

# **POLITICAL FORECAST : How Much Time Left on Hussein's Political Clock?**

Saad Eddin Ibrahim, former secretary-general of the Arab Thought Forum and currently a political sociologist at American University in Cairo:

I don't think Saddam Hussein will survive for very long, metaphorically or literally. . . . He's not going to give up without a stiff fight, though.

His legacy will disintegrate. But this will take some time, until the facts are revealed to the deceived masses who thought of him as a messiah of Arab nationalism. I think there will be intense disappointment, frustration, anger, sadness . . . among his supporters, among those who wanted to believe that there is an Arab leader who can stand up to the West.

This, of course, does not change how people feel about the West. Even the most anti-Hussein forces in the Arab World will never forgive the West for a long list of grievances, the latest of which is that the West helped Hussein to become the Frankenstein he became. The biggest grievance is the double standard--the implicit racism in many of the Western

policies toward this part of the world. When Hussein pinpointed that, he was right.

Rami G. Khouri, Palestinian-Jordanian political columnist and author:

Although Hussein's military astuteness is poor, his political survival is probable. His political legacy throughout the Arab, Muslim and Third World was defined between August, 1990, and Jan. 17, 1991--before the Gulf War started.

He articulated and personified a new Arab-Islamic spirit of defiance and fearlessness in the face of clear enemy superiority. That spirit rested on overwhelming Arab dissatisfaction with the artificial, unnatural and failed regional economic-political order following World War I; the double standard of the United Nations and the world in applying Security Council resolutions; the legacy of the Western colonial and neo-colonial powers sending large armies to the Middle East to maintain an order that suits their commercial and strategic needs but does not suit the aspirations of the indigenous Arab-Muslim people, and the U.S. insistence that Israel should remain stronger than all its Arab neighbors.

Dan D. Schueftan, research fellow, Harry S. Truman Research Institute, Hebrew University of Jerusalem:

If this war ends, as it seems, with a humiliation of Hussein, the legacy will be very similar to the failure of Gamal Abdel Nasser. In the 1950s and '60s, Nasser provided the Arab world with the tremendous hope that it could change, in a major way, the rules of the game. It was after (the 1967 War) that his failure became apparent to all Arabs; he ended his life being the symbol of defeat in terms of changing the rules of the game.

Hussein tried something very similar to Nasser. The legacy he wanted to leave is that if you dare, if you're strong enough and willing to take the risks, you can change the rules of the game. His failure suggests that the Arabs--and perhaps it goes beyond the Muslim world into the Third World--simply are not in a position to challenge this world order, and when they do, they not only fail in changing it favorably, but they also demonstrate how impotent they are.

If Nasser had failed (as Hussein has), he would not have survived. (However, in Iraq) it is not as if, when somebody fails, the will of the people no longer makes it possible for him to stay in power. It depends, to a very large extent, on whether his opponent kills him or he kills his opponent.

R.K. Ramazani, professor of government and foreign affairs,  
University of Virginia:

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Hussein might survive beyond armed hostilities a bit. But I seriously doubt he can survive much longer than that, particularly if Washington insists on the implementation of all the U.N. resolutions. There would probably be a move within Iraq to remove Hussein in order to remove all these demands of the international community on Iraq.

The Baath Party and the Iraqi military are instruments of Hussein, rather than institutions having their own viability in terms of grass-roots support. The party has survived for so long and developed such a network of cells in Iraqi society that it is difficult to uproot. It is not a grass-roots party but one that exercises authority from the top down. Thus, with the boss disappearing, it is hard to believe it will survive.

Daniel Pipes, director, Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia:

Hussein will have three legacies. Inside Iraq, he will be remembered as the man whose folly led to devastation, whose ambitions caused a rich country to become suddenly destitute and a proud country to be humiliated.

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In the Muslim world, Hussein will be fondly remembered as the standard-bearer who ran into a force much greater than his own. There'll be a considerable affection and admiration

for him, despite his poor showing.

In the non-Muslim world, he will be a symbol, much like Hitler and Stalin, of an unbridled tyrant who indulged his ambitions, who let his own *machismo* determine the destiny of millions of people, and who eventually ended up destroying both them and himself.

His survival largely depends on decisions made in Washington, and so far the signs are that we'll try to make it difficult for him.

Sergei M. Rogov, head of the Military-Political Problems Department at the U.S.A. and Canada Institute, Moscow:

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The immediate prospects for Iraq are bleak. It has lost about 80% of its heavy armaments. Its air force suffered less damage, but, by all indications, it will not be in Iraqi hands for the foreseeable future. Iraq's economy is in ruins, its infrastructure almost totally destroyed. It has no military potential at the moment and will cease to be a regional superpower threatening its neighbors until the year 2000, at least.

Although it is uncertain whether Hussein's regime will collapse, one thing is clear: The Republican Guards, who constituted his power base, are decimated, if not

annihilated. In the last decade, Iraq waged two ruthless and destructive wars, losing close to 1.5 million men. Hussein's prestige, both inside and outside Iraq, will be lost in the economic and political debacle he has suffered at the hands of the Gulf coalition; he will not be able to pull a "Nasser trick"--walking away from the defeat with the halo of a hero. A change of leadership is very likely in Iraq, but the problem is, power might be taken not by pro-Western elements, but by Muslim fundamentalists with pro-Iranian leanings.

Riad Ajami, professor of international management and strategy, Ohio State University:

There will be people in the Arab World who will remember that Hussein was a defiant Arab leader who managed to stand up to the West. There will be at least some residue of this sentiment among the dispossessed, the politically disenfranchised--the Palestinians, some of the Lebanese, some of the poor Egyptians. That will be one kind of legacy. There'll be others who believe that the Arab world is falling behind, and will fall more behind because of the actions of Hussein. (But) given the psyche and the history of the Arab world, I think that (the former view) will be dominant.

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Hussein's chances of surviving politically are reasonably good. Given his ability to survive in Iraqi politics for such a

long time, given the pervasiveness of the Baath Party's units throughout Iraqi society and given the fact that he has managed to develop a middle class in Iraq--for some of these reasons, in the short run, he will survive.

Naturally, he's going to exploit the fact that the United States confronted him and the West wanted to eliminate him because he was an Arab nationalist.

Rep. Patricia Schroeder, (D-Colo.), member of House Armed Services Committee:

Politically, Hussein is damaged. The only question is: What is the mechanism for removing him? Somebody else is probably already calling the shots in Iraq. . . . Hussein may not have a check on reality, but (somebody does). Even during the Tarik Aziz negotiations, you almost had the feeling that (the Iraqi foreign minister) wasn't checking in too closely with Hussein.

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My guess is that the Arab community is going to be split. There will be those who think Hussein was the greatest, and there will be others who disagree. Incredible amounts of energy will be expended arguing that issue. There will be a raging debate about whether the Arab community left him high and dry: Could he have won if there had been

solidarity?

I would hope it wouldn't continue for a long time . . . (but) that region tends to rehash history over and over again.

It's important that we not be there as a colonizing force. . . .  
It's the Arab neighborhood, and the Arabs ought to be policing their own neighborhood.