



---

## Lesson: Predicting How the U.S. Government Will Respond to the Iraqi Government

This lesson looks back at the history of U.S. relations with Iraq in order to better understand U.S. objectives today. The lesson asks students to focus on critical choice points in U.S. policies on Iraq. By attempting to predict U.S. policy choices, students will not only understand what happened in the history which has led us to today's crisis, but also understand that there were real possibilities of creating a different policy.

Expect that the students will be disturbed to learn much of this information which has been omitted or overlooked in the typical portrayals of U.S. Iraqi relations. Help students understand this history and to become critical without developing a generalized cynicism.

The lesson will take two to three class periods plus an additional one to two class periods for the film.

1. Inform students that they will learn the history of U.S. Iraqi relations by examining crucial choice-points that U.S. leaders had. Students must try to predict how the U.S. will respond in each case and explain the likely rationale of U.S. leaders. Inform students that they will later learn what the real decisions were.
2. Put students in groups of three and distribute the first situation. Have students examine each problem (one at a time, each on a half sheet of paper, before examining the next situation). Have them discuss in their groups and have each student write their predictions and the likely reasons for them. Ask some of the students to share their group's answers and rationale, and pass out the next problem and repeat until you finish all ten problems. (this can take one and a half to two class periods)
3. After students are finished with all ten problems, hand out the answers and read them together out loud (answers to choice situations are in bold). Review the writing assignment (at the end) first. Tell students to highlight and take notes on essential information to help them on their writing assignment they will do at the end. After each briefly have a few student compare the real decisions with their predictions. Discuss quote from Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy wrote "The U.S.-Iraqi relationship is . . . important to our long-term political and economic objectives." What were U.S. political and economic objectives in the Middle East? If not showing the video, inform students that former U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, once said: "Oil is too important a commodity to be left in the hands of the Arabs." What does that reveal about U.S. political and economic objectives?
4. Assign writing homework or show video next. (half to one full period)

After explaining homework, start the video [Hidden Wars of Desert Storm](#), an historical documentary that reviews the history of US-Iraqi relations. Inform students that the film will give more information to understand how the U.S. made its decisions in relation to Iraq. Also, inform students that the beginning of the film may be a little overwhelming with broader background history, but the film will review many of the historical choice-points that the students made predictions on. The analysts and experts in the video provide interpretations about U.S. goals for what appears to be an inconsistent foreign policy (e.g. former U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, once said: "Oil is too important a commodity to be left in the hands of the Arabs."). Pause the video to direct attention to these explanations. If you have time discuss the film at the end, using the film transcript (with the film) to explain anything they may have missed. (60 minute video plus time for discussion and debrief)

### Recommended extensions.

Return to the present day crisis to examine the current U.S. policy and how interest in oil is a factor

As many people including prominent government officials of U.S. allies have accused the U.S. leaders of wanting to go to war with Iraq for oil, examine data on oil exports from the Middle East. Point out that the majority of oil from the Middle East gets exported to Japan, Europe and other parts of Asia and Africa. In light of these issues, have students critically revisit President Bush Sr. appeal "Our jobs, our way of life, our own freedom and the freedom of friendly countries around the world will suffer if control of the world's great oil reserves fell in the hands of than one man, Saddam Hussein."

The following are good articles that closely examines the oil factor:

**Iraq: the Struggle for Oil**

<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/oil/2002/08jim.htm>

**U.S. Oil Policy in the Middle East**

<http://www.foreignpolicy-infocus.org/briefs/vol2/v2n4oil.html>

(article discusses that although US consumers receive little of Middle East oil, U.S. and British corporations control and profit from much of the oil exports to the entire world.

**Persian Gulf Oil and Gas Exports Fact Sheet** <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/pgulf.html>

(the net oil imports from the Persian Gulf graph points out the U.S. receives a minority of this oil)

**Hitting OPEC by Way of Baghdad** <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/oil/2002/1028opec.htm>

Article from corporate journal Forbes about American and British interests in Iraqi oil.

**Analysis: Oil and the Bush cabinet** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1138009.stm>

**Predicting How the U.S. Government Will Respond to the Iraqi Government**

Predict how the U.S. government will respond in each case and explain the likely reasons for its decisions. Range of possible options can include changes or additions to one or more of the following:

1. Use military force
2. Use economic sanctions to discourage undesirable behavior
3. Officially criticize actions
4. Ignore the actions
5. Support with military aid
6. Support with economic and humanitarian aid
7. Other response (explain)

**1982**, Iraq is now in the second year of war against Iran, its neighboring country. An Islamic revolution recently overthrew the Shah, the King of Iran, who was supported by the U.S. State Department and C.I.A. U.S. officials are concerned that if Iran begins to dominate the region, "anti-American extremist" Shiite-Muslim factions could spread to pro-U.S. oil-rich countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Some U.S. officials are considering taking Iraq off the list of sponsors of terrorism, while many in Congress object. The U.S. might begin to sell weapons to Iraq in order to prevent Iranian power and influence in this region. What will the U.S. government do?

**The Reagan-Bush administration took Iraq off its list of countries that support terrorism, and sold weapons despite heated objections from some members of Congress.**

**1983**, Donald Rumsfeld, President Reagan's special envoy (and who will later become Pres. G.W. Bush's Secretary of Defense), meets with Saddam Hussein. Rumsfeld knows that Saddam has been working on nuclear weapons. In 1984 Rumsfeld meets again with Saddam right after reports that the Iraqi military is using chemical gas almost everyday against Iranian soldiers. Iraq had been losing the war against Iran up until then. (The use of chemical weapons was outlawed by the 1925 Geneva Protocol as weapons of mass destruction.) Some members of the U.S. government want to allow Iraq to buy equipment including computers, dual-use chemicals, anthrax bacteria, and helicopters. They also consider giving satellite information to Iraq to aid them in their fight against Iran. How will the U.S. government respond to reports of chemical weapons?

**The U.S. government:**

1. restored full diplomatic relations;
2. allowed American corporations such as Union Carbide and Honeywell to sell Iraq supplies);
3. gave billions of dollars of loan credits to Iraq;
4. gave intelligence information to help Iraq fight Iran.  
In private, the U.S. considered "any major reversal of Iraq's fortunes as a strategic defeat for the West." (National Security Defense Directive 114 and sworn affidavit from former National Security Council official Howard Teicher) Rumsfeld did not criticize Saddam when he met with him but only mentioned in passing to the Iraqi foreign minister that Iraq's use of chemical weapons "inhibited" U.S. efforts to assist Iraq.

**1988**, Saddam orders his military to drop bombs with poisonous mustard gas, sarin, vx gas and tabun against the Kurds (an ethnic minority group) in northern Iraq. Saddam's cousin in the government known as "Ali Chemical" says, "Who is going to say anything? The international community?" Many officials in Congress, the State Dept. and White House are concerned about Saddam's use of banned weapons. The U.S. Senate considers a resolution that proposes sanctions against Iraq. What will the U.S. government do?

**The White House under Ronald Reagan and George Bush blocked the Senate resolutions for sanctions. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy wrote "The U.S.-Iraqi relationship is . . . important to our long-term political and economic objectives . . . We believe that economic sanctions will be useless or counterproductive to influence the Iraqis." Michael Dobbs reports in the Washington Post (12/30/03) that Iraqi gassing of the Kurds "provoked outrage on Capitol Hill and renewed demands for sanctions against Iraq. The State Dept. and White House were also outraged-- but not to the point of doing anything that might seriously damage relations with Baghdad. . .**

**Although US arms manufacturers were not as deeply involved as German or British companies selling weaponry to Iraq, the Reagan administration effectively turned a blind eye to the export of 'dual use' items such as chemical precursors and steel tubes that can have military and civilian applications. In December of 1988, Dow Chemical sold \$1.5 million of pesticides to Iraq which could be used as chemical warfare agents."**

**July 1990**, Saddam Hussein accuses its neighbor, Kuwait of drilling \$2.4 billion worth of Iraqi oil at the border between Iraq and Kuwait while it was locked in war with Iran and also bringing down the international price of oil by over-selling. Iraq argued that this practice caused its treasury to lose billions of dollars while it was desperately in debt from war. Saddam calls this an "economic war" and demands \$10 billion in compensation, threatening to go war against Kuwait. The Kuwaiti government ignores these demands and Saddam amasses troops at the border. The U.S. government sees Kuwait as a friend in the region. Saddam checks to see what is the U.S. stance on his threat to invade Kuwait. The U.S. Ambassador April Glaspie told him "We're watching you. We're concerned about the bellicose statements that you've been issuing. But our fundamental feeling is that we have no direct vested interest in Arab-Arab disputes, including the dispute that you're having with the Kuwaitis over the mutual border that you share." Saddam is likely confused about whether the U.S. will take a stand on this dispute. Will the U.S. help settle the conflict to help maintain peace in the Middle East? Will they clearly warn Saddam not to invade? What will the U.S. government do?

**The U.S. government maintains the stance that the U.S. does not have an opinion on Arab-Arab conflicts while secretly preparing for war if Iraq invades. In July, the Pentagon was busy running its computerized command post exercise, initiated in late 1989 specifically to explore possible responses to "the Iraqi threat"-- which, in the new war plan 1002-90, had replaced "the Soviet threat"-- the exercise dealing with an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait or Saudi Arabia or both. [William Blum author of Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since WWII cites a) Major James Blackwell, US Army Ret. Thunder in the Desert: The Strategy and Tactics of the Persian Gulf War; b) Triumph "Without Victory: The Unreported History of the Persian Gulf War; c) Air Force Magazine 3/91 p. 82 and d) Newsweek, 1/28/91 p. 61] At the war games exercise at the Naval War College in Newport, RI, participants were also being asked to determine the most effective American response to a hypothetical invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.**

After the final attempt at negotiation, the Iraqis walked out on talks when the Kuwaitis refused to meet their demands. On **August 2, 1990**, Saddam Hussein invades Kuwait. The United Nations Security Council and the Arab League immediately condemned the Iraqi invasion. Four days later, in Resolution 661 the Security Council imposed an economic embargo on Iraq that prohibited nearly all trade with Iraq. Iraq responded to the sanctions by annexing Kuwait on August 8, prompting the exiled Kuwaiti monarchy to call for a stronger international response. With control of Kuwait, Saddam has control of one-fifth of the world oil supplies. If Saddam were to continue to invade into Saudi Arabia, he would have control of 40% of the world's oil. Saddam indicates that he would be willing to negotiate a withdrawal from Kuwait in exchange for his demands. Arab countries want a chance to mediate in order to resolve the conflict peacefully. Many American citizens are weary of another war, after the experience of Vietnam. There are many in Congress who also question the idea of going to war. Will the U.S. try to negotiate a diplomatic solution or prepare to go to war against the Iraq's invasion? What will the U.S. government do?

**The U.S. government only gave 48 hours for Arab mediation and agrees to only one brief attempt at negotiation in January 1991 (one week before war). The U.S. convinces Saudi Arabia to allow U.S. troops to amass over 200,000 troops for war against Iraq. In November, Saddam takes hostages to use as "human shields" to ward off attack. In November, the U.S. leads the UN Security Council to pass a resolution demanding that Iraq withdraw unconditional by Jan. 15 or face a U.N. military action. President Bush (Sr.) appeals to the American people, "Our jobs, our way of life, our own freedom and the freedom of friendly countries around the world will suffer if control of the world's great oil reserves fell in the hands of than one man, Saddam Hussein."**

**Jan. 17, 1991**, the U.S. is leading the United Nations coalition in a war to make Saddam's troops retreat from Kuwait. Iraq's infrastructure for clean water, sanitation and electrical power is an essential life-support for the country. U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency considers the strategy of extensively bombing Iraqi infrastructure predicting a huge impact on Iraqi civilians with children being the most in danger of sickness and death from diarrhea and acute respiratory infections. Comprehensive post-World War II government studies had concluded that "the dread of disease and hardships imposed by the lack of sanitary facilities were bound to have a demoralizing effect upon the civilian population," and that there was a "reliable and striking correlation between the disruption of public utilities and the willingness of the German population to accept unconditional surrender." Will the U.S. government attack Iraqi water and electrical facilities?

**The U.S. military destroys Iraq's infrastructure. Over 100,000 air missions drop 88,000 tons of bombs (equivalent of 7 and a half Hiroshimas) in 42 days resulting in an estimated 5000 to 10,000 immediate civilian deaths and over 100,000 dead troops. The Pentagon admitted later that non-military facilities had been extensively targeted for political reasons. A U.S. Air force planner during the Gulf War said, "Big picture, we wanted to let people know, 'Get rid of this guy and we'll be more than happy to assist in rebuilding. We're not going to tolerate Saddam Hussein or his regime. Fix that, and we'll fix your electricity.'" On February 15, Saddam offers to withdrawal from Kuwait and follow all U.N. resolutions,, but President Bush rejects offer as a "cruel hoax."**

**Jan. 1991.** The United States and Great Britain are preparing to attack Iraq in order to force Iraqi troops out of Kuwait. There is a new and unbelievably powerful weapon at their disposal: tank and rocket shells made in part from depleted uranium 238, a metal 1.7 times more dense than lead. These shells can pierce armor - including tanks. In fact, they can cut through armor "like a hot knife through butter," as some have described it. The problem with the use of this weapon is that depleted uranium creates a fine aerosol-like radioactive and chemically toxic dust. And it doesn't ever go away; it has a half-life of 4.5 billion years. US military studies indicate that use of depleted uranium 238 on the battlefield could lead to cancers of the lung and bone, kidney damage, non-malignant lung disease, neurocognitive disorders, chromosomal damage and birth defects. Use of depleted uranium shells could not only contaminate Iraqi soldiers and Iraqi and Kuwaiti civilians, it could also poison the tens of thousands of U.S. and British troops who will attack the Iraqi military after depleted uranium shells have been used. Will the U.S. military use depleted uranium shells, warn the troops and equip them with special masks to avoid contamination? Will they use the shells but not warn their troops? Will they avoid use of depleted uranium weapons? What will the U.S. government do?

**According to Dr. Helen Caldicott, writing in the *Baltimore Sun*, by the end of the Gulf War, the United States left between 300 and 800 tons of depleted uranium 238 in anti-tank shells and**

**other explosives on the battlefields of Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. 696,628 U.S. troops served in the Gulf War - 183,629 filed for service-related disabilities - 9,592 US Gulf War veterans have died as of Jan. 1, 2000. It's unknown how many of these may have been caused by exposure to depleted uranium.**

**Gulf War veteran and anti-depleted uranium activist Dan Fahey:**

**"I could go through their [U.S. military] earliest reports on this issue... This is one from 1990 where they say : 'the most exposed individuals are the soldiers who go to the battlefield after DU rounds are shot,' saying that civilians and soldiers can suffer health effects from the ingestion and inhalation of DU dust, and even saying that once people realize the health and environmental effects of this weapon, there might be a move to ban it. And this is July 1990 - this is just six months or so before the war. You have to wonder why no warning was ever disseminated to any ground forces prior to the war."**

**President of National Gulf War Veterans Resource Center, Paul Sullivan:**

**"More than 436,000 U.S. troops are confirmed to have entered into those areas of radioactive toxic waste. And sadly, some soldiers camped in areas contaminated by depleted uranium radioactive toxic waste for up to two months without any idea, without any warning at all."**

**Basra Cancer Professor Dr. Anuar Abdul Mehsen:**

**"If we compare the mortality rate, that is the number of patients who die because of cancers, in 1988, we had only 34 patients who died because of cancer. But in 1998, we recorded 428 patients who died because of cancer. Cancers that normally affect elderly people, now they are seen in younger age groups. I have a patient who has cancer of the ovaries who is 11 years old."**

**March 1991**, Iraqi troops have now retreated from Kuwait. Shiites (a religious minority) in southern Iraq and Kurds in the north rebel against Saddam to overthrow him. If Shiites in Iraq gain power, they could join with Shiites Iran and strengthen their influence in a region that has 65% of the world's oil supply. The U.S. government considers returning captured helicopters and weapons to the Iraqi military controlled by Saddam. He might use these weapons against the rebels. What will the U.S. government do?

**U.S. and coalition forces stop the fight against Iraq in southern Iraq and do not go after Saddam in Baghdad. The war is stopped without capturing Saddam despite objections from General Schwarzkopf (commander of U.S. forces) The U.S. also allows Saddam to use armed helicopters to kill the rebels.**

**1998** United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) releases a report indicating that the sanctions (started in 1991 to pressure Iraq to disarm weapons of mass destruction) have resulted in the deaths of over half-million Iraqi children (5000 per month) and that 250 Iraqis die each day as a result of the sanctions. After almost 8 years of sanctions, Saddam Hussein has not met all requirements to disarm. Iraq's national economy shrank to one-fifth of its size in 1979, but Saddam continues to rule and maintain his many palaces while Iraqi civilians suffer. Conditions in Iraq include untreated sewage, no clean water, shortage of food and medicine, and highly inflated prices for everything. According to the Geneva Conventions, civilians are not to be targeted in war or economic sanctions. What will the U.S. government do?

**The U.S. leads the U.N. in maintaining sanctions. Medicines and chlorine needed to treat drinking water is banned as a dual use chemical. The U.S. says that Saddam Hussein's lack of cooperation is the real cause of extending the sanctions and for the suffering of the Iraqi people.**

**1998-2002**, the U.S. and Britain (France withdrew from this coalition) without United Nations authority have been patrolling and bombing "No-Fly Zones" in Iraq. The U.S. and Britain say that they patrol these regions to protect the lives of minority groups that Saddam might threaten. The U.S. and Britain engage in almost daily attacks on Iraqi anti-aircraft emplacements and major bombing episodes, triggered by alleged major movements of Iraqi armor in border areas. U.S. and Britain allow pilots to strike any part of the Iraqi air defense system, not just those directly targeting U.S./British aircraft, by firing on them or by "locking on" radar detectors to U.S./British planes. The result is up to 5 tons of

bombs dropped on Iraq per month with 144 civilians (members of minority groups in the region) killed and 446 injured in 1999 alone. Francis Boyle, professor of international law at University of Illinois College of Law has criticized the bombings: "It is the U.S. government that is violating the United Nations Charter. . . by using military force to allegedly 'police' these illegal 'no-fly' zones that have never been authorized by the U.N. Security Council or by the U.S. Congress, in right of self-defense under U.N. Charter article 51. The Bush administration has deliberately put U.S. pilots in harm's way in order to concoct a pretext for a catastrophic war of aggression against Iraq. The best way for the American people to protect the lives of our military personnel in the Persian Gulf is to bring them all home." Will the U.S. continue to enforce these "No Fly Zones?" What will the U.S. government do?

**The U.S. and Britain continue the no-fly zones saying that it is to protect the ethnic groups. They blame Saddam for locating military equipment near the civilians.**

---

**Essay Assignment: Explain the actions of the U.S. government? Evaluate its goals and consequences. What are the factors that have shaped U.S. policy toward Iraq? How has the policy been consistent or inconsistent?**

### Sources of Information

William Blum Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Intervention Since WWII "Iraq 1990-1991: Desert Holocaust" reprinted in <http://members.aol.com/bblum6/iraq2.htm>

Washington Post 12/30/02 "US Had Key Role in Iraq Buildup" Michael Dobbs reprinted in <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/saddam/2002/1230buildup.htm>

Newsweek/MS NBC 9/23/02 "Supporting Saddam: The US Helped Build Up the Leader It Now Seeks to Oust" Christopher Dickey and Evan Thomas reprinted in <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/attack/2002/0923monster.htm>

Frontline: Gulf War (transcript) [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/script\\_a.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/script_a.html)

Institute for Policy Studies, "Detailed Analysis of October 7 Speech by Bush on Iraq printed in <http://www.commondreams.org/views02/1009-10.htm>

Steven Zunes Foreign Policy in Focus Special Report #12 - The Gulf War: Eight Myths [http://www.fpif.org/papers/8myths/index\\_body.html](http://www.fpif.org/papers/8myths/index_body.html)

Iraqjournal.org, "The Saddam in Rumsfeld's Closet" Jeremy Scahill available on <http://www.commondreams.org/views02/0802-01.htm>

Hidden Wars of Dessert Storm (film transcript) <http://www.hiddenwars.com>

Sarah Graham-Brown and Chris Toensing, Middle East Research and Information Project, "Why Another War? A Backgrounder on the Iraq Crisis, 2nd Ed." [http://www.merip.org/iraq\\_backgrounder\\_102202/iraq\\_background2\\_merip.pdf](http://www.merip.org/iraq_backgrounder_102202/iraq_background2_merip.pdf)

Spring 2003