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Comment/Opinion/Insight

## New borders: The dismemberment of Iraq

By ROBERT EISENMAN

**W**ITH THE CONCLUSION of the Persian Gulf war the question of Middle East borders increasingly comes to the fore. We hear repeated voices about the impossibility of occupying Iraq and the negative effect this would have on the Arab-Islamic Middle East. But this, as usual, is short-sighted and uninformed.

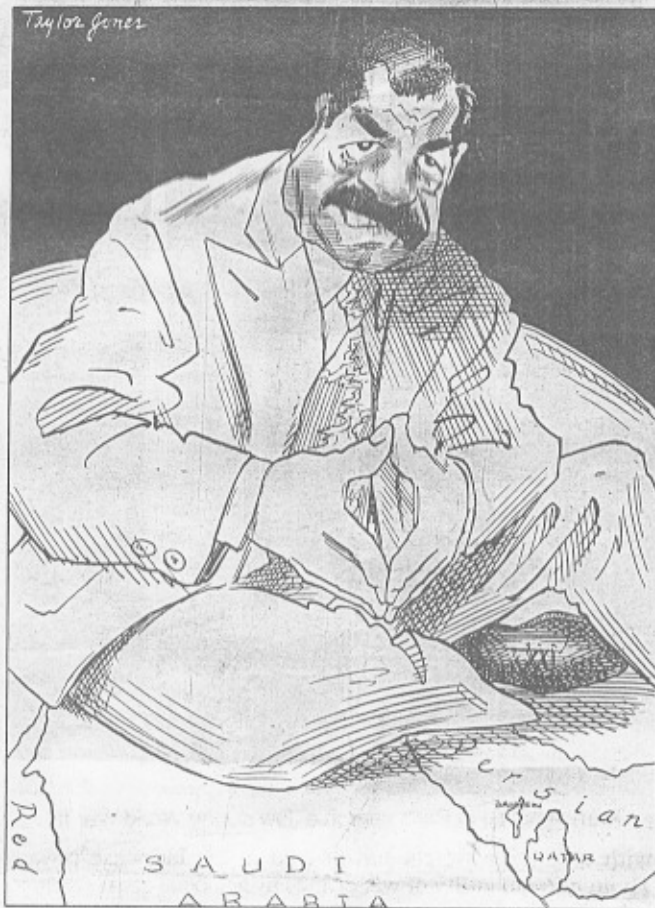
President Bush speaks of a "new world order." The world order we are now familiar with was, for the most part, laid down in the aftermath of the First World War following the vision of a previous president, whom Bush much resembles, Woodrow Wilson. In particular, many of the Middle East borders we know today were laid down in the wake of the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire by the Allies in a series of political decisions after the First World War in the early part of the 1920s.

Iraq, as we know it, was basically a line drawn on a map by the Royal Air Force after the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. T. E. Lawrence was very helpful here, as he was in Palestine-Jordan-Sinai map-drawing (he was an enthusiastic and experienced cartographer), and, for their part, the Colonial Office was very interested in an air staging point between Suez and India.

The British have always been enthusiastic map-makers. This activity was sponsored for exploratory and quasi-espionage purposes by the Royal Geographic Society in the latter decades of the 19th century. In fact, most of the borders we presently know in the Middle East were drawn by enthusiastic British geographers and cartographers. Unfortunately, it is to their efforts, too, that we owe much of the present legacy of sorrow in this part of the world. It is fitting, therefore, that the British should bear a share of the present multinational military effort.

Not only is the Kuwait problem based on their activities and strategies, but so is the Palestine problem. Therefore, in the coming Middle East peace conference, if there is to be one, all

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matters such as these, including all border matters and claims, should be on the table. Where Iraq is concerned, given a degree of insight and vision, the problem is a relatively easy one to solve.

The guiding principle should be that losers in an unprovoked war should not profit; nor should their war-making capacity be left intact. In short, Iraq, as we know it, should be dismembered. Since it was only an artificial line, "drawn in the sand" by British planners in the 1920s out of former dis-

parate provinces of the Ottoman Empire, there is no reason why such a line should stand. It is not sacrosanct.

Only by dismemberment can the future military aspirations of the Iraqis, which will be inevitably fed after their defeat by renewed revanchism, be controlled. The Kurds, gassed by the Iraqis and tragically fighting for their own homeland for years, should be given a state in Northern Iraq to include the Mosul and Kirkuk oil fields. This would give their new state the kind of economic viability it would need, while simultaneously reducing the capacity of Iraq to pursue nuclear armament programs or wage an even more destructive war in the future. The stripping of such oil fields from the Iraqis would not only be a damper on their future nuclear ambitions — it would also be poetic justice.

In addition to the Kurds, loyal allies such as the Turks should have a share of the wealth. Through several generations of steadfastness on the side of the West, going back to their well-publicized participation in the Korean War in the 1950s, the Turks have demonstrated their loyalty. Why should they continue "poor men of Europe" while others reap the profit of former Ottoman provinces?

In fact, the Iranians, the Syrians, the Kuwaitis, etc. could all take their share, reducing Iraq to a mere province around the area of Baghdad. This would be fitting recompense for the megalomania of those so willing to follow the siren song of greed and dictatorship — in the process reducing the problem of the occupation of Iraq to a dead letter.

The hallmark of the new world order, then, should be steadfastness on behalf of the West and proven reliability and responsibility — if not democratic government, i.e., any government attempting to follow the essence of civilized norms of behavior without resorting to demagoguery and bullying. Far from the Iraqis being given a greater share of the Kuwait's oil fields, the Kuwaitis, who have proven themselves responsible and reliable allies, should be given control of the southern Iraqi oil fields. They, at least, can be relied upon to use the awesome economic power this would entail constructively and responsibly, as they have already proven they can.

It would be particularly fitting if those who lusted after their neighbors' oil fields should themselves lose their own, and in the process, even more significantly, their ability to manufacture stockpiles of mass destruction in the future.