UNMOVIC.

I will argue that the inherent contradictions in U.S. policy on Iraq, which are partly responsible for the inability of UNMOVIC to return to Iraq, may have dire security consequences for several key states in the Middle East. The situation in Iraq has already damaged the norms of future international arms control mechanisms and the cohesiveness of the resolve of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to deal with belligerent states such as Iraq in the future. Moreover, the current American-led sanctions on Iraq are destroying the fabric of the Iraqi society, which not only is causing a humanitarian catastrophe, but also is responsible for systematically eliminating the Iraqi middle class. An

Iraqi middle class is a prerequisite if a transformation to democracy can ever come into existence. I will conclude by offering recommendations on how the United States can lead UN efforts in reestablishing an effective weapons mentoring regime in Iraq while simultaneously assisting the Iraqi society find an alternative to the regime of Saddam Husayn.