

tion was supported by London and Washington—most glaringly in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War as explored in chapter 5—up until the 2003 overthrow of the Hussein regime. The point of this arrangement was to prevent the emergence of a Kurdish state, which could threaten the stability of Iran to the east and Turkey to the north; and also to prevent the rise of Shi'a power. Prior to 1979, this could have destabilized the Shah's rule in Iran; after his fall it could have increased the regional influence of Iran's Islamic Republic. Today, the U.S. occupation of Iraq has not resolved these deep ethnic and religious tensions; instead, they have the potential to help turn Washington's conquest into a quagmire.

The new state lay at the head of the Persian Gulf, soon to become the heart of the world oil industry, and was bordered by Turkey to the north, Iran to the east, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to the south, and Jordan and Syria to the west. Three of these states—Turkey, Iran, and Syria, shared overlapping Kurdish populations with Iraq—a demographic that the U.S. has frequently exploited to weaken Iraq.

In 1932, Britain's League of Nations mandate ended and Iraq became formally independent, but London still effectively ruled. Its armed forces remained in Iraq to ensure the continuation of the monarchy, which was widely hated and rightly considered a tool of British interests.

There were repeated uprisings against the British and the King, which British forces violently put down. In July 1931, RAF planes buzzed towns along the Euphrates River to intimidate an Iraqi general strike. That year and the next, the RAF bombed Kurdish rebels in Barzan.<sup>44</sup> British planes were deployed against numerous uprisings, mainly in Kurdish areas, between 1936 and 1941. And during World War II, British troops invaded and occupied Iraq to depose the nationalist and pro-German government of Prime Minister Rashid Ali, who had seized power in 1941 with support from reformist intellectuals and nationalist army officers. During the war, preventing Iraq's oil from falling into German hands became an important military objective.

## Beyond Dreams of Avarice

After World War I, the world's major powers not only carved out spheres of influence in the Middle East, they also battled for control of its most prized resource: oil. The decade after 1918 saw the first serious U.S. foray into the region, and Iraq was at the center of the intrigue.

The region's oil had proved to be immensely profitable and strategically vital. In 1918, after oil had proved critical to the outcome of World War I, Britain's foreign secretary Balfour declared, speaking of Mesopotamia's then untapped petroleum, "I do not care under what system we keep the oil. But I am quite clear it is all-important for us that this oil should be available."<sup>45</sup>

In *The Control of Oil*, his 1976 study of the monopolization of the global petroleum industry, John Blair writes that Anglo-Persian Oil Company had been pumping Iranian oil since 1908, and by 1917, one Iranian well was producing "more than the entire prewar production from the whole of Rumanian and Galician oil fields with 10 times the number of wells and invested capital." In 1923 Churchill reported that the British government had earned 25.6 million pounds on an investment of 2 million pounds. They were, John Blair notes, "profits beyond the dreams of avarice."<sup>46</sup>

U.S. firms had not been active in the region, due mainly to their abundant supply of domestic oil, although they had conducted explorations there. This changed after World War I when fears rose of a global oil shortage. The rivalry between Britain, the U.S. and other powers for control of Middle East oil quickly became intense (and is still at work today in Iraq).

In September 1919, for example, Standard Oil of New York geologists were dispatched to explore in Iraq. One wrote his wife, "I am going to the biggest remaining oil possibilities in the world...the pie is so very big." When the British got wind of the expedition, they blocked its work.<sup>47</sup>

Much worse in American eyes was the discovery that the 1920 San Remo conference had not only approved Sykes-Picot, but had also ratified agreements monopolizing Middle East oil for the British. U.S. politicians and businessmen understood that domestic oil supplies wouldn't last forever, and after the war discovered to their great dismay that other powers were in the process of gaining a strangle-

hold on much of the world's future supply.

When Standard Oil of New Jersey obtained a copy of the secret San Remo oil agreement, the petroleum giant protested vigorously, and a titanic behind-the-scenes struggle between oil monopolies ensued. Britain's Lord Curzon argued the region's oil should belong to Britain because "Britain controlled only 4.5 percent of world oil production and the U.S. controlled 80 percent, and the U.S. excluded non-American interests from areas it controlled." Standard Oil retorted that no matter the extent of U.S. control over current production, the more important fact was that American firms controlled only one-twelfth of the world's oil reserves and therefore deserved more.<sup>48</sup>

A U.S. Senate investigating committee was formed and concluded unsurprisingly that "American interests were indeed being systematically excluded from foreign oil fields."<sup>49</sup> A 1920 bill established a government corporation to develop foreign oil resources, and pressure was brought to bear upon the British to cut the U.S. in on Middle East oil.<sup>50</sup> The U.S. demanded an "Open Door" to Middle East oil, and by 1928 the British were forced to agree, due to America's rising global power and the enormous leverage exerted by U.S. firms: Exxon supplied half of the United Kingdom's oil.<sup>51</sup>

The result was the 1928 "Red Line Agreement"—after a line drawn in red pencil on a map of the region. It divided Middle East oil between American, British, Dutch, and French companies. As their economic futures were being determined, no Iraqis, Iranians, Saudis, or Kuwaitis were present. Such blatant colonialism may seem an outdated relic of the past, but similar discussions are taking place at this writing between the U.S., Russia, and France over how to parcel out oil spoils in post-Saddam Iraq.

In the late 1920s, the Red Line Agreement provided that no single power would develop the region's oil without the participation of the others. For the first time, U.S. firms got a slice of Middle East oil: Exxon and Mobil would share 23.75 percent of the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC). British Petroleum, Royal Dutch Shell, and the Compagnie Francaise des Petroles (CFP) received equal 23.75 percent shares.<sup>52</sup> The open door demanded by the U.S. was now, as C. S. Gulbougian, an Armenian businessman who owned a five percent share of IPC, put it, "hermetically sealed" to other com-

petitors.<sup>53</sup> The French called the agreement the beginning of "a long-term plan for the world control and distribution of oil in the Near East."<sup>54</sup> John Blair described it as "an outstanding example of a restricted combination for the control of a large portion of the world's supply by a group of companies which together dominate the world market for this commodity."<sup>55</sup>

The IPC and the oil cartel deliberately restricted Iraq's oil production and development for decades in order to prevent an oil glut which could weaken prices and lower their profits. At the time, Iranian oil was more profitable, so Iranian production was favored. This decision, made without Iraq's consent or even knowledge, cost it hundreds of millions of dollars in lost revenues and is one reason Iraq's oil fields remain relatively untapped to this day.

Surveying the record of foreign domination of the region's petroleum wealth, Simons concludes,

The oil bounty that should rightly have liberated the Arab peoples (and the Persians and others) was destined to lead to their subjugation and humiliation.<sup>56</sup>

## A Testing Ground of Empire

Iraq has been a testing ground for the tactics—and crimes—of empire.

The U.S. got its first Middle East oil supplies and profits from Iraq, and the British-U.S.-controlled IPC became a model for oil cartel operations in other Third World countries. As Blair concluded, "The pattern of control through joint ventures [throughout the Middle East] was first established by the formation of the Iraq Petroleum Company."<sup>57</sup>

Iraq was one of the first colonies policed with air power, and the British developed a number of anti-personnel weapons specifically for use in Iraq. Britain's Air Ministry acknowledged:

Phosphorus bombs, war rockets, metal crowsfeet [to maim livestock] man-killing shrapnel, liquid fire, and delay-action bombs. Many of these weapons were first used in [Iraqi] Kurdistan.<sup>58</sup>

The U.S. continued this bloody tradition in the 1991 Persian

- 18 Mostafa T. Zahrani, "The Coup That Changed the Middle East—Mossadeq v. The CIA in Retrospect," *World Policy Journal*, Summer 2002, 94
- 19 Solberg, 195-97; Blair, 78-80
- 20 Solberg, 197
- 21 Kissinger notes: "On November 29, 1956, the U.S. government, hailing the recent Baghdad Pact summit...declared: 'a threat to the territorial integrity or political independence of the members would be viewed by the United States with the utmost gravity.' It was the diplomats' way of saying that the United States would undertake the defense of the Baghdad pact states, a role for which Great Britain was now too weak and too discredited." Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 548-49
- 22 Shibley Telhami, "Shrinking Our Presence in Saudi Arabia," *New York Times*, January 29, 2000
- 23 Chomsky, "After the Cold War," 81
- 24 "U.S. Financial Aid To Israel: Figures, Facts, and Impact Summary," Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, January 15, 2003 (<http://www.wrmea.com>)
- 25 Cleveland, 317-18; Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 31-34
- 26 Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 34, 36; Richard Becker, "The U.S. and Iraq In Historical Perspective," International Action Center, 2003 ([www.iacenter.org](http://www.iacenter.org))
- 27 Tripp, 128, 138; [www.odssa.com/Eagle/eagle10.htm](http://www.odssa.com/Eagle/eagle10.htm)
- 28 Blair, 83-84
- 29 Blair, 86
- 30 Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 40
- 31 Tripp, 131
- 32 On May 2, 1958, Radio Cairo broadcast this call to Iraq: "Arise, my brethren on the police force and in its army in Iraq! Stand side by side with your brothers and your people against your enemies! The freedom of Iraq is in your hands." David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, *The Invisible Government* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 318. The Slugletts report that "Nasser's passionate speeches over Cairo Radio were reaching an eager and appreciative audience in Iraq," Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 44
- 33 Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 49
- 34 Michel Moushabeck, "Iraq: Years of Turbulence," in *Beyond the Storm*, 29
- 35 Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 78. The U.S. State Department's legal office acknowledged that under Iraq's December 1961 Public Law No. 80, which took away drilling rights, "IPC's property as such has not been taken, and in fact IPC's operations have continued substantially unimpeded. What IPC has been deprived of is mineral rights granted in a number of concessions awarded by the government of Iraq." Blair, 85
- 36 Blair 81, 85; Frankel, 19
- 37 Said K. Aburish, *Saddam Hussein: The Politics of Revenge* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 71
- 38 Micah L. Sifry, "U.S. Intervention in the Middle East: A Case Study," in *The Gulf War Reader*, 28
- 39 William Blum, *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage, 1995), 89
- 40 Blum, *Killing Hope*, 90-94; Kolko, *Confronting the Third World*, 85
- 41 Blum, *Killing Hope*, 93. See also, Wise and Ross, 315-320 on clandestine CIA broadcasts directed against the Nasser government.
- 42 Sifry, 27, 30; Blum, *Killing Hope*, 97
- 43 Sifry, 30; Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan, *Force Without War* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1978), 238, 256, cited in Daniel Ellsberg, "Introduction: Call to Mutiny," in *Protest and Survive*, eds. E.P. Thompson and Dan Smith (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1981), v-vi
- 44 Michael Tanzer, "Oil and the Gulf Crisis," in *Beyond the Storm*, 263; Sifry, 30-31, emphasis in original
- 45 Sifry, 28. According to Blum, the U.S. may also draw up a secret plan for a joint U.S.-Turkish invasion of Iraq shortly after the 1958 revolution. William Blum, *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage, 2000), 134
- 46 Sifry, 30
- 47 *New York Times*, April 29, 1959, cited in Blum, *Rogue State*, 133
- 48 Roger Morris, "A Tyrant 40 Years in the Making," *New York Times*, March 14, 2003
- 49 Tanzer, 263

- 50 Sifry, 32
- 51 Morris, *New York Times*, March 14, 2003
- 52 Blair, 86-87
- 53 Blum, *Rogue State*, 134; Lee F. Dinsmore, "Regrets for a Minor American Role in a Major Kurdish Disaster," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, May/June 1991, 9
- 54 Morris, *New York Times*, March 14, 2003
- 55 Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 89; al-Khalil, 226
- 56 Tripp, 153-54; Blum, *Rogue State*, 133-34
- 57 U. Zaher, "Political Developments in Iraq 1963-1980," in *Saddam's Iraq*, 32; Moushabeck, 29
- 58 Cleveland, 395
- 59 Aburish, 54-55
- 60 Morris, *New York Times*, March 14, 2003
- 61 Aburish, 57
- 62 Zaher, 32. Zaher writes that "the French Service de Documentation Exterieur et de Contre-Espionnage also helped to overthrow Qasim and harass the Communists."
- 63 Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 86
- 64 Aburish, 58
- 65 Zaher, 32
- 66 Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 86
- 67 Tanzer, 263; Blum, *Rogue State*, 134; Aburish, 55-56
- 68 Morris, *New York Times*, March 14, 2003; Aburish, 59
- 69 Blum, *Rogue State*, 134; Frankel, 19
- 70 Aburish, 59; Morris, *New York Times*, March 14, 2003
- 71 Yousef, 58
- 72 Morris, *New York Times*, March 14, 2003; Simons, 276-77; Aburish, 64-66, 74
- 73 Aburish, 74
- 74 Aburish, 73-74
- 75 Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, 118
- 76 Cleveland, 396
- 77 Samir al-Khalil, *Republic of Fear* (New York: Pantheon, 1989), xvii
- 78 Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 344
- 79 It is my view that by the 1960s, the once-socialist Soviet Union had embraced a form of state capitalism, and like other capitalist states, it was compelled to expand its global reach, including in the Middle East.
- 80 Mark Phythian, *Arming Iraq* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 11
- 81 Ismet Sheriff Vanly, "Kurdistan in Iraq," in *People Without A Country*, 183
- 82 Robert Engler, *The Brotherhood of Oil* (New York: New American Library, 1977), 18-19; Blair, 52
- 83 Blair, 90
- 84 Kolko, *Confronting the Third World*, 230
- 85 Henderson, 37, 46
- 86 Kolko, *Confronting the Third World*, 230.
- 87 Engler, 124
- 88 Cleveland, 400-402. During the 1970s, it expanded its land reform program, enacted a mass literacy campaign, built a nationwide health care system, and broadened women's rights. Forced marriage was outlawed and women were given greater access to education. By 1982, 30 percent of Iraq's university students were women. Working women were given paid maternity leave, equal pay for equal work, and had access to childcare.
- 89 Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 863
- 90 Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 888
- 91 Robert Dreyfuss, "The Thirty Year Itch," *Mother Jones*, March/April 2003, 42
- 92 Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 863
- 93 Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 674-75
- 94 Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 669
- 95 Phythian, 10-12; Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 669
- 96 Joe Stork and Martha Wenger, "From Rapid Deployment to Massive Deployment," in *The Gulf War Reader*, 36
- 97 Bush, *Wall Street Journal*, September 12, 2002