

operation with a pause to allow time for Saddam Hussein **to be toppled by his own people**... Allied planning appears heavily weighted towards an incremental strategy that applies mounting pressure and **allows time for Saddam's henchmen to decide their self-interest lies in risking a move against him.** "This is all about getting someone to tip him over," said the source.' (*Telegraph*, 15 Mar., p. 10) The political purpose of the war, as in 1991, was to achieve a military coup.

PARTIAL VICTORY FOR THE US

The US had been aiming for 'leadership change, regime stabilisation'. Unfortunately for the US, there was no coup, and there was considerable Iraqi resistance, so that much of the military force that the US was intending to hand power to is either destroyed or dispersed.

Iraqi exile opposition leader Ahmed Chalabi is back in Iraq: 'However, his move for power is being strongly resisted by the British and officials from the US State Department, who **favour encouraging an indigenous leadership, even if it means dealing with former figures in Saddam's military or ruling Ba'ath party.**' (*Times*, 10 Apr., p. 8)

'British officials are under no illusion that the vengeance of the mob is likely to lead to some top Ba'athists being lynched, but they want to limit the violence. "It is up to the Iraqis to draw a line on what level of Ba'ath Party activity is acceptable, but we believe it should be **fairly high**—to promote reconciliation and to get the country running again," said a coalition official.

'It is fairly clear there are **no plans** for a root-and-branch purge of Ba'ath party members. One reason is a severe shortage of skilled professionals.' (*Telegraph*, 10 Apr., p. 8) This does not explain why the Iraqi military and police leadership gets immunity. The reason is that the US wants 'the best of all worlds', 'an iron-fisted Iraqi junta without Saddam Hussein', a return to the days when Saddam's 'iron fist... held Iraq together, much to the satisfaction of the American allies Turkey and Saudi Arabia.'

In 1991, the US had a partial failure by achieving regime stabilisation, but not achieving leadership change. In 2003, the US has had a partial victory by achieving leadership change, but without full regime stabilisation. As a result, the US now faces the challenge of subduing Iraq's Shi'ite majority and preventing democracy, without the readymade weapon of the regime to hand.

PARTIAL VICTORIES

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PARTIAL VICTORIES FOR THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

The anti-war movement very nearly succeeded in detaching Britain from the US invasion. It was reported just before the war that with their forces '[s]andwiched together, with units under each other's command, Yanks and Brits are more closely integrated than they have been since the Second World War—and that is why a last-minute withdrawal by Mr Blair has become simply unthinkable.' (*Sunday Telegraph*, 16 Mar., p. 6)

But the unthinkable was thought. 'By Tuesday [12 Mar.], there were serious worries in the White House that Mr Blair, its staunchest ally, might not survive the political crisis at home. Geoff Hoon, the Defence Secretary, tried to explain the problems to Donald Rumsfeld, the US defence secretary, in a telephone call which had meant to be devoted to the fine detail of the war plan.' The *Telegraph* revealed that on 12 Mar., 'Mr Hoon's department [the Ministry of Defence] was **frantically preparing contingency plans to "disconnect" British troops entirely from the military invasion of Iraq**, demoting their role to subsequent phases of the campaign and peacekeeping.' (*Sunday Telegraph*, 16 Mar., p. 18)

When, after his phone conversation with Mr Hoon, Mr Rumsfeld suggested that US troops could go to war without the British if necessary, 'One Cabinet Minister said, in tones of desperation: "It is just Rumsfeld being Rumsfeld."' and the British media was encouraged to believe that the US Defence Secretary had been speaking hypothetically. '**The trouble was that he hadn't been doing any such thing. As a senior Number 10 official said: "Rumsfeld was telling the truth." The cat was out of the bag.**' "Wobbly Tuesday" was the lowest point of the crisis for Mr Blair.' (*Sunday Telegraph*, 16 Mar., p. 18)

We very nearly succeeded in forcing Tony Blair to withdraw from the war—which might have derailed the entire US war effort.

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Another major achievement of the global anti-war movement has been to help force the US and UK to moderate their attacks on the civilian infrastructure in Iraq. If the electricity sector had been targeted, for example, as it was in 1991, and as it was in the Kosovo war, the consequences for the Iraqi people could have been devastating, if they were deprived of clean drinking water as the summer heat approached, bringing possibly hundreds of thousands of deaths from water-borne diseases.

The war did come, despite enormous efforts by millions of people, in this country and others. But our work may well have saved hundreds of thousands of lives in Iraq, and helped lay the basis for a stronger movement well-placed to prevent the next wars threatened by President Bush.

LEADERSHIP CHANGE WAS THE AIM

To understand what is going on, we have to clear away media misinformation and see US goals for what they really are. It has been clear for some time that the US war aim was not 'regime change', but 'regime stabilisation, leadership change.' The political system in Iraq suits US interests in the region, and Washington wanted to retain as much of it as possible, while also demonstrating total victory over Saddam Hussein and his inner circle.

Just as in 1991. When there were mass uprisings in March 1991, the US allowed Baghdad to use helicopter gunships against the rebels; refused to release captured Iraqi weapons to the rebels for them to use against Saddam's forces; and refused to offer political support to, or even meet with, the Iraqi opposition forces. (See Milan Rai, *War Plan Iraq*, Chapter VII for details.)

Brent Scowcroft, National Security Adviser to President Bush Sr in 1991, told ABC television later, 'I frankly wish [the uprisings] hadn't happened. I envisioned a post-war government being a military government.' (Cited in Dilip Hiro, *Neighbours not Friends*, p. 36.) The political objective of the war was a military coup.

Thomas Friedman, Diplomatic Correspondent of the *New York Times*, explained on 7 July 1991 that economic sanctions would continue until there was a military coup in Iraq, which would create 'the best of all worlds', 'an iron-fisted Iraqi junta without Saddam Hussein'. This would be a return to the days when Saddam's 'iron fist ... held Iraq together, much to the satisfaction of the American allies Turkey and Saudi Arabia.'

Turkey is determined to squash Kurdish independence and self-confidence in Iraq (which is a bad example to Turkey's oppressed Kurdish population). Saudi Arabia fears democracy on its borders, and the extension of Iranian influence into Iraq (whose population is 60 per cent Shia Muslim). Thus the preference for an iron-fisted Sunni Muslim-dominated military dictatorship.

DEFINING THE REGIME

These priorities continue. Therefore the goal of the war was to defeat Saddam Hussein, but to retain as much of the military and political establishment as possible. The 'regime' that was to be changed had to be defined as narrowly as possible. This was made very clear in the signals about the exile option.

Donald Rumsfeld said in Dec., Saddam Hussein had 'the choice of leaving.' Mr Rumsfeld clarified this to a Congressional committee: 'One choice he has is to take his family and key leaders and seek asylum elsewhere. Surely one of the 180-plus countries would take his regime—possibly Belarus.' (*Sunday Times*, 29 Dec. 2002, p. 18) Mr Rumsfeld said again, 'to avoid war, I would... recommend that some provision be made so that the senior leadership in that country and their families could be provided haven in some other country.' (*Guardian*, 20 Jan. 2003, p. 1) The 'regime' in this account consists of Saddam Hussein, 'his family', and 'key leaders' and 'their families'.

In late March, *Newsweek* was given a 'list of those formally considered "irredeemable"' as one Bush administration official put it' The list had only **six** names on it, apart from those of Saddam and his two sons. The 'senior administration official' who leaked the list said, 'Our bias will be toward forgiving as much of the past as possible.' This shocks human rights activists, 'But as **the United States tries to foster a coup** or a quick surrender by the people around Saddam, it's practical.' (*Newsweek*, 31 Mar., p. 48)

It seems the US has no problem with the police, the military, the judiciary, the civil service, all remaining intact. The war against the Kurds, the invasion of Kuwait, the crushing of the 1991 rebellions, all the crimes that have been used to whip up war fever in the West, are all to be 'forgiven' by the US.

TARGETING SADDAM

President Bush issued an exile ultimatum to Saddam Hussein and his sons on the eve of the war. Roula Khalaf, a well-informed columnist at the *Financial Times*, reported that this seemed to be 'encouraging a last minute coup more than the Iraqi leader's departure from Baghdad... Western diplomats in the region said the ultimatum was designed to raise the internal pressure on insiders in the regime to move against the Iraqi leader.' (*FT*, 19 Mar., p. 3)

Then there was the US missile-strike assassination attempt against the Iraqi leader on the first night of the war. These two events made clear the US was targeting a man (and his sons) not the military-political machine in Iraq.

THE COUP-CENTRED WAR PLAN

The *Daily Telegraph* reporter in Kuwait was told by a senior British source before the war started that, 'The war in Iraq is expected to be a two-stage