Post-invasion Iraq / Iraq should be split up

< Post-invasion Iraq

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Position: Iraq should be split up

This position addresses the topic Post-invasion Iraq.

For this position

"With these requirements in mind, a three-region solution could create more problems than it resolves. But a system based upon five regions would seem to have more chance of succeeding. A five-region model could see two regions in the south, one based around Basra and one around the holy cities. Kurdistan and the Sunni region would remain, but Baghdad and its environs would form a fifth, metropolitan, region."

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From The only solution left for Iraq: a five-way split, by Gareth Stansfield (*The Daily Telegraph*, October 29, 2006) (view)

"Iraq's Kurdish leaders are willing to remain part of Iraq for the time being because Kurdistan already has all attributes of a state except international recognition. But over the long term, the former Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union are better analogies to Iraq than Bosnia. Democracy destroyed those states because, as in Iraq, there was never a shared national identity, and a substantial part of the population did not want to be part of the country."

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From Make Walls, Not War, by Peter Galbraith (The New York Times, October 23, 2007) (view)

"Before it leaves Iraq, then, the United States must inflict a dramatic and decisive defeat upon the Sunni insurgents--one that will demonstrate the unbearable cost and utter futility of the Islamist dream of establishing a Muslim umma under the rule of a global Sunni caliphate. That defeat must be more than military; it must also be political: The United States should divide Iraq into two parts, leaving the Kurds in control of the north, the Shia in control of the south--and the Sunnis stateless in between."

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From Crush the Sunnis, by James Kurth (The New Republic, November 25, 2006) (view)

"The Shiites might like a united Iraq if they controlled it -- which they could if those elections Mr. Bush keeps promising ever occur. But the Kurds and Sunnis are unlikely to accept Shiite control, no matter how democratically achieved. The Kurds have the least interest in any strong central authority, which has never been good for them. A strategy of breaking up Iraq and moving toward a three-state solution would build on these realities."

From The Three-State Solution, by Leslie H. Gelb (*The New York Times*, November 25, 2003) (view)

In Yugoslavia the solution, abetted by western intervention, was partition. In Iraq America began the same process by guaranteeing de facto autonomy to Kurdistan. That logic must now be followed to its conclusion."

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From The fantasy is over, we must partition Iraq and get out now, by Simon Jenkins (*The Times*, May 21, 2006) (view)

"The country has broken up. The United States cannot put it back together again and cannot stop the civil war. The conventional wisdom holds that Iraq's break-up would be destabilising and should be avoided at all costs. Looking at Iraq's dismal history since Britain cobbled it together from three Ottoman provinces at the end of the first world war, it should be apparent that it is the effort to hold Iraq together that has been destabilising."

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From Iraq's salvation lies in letting it break apart, by Peter Galbraith (*The Sunday Times (UK)*, July 16, 2006) (view)

"After nearly four years of occupation, Iraqis have made up their minds they do not want to live together. The intention of the Shi'a is to establish an Islamic republic that either excludes or subjugates Sunni Arabs and Sunni Kurds. The Sunni Arabs, who make up about 20% of Iraq's population, know they've lost and their only option is to retreat into the desert and create their own country. The Kurds, for their part, already have their own country."

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From Tell the Truth About the Surge, by Robert Baer (*Time*, January 17, 2007) (view)

"The border would be drawn along the ethnic contours of Iraq, with Kirkuk (and probably Mosul) as part of Kurdistan and Baghdad as part of the much larger southern Shia state. Both territories have enough oil to be economically viable. After the partition, the United States would be free to pursue separate policies with each, using different carrots and sticks as needed."

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From A realistic plan: Split the country in two, by Jonathan Last (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 3, 2006) (view)

"Iraq's Kurds have created a Western-oriented aspiring democracy in the north. What U.S. interest is served by forcing them to live in an Iraq that is theocratic and allied with Iran? And if Iraq's Shiites want their own state, as apparently they do, why should we commit our military to stopping them?"

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From Gone to pieces, by Peter Galbraith (New York Daily News, August 22, 2006) (view)

Against this position

"Three Iraqs are not better than one. A splintered Iraq means that it will never emerge as a bulwark for democracy and freedom in the Arab world. A Shiite regional bloc is likely to become a satellite of Iran, the big winner in any split."

From One Iraq or three?, by Chicago Tribune editorial board (*Chicago Tribune*, October 8, 2006) (view)

"The mini-states that emerge from a partition will have plenty of reason to fight wars with one another, as India did with Pakistan in the 1940s and has done virtually ever since. Worse, it is likely that if the Sunni Arab mini-state commits an atrocity against the Shiites, it might well bring in the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. They in turn would be targeted by Saudi and Jordanian jihadi volunteers."

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From Partitioning Iraq, by Juan Cole (Salon.com, October 30, 2006) (view)

"Poll results consistently have shown that significant majorities among all Iraqi communities want their country to remain unified. Even among independence-minded Kurds in the north, leaders are speaking out forcefully in favor of Iraqi unity. The president of Iraq, it's worth noting, is a Kurd."

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From Keep It Together, by The Dallas Morning News editorial board (*The Dallas Morning News*, October 3, 2007) (view)

"First, our plan is not partition, though even some supporters and the media mistakenly call it that. It would hold Iraq together by bringing to life the federal system enshrined in its constitution. A federal Iraq is a united Iraq but one in which power devolves to regional governments, with a limited central government responsible for common concerns such as protecting borders and distributing oil revenue."

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From Federalism, Not Partition, by Joe Biden, Leslie H. Gelb (*The Washington Post*, October 3, 2007) (view)

"A plan to partition Iraq would plunge the country into total civil war far more widespread and bloody than the sectarian and factional violence we are witnessing now. The partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 resulted in 2 million dead and 11 million displaced. The death toll and refugee numbers from collective murder, reprisal killings and ethnic cleansing in Iraq would be comparable, dwarfing the casualties in Iraq today."

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From Partition Is Not the Solution . . ., by Rend al-Rahim (*The Washington Post*, October 29, 2006) (view)

"A favored course of action of uninspired diplomats, the partitioning of territories has usually visited little more than trauma on countries, accompanied by war. That's what happened in India, Palestine, Korea, Vietnam, Cyprus, and Bosnia, and nothing suggests that Iraq will be any different."

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From Breaking Up Ain't Hard to Do, by Michael Young (Reason, October 12, 2006) (view)

"The only real hope of restoring order in the short term is to send American reinforcements. Unfortunately, pacifying the entire country would probably require 400,000 to 500,000 troops, an obvious nonstarter. A smaller number — 25,000 to 50,000 — might suffice to control Baghdad, but, in the current political climate, it seems unlikely that even that many will be sent."

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From Many dead ends in Iraq, by Max Boot (Los Angeles Times, November 8, 2006) (view)

"An Iraqi population already skeptical of American motives would view any suggestion of further division as proof of a nefarious scheme to divide and plunder their country... Gelb's proposal is the singularly least democratic suggestion offered to solve the Iraq crisis to date. Moreover, no neighboring country would accept the idea of dividing Iraq."

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From Iraq: Three from one doesn't add up, by Nir Rosen (*Asia Times Online*, November 27, 2003) (view)

"A permanent Gulf regional security dialogue could emerge that includes Syria and Iran, and the United States could undertake a role as regional security guarantor. Preliminary discussions should lead to a more intensive dialogue with Iran in which security assurances and nuclear programs are discussed."

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From Next move in Iraq?, by Wesley Clark (*USA Today*, November 21, 2006) (view)

"It is tempting to try to separate Shiite and Sunni combatants before they further shred and bleed their country, Yugoslavia style. But partition is a dangerous idea, the merits of which do not improve even as other options look worse. First and most important, the Iraqis do not want it. Second, the biggest prize in the ethnic wars — Baghdad — may be ghettoized, but it cannot be easily divided."

From The perils of partitioning Iraq, by Los Angeles Times editorial board (*Los Angeles Times*, February 5, 2007) (view)

"The majority of Iraqis may be irritated by the presence of foreign forces, but most realize that a premature withdrawal would create hideous problems for the country. This majority includes Sunnis as well as Shiites and Kurds."

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From What Iraq Needs, by Samir Sumaidaie (New York Post, August 28, 2006) (view)

"At best, the course we're on has no end in sight. At worst, it leads to a terrible civil war and possibly a regional war. This plan offers a way to bring our troops home, protect our security interests and preserve Iraq as a unified country."

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From A Plan to Hold Iraq Together, by Joe Biden (*The Washington Post*, August 24, 2006) (view)

"Even in Baghdad, where the worst of Iraq's sectarian violence has occurred, 76% of those surveyed opposed ethnic separation, with only 10% favoring it. The challenge of the Baghdad Security Plan and its accompanying effort at national reconciliation is to realize the overwhelming majority of Iraqis desire to live in peace with one another against the violent minority who seek to impose their vision of hatred and oppression."

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From The Battle of Baghdad, by Zalmay Khalilzad (*The Wall Street Journal*, August 23, 2006) (view)

Mixed on this position

"What's happening today is not geographical line-drawing, colonial-style. We do not have a Mr. Sykes and a Mr. Picot sitting down to a map of Mesopotamia in a World War I carving exercise. The lines today are being drawn organically by self-identified communities and tribes. Which makes the new arrangement more likely to last."

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From The Partitioning of Iraq, by Charles Krauthammer (*The Washington Post*, September 7, 2007) (view)

"I have my reservations about Galbraith's proposal, because I think that partition is always and everywhere a defeat and often leads to more wars and more partitions. But I strongly recommend a reading of his powerful book, which makes the case that partition is no longer avoidable and that we must broker "an amicable divorce" between the factions."

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From Mesopotamia Split?, by Christopher Hitchens (Slate, March 26, 2007) (view)

"At times - as in the case of Pakistan - there's an immediate strategic necessity to support a cobbled-together state. But there's no excuse for our recent history of reflexively defending every bad border out of diplomatic inertia. How long will the United States - the greatest force for freedom in history - continue bleeding to preserve the most-destructive legacies of Europe's empires?"

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From Broken Borders, by Ralph Peters (New York Post, February 19, 2008) (view)

"The new border would run from southwest to northeast roughly through Baghdad's airport. The state to the northwest -- let's call it New Babylon, just to keep track -- would include all 5 million Kurds and nearly all 5 million Sunni. It would include all of Baghdad and all the 2 million to 3 million urban and suburban Shi'a in its vicinity."

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From A two-state solution for Iraq?, by David Apgar (*The Boston Globe*, December 26, 2006) (view)

"There is what might be called a "Plan A-" option — facilitating voluntary ethnic relocation within Iraq while retaining a confederal governing structure. We should offer individuals who want to protect themselves and their families the chance to move to an Iraq territory more hospitable to their ethnicity and/or religion."

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From Break Up Iraq to Save It, by Michael O'Hanlon (*Los Angeles Times*, August 27, 2006) (view)

"With all this to consider, it's no wonder that even partition's stoutest supporters see it as a last-ditch option. If Iraq is partitioned, it probably will be only after the United States experiences the same kind of panicky desperation that helped prompt Britain's mid-century partitions in its crumbling imperial possessions."

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From Breaking Up (a Country) Is Hard to Do, by Gary Bass (*The Washington Post*, August 27, 2006) (view)

"The key lesson of Yugoslavia was that no amount of diplomatic pressure, bribes in aid or peacekeeping forces can vanquish the desire of the oppressed to reclaim their independence and identity. Attempts to force such groups to continue to play together like nice children simply prolong the conflict and intensify the bloodshed."

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From Must Iraq Stay Whole?, by Ralph Peters (*The Washington Post*, April 20, 2003) (view)

"Because the administration and its partners lacked the vision and fortitude to dismantle Iraq and draw more promising borders for Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds, the series of elections in which Iraqis braved terror to go to the polls had nothing to do with strengthening a nation and everything to do with empowering ethnic supremacists and religious demagogues."

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From An errant push for democracy first, by Ralph Peters (*USA Today*, April 18, 2007) (view)

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