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### **Post War Iraq: Understanding and Shaping the Forces of Positive Changes**

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The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 has triggered international condemnations and a worldwide fear. The speed at which the regime of Saddam Hussein crumbled has left the people in the Middle East in great astonishment, disbelief, deep suspicions and dismay. Initially, the Iraqi people displayed intense hope for a better future. Gradually, however, the Iraqis have witnessed increasing violence, chaos and insecurity under a lingering foreign occupation. The paper discusses the role of Iraq in the Arab and Islamic World, the major political players in Iraq, and the policy options for Washington. Three policy options are identified: exiting Iraq, monopolizing power, and working with moderate Iraqi leaders for building sound institutions and free direct elections. These options are discussed and their strengths and shortcomings are identified.

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