

18 February 1998

Dear editor,

The situation over Iraq's possession of biological weapons should cause all Americans great concern. Things that occur half a world away have local consequences.

We must consider the geopolitical factors. US policy toward Iraq has wavered between ally and outcast. We helped build Iraq's military in the 1980's. Then in 1991 we destroyed a huge portion of it. Since Desert Storm, we benignly allowed Iraq to rebuild its ability to threaten its neighbors. This deliberate policy of creating a problem and then presenting a solution represents New World Order diplomacy at its best.

It is an unspoken policy of the US to serve as the aloof and unilateral policeman in the Persian Gulf. We have fulfilled this role since the adoption of the Carter Doctrine which said the US will not allow any one country or coalition to disrupt stability (read flow of oil) of the Gulf region. Hence, we balanced the forces between four primary groups. Group A--pro-Western countries of Israel and Turkey. Group B--Baath Socialist Arab countries (Egypt, Syria, Iraq). Group C--pro-American Gulf countries (Gulf Cooperation Council). And Group D--Islamic fundamentalist countries (Iran, Afganistan) more or less represented as a movement. The United States stands watch over these groups. When one group becomes too powerful like Iran in the 1980's, the US supported the enemy with material resources, in this case Iraq. In the early 1990's Iraq became too powerful vis-a-vis the Gulf States, so we bombed her. Then we had to worry about Iran again. Enter weapons of mass destruction.

Only one political instrument will maintain this balance of power--The United States military. In sum, it will cost American lives to keep oil flowing from the Persian Gulf to Western Europe and Japan. Money drives political decisions. Money becomes especially important in foreign policy. The US and its allies can not afford to have one country control the world's largest oil reserve, ie the Persian Gulf. Could we somehow change nation-state behavior and realign our commitments so that policy doesn't pose such a risk to American lives?

Indeed, the policies which would do most to solve the Middle East problems should have been implemented twenty years ago. First, take the money out of oil. Develop alternative energy sources. We have to do it anyway at some point. But will the money men allow us to do that? Probably not without mass public pressure. Second, by cutting off the money and oil connection, the Middle East would have less money with which to buy weapons. This is only the first step to de-militarizing the region and ensuring America's moral obligation to guarantee the existence of Israel. The other steps to ensuring regional stability involve taking politics out of religion. Then maybe the covenants of peace will endure.

But all of this is wishful thinking. US foreign policy continues to push for a military strike against Iraq. We could and should have taken measures years ago to prevent this escalation. We haven't because the American people remain un-informed about political reality. Until the public begins self-education and pressures its leadership to follow a more sensible policy we will have more Iraqs. With that, we will have American casualties, unnecessary violence done for the interest of money. Will Americans put up with a public relations war? a war to make our leaders look good? a war to make our allies feel better? We damn well shouldn't.

Sincerely,

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