

**IRAQ Under Saddam Husayn  
and  
the Ba`th Party**

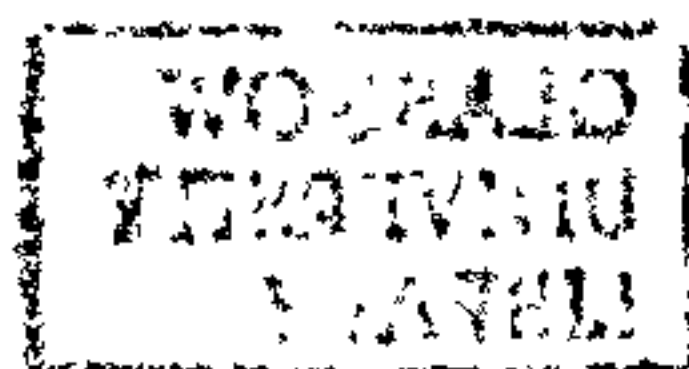
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1998



**IRAQ Under Saddam Husayn  
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**To the Victims of Saddam  
and the Ba`th Party  
in Iraq**

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## NOTE ON & SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION

Only lesser known proper names have been transliterated. Well known names are retained in their most familiar form.

a	-	ا	'	-	ء
i	-	ي	b	-	ب
u	-	و	t	-	ت
			th	-	ث
a	-	ا	j	-	ج
i	-	ي	h	-	ح
u	-	و	kh	-	خ
			d	-	د
aw	-	او	dh	-	ذ
ay	-	اي	r	-	ر
h	-	ه	z	-	ز
t in construct.			s	-	س
			sh	-	ش
			s	-	ص
			d	-	ض
			t	-	ط
			z	-	ظ
			'	-	ع
			gh	-	غ
			f	-	ف
			q	-	ق
			k	-	ك
			l	-	ل
			m	-	م
			n	-	ن
			h	-	ه
			w	-	و
			y	-	ي

## Abstract

This work is, essentially, an assessment of Saddam's regime in Iraq, one of the cruelest and most violent regimes of modern times, and the Ba`th Party policies and ideological principles, recognised by Saddam as the theoretical basis for his practices. These policies and practices have had catastrophic consequences for Iraq, "home of ancient civilisations", jeopardising its sovereignty and future and permitting the west and the west-sponsored states in the region to gain favourable concessions at the expense of Iraq's interests. This thesis is divided into nine chapters:

The first deals with the Ba`th Party, its founding, ideology, set-backs and seizure of power.

The second deals with the founding of the Ba`th Party in Iraq, its political development throughout the Monarchy regime, Qāsim's regime and the period during which the Ba`thists came to power on 8 February 1963.

The third deals with Saddam's early life and his political activities throughout `Ārif's regime.

The fourth deals with the circumstances in which the Ba`th Party returned to power.

The fifth deals with the presidency of Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr and examines Saddam's role and the nature of Ba`thist authority during that period.

The sixth deals with Saddam's presidency and his assumption of all responsibility for the state and the Party.

The seventh and eighth deal with the first and second Gulf wars, the occupation of Kuwait and the results these two destructive wars, embarked upon at the whim of one man, have imposed upon the Iraqi army and people.

The ninth comprises a summary of the thesis, in which Saddam's strange and unstable personality will be analysed and a possible solution will be suggested for the future of Iraq - a community different in composition and circumstances from any other country.



## Introduction

Iraq was incorporated into the Ottoman empire during the sixteenth century as three Vilayets. Ottoman rule left a deep impression, which has still not been wholly eradicated. The rule of the Valis, as throughout the Empire, was arbitrary and despotic. They, their government officials and civil servants were all Turks, and only the least important functions were delegated to the local inhabitants. When the Iraqis eventually came to rule themselves, they had no other government model and they behaved in much the same way. They also inherited the corruption of the Ottoman administration. Bribery, nepotism and fraud were deep-rooted in the bureaucratic apparatus they assumed.

The fact that the Ottomans favoured the Sunnis and considered the *Ja'fari* (Shi'ites), who formed the majority of the population, virtually as infidels, meant, apart from the other sectarian problems that it caused, that the Iraqi officers who were trained in the Ottoman military academies were all Sunnis. It was also responsible for continued tension and occasional hostilities between Shi'ite Iran and Turkey. Iran coveted Mesopotamia, not least because of the persecution of its co-religionists.

The Ottoman-trained officers, many of whom became powerful in post-1919 Iraq, had learnt how to keep power in the hands of the army, or, more specifically, its



leaders. They practised this lesson and passed it on to their successors. As a result the politicised army has carried out all the coups and revolutions that have beset Iraq.

The corruption of the administration was responsible for the rise of a sort of aristocracy, composed of small businessmen, who could flatter or bribe their way into the favour of the Vali or his deputies, transferring their allegiance wantonly with the rise and fall of this or that great man. These developed into the *Effendi* or Baghdad *Effendi* class, who were the only people, together with the *Beys*, the successors of the *Mamluks*, the slaves who had previously been army leaders and the aides and assistants of the Valis, that the British could depend on to run the country and to support them after they invaded during the First World War.

From the beginning of Ottoman rule, the Arab tribes, the leaders of which commanded the allegiance of a large proportion of the people, made periodical attempts to assert their own power as a political force. Their numerous revolts against the authorities sometimes brought them a short-lived independence, but were invariably suppressed in the end with great severity.

Into this confused situation came the British with an expeditionary force from India in 1914 to open up another front against the Turks and to anticipate any movement of

the Central Powers against the Indian Empire. After the eventual Turkish defeat, Britain was given the mandate over Iraq, against which the whole of Iraq rose in revolt in 1920. This revolt was almost successful. However, in spite of the political coalition of the many disparate elements, there remained a religious schism between a number of the leaders, which was sufficient to bring about its failure. It considerably affected the subsequent political history of Iraq, in that it drew the British administration's attention to the latent strength of the tribes. They promptly proceeded to buy those tribal leaders that could be bought. They allowed them to regain control over all their tribal lands, and thus created a new group of feudal lords *muqṭi'īn* who became the greatest farmers and landlords in Iraq.

By buying the tribal leaders, the British succeeded in winning over a large sector of the Iraqi people into acquiescence with their rule. It was an influential sector, most of which was Shiah. The Hashemite kings installed by the British followed their lead in their dealings with the tribes. This alienated the Beys and Effendis and also many of the other Sunnis, not only for religious reasons, but also because they felt that their positions and other interests were threatened. The tensions thus created grew gradually more acute and culminated in the coup of July 1958, carried out by a group of army officers. The monarchy was removed and replaced by a republic. This solved none of the political

problems and led to further military coups. Most of the rulers of modern Iraq have been army officers, the successors of those who graduated from the Ottoman military academies. They have been consistently despotic and repressive. They have suppressed freedom of speech and have tortured and murdered not only those who actively opposed them, but also their relatives, friends and associates.

This thesis will be concerned with Iraq's suffering under the worst catastrophe that it has yet suffered in its unhappy history, the rule of the Ba`th Party under Saddam Husayn's leadership. It will be divided into nine chapters:

The first will deal with the Ba`th Party, its founding, ideology, set-backs and seizure of power.

The second will deal with the founding of the Ba`th Party in Iraq, its political development throughout the Monarchy regime, Qāsim regime and the period during which the Ba`thists came to power on 8 February 1963 and.

The third will deal with Saddam's early life and his political activities throughout `Ārif's regime.

The fourth will deal with the circumstances which allowed the Ba`th Party to return to power.

The fifth will deal with the presidency of Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr and Saddam's role during that period, analysing the nature of Ba`athist authority.

The sixth will deal with Saddam's presidency and his assumption of all responsibility for the state and the Party.

The seventh and eighth will deal with the first and second Gulf wars, the occupation of Kuwait and the results these two destructive wars have imposed upon the Iraqi army and people at the whim of one man.

The ninth will comprise a summary of the thesis, in which Saddam's strange and unstable personality will be analysed and a possible solution will be suggested for the future of Iraq, a community different in composition and circumstances from any other country.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **THE BA`TH PARTY**



## The Emergence of the Ba`th Movement

The history of the Ba`th Party will not be researched, as this has already been the subject of many historical works.(1) However, attention will be drawn to certain stages on its journey. These stages represent important indicators that will greatly help us to unveil the true nature of the Ba`th Party, which has had such a disastrous effect on Iraq's modern history.

To understand the motives behind the foundation of the Ba`th Party, it is necessary to consider briefly the most striking features of the period preceding the foundation of the Ba`th and the common political climate at the time.

Intensified competition among the imperialist powers over the Asian territories of the Ottoman Empire, in particular Mesopotamia, influenced the imperialist powers in the conduct of the First World War.

The effect of the War and the post-war arrangements between the victorious allies for the annexation and creation of a spheres of influence in line with their economic and strategic imperialist aims; this was in accordance with the secret arrangements of the Sykes-Picot agreement,(2) which was exposed by the Russians after the Revolution,(3) and provoked the following developments in the Middle East, and in Iraq in particular:

- (1) There was opposition to foreign tutelary control of the Arab East by the British and the French, who had not kept their assurance to the Arabs to support the creation of an independent Arab Kingdom. This had been agreed with the Sharif of Mecca, Amir Ḥusayn, who had encouraged an Arab national rising against the Ottoman Empire.

The Arab Forces under the leadership of Amir Ḥusayn and his two sons, Amir Fayṣal and Amir `Abdallāh, together with some Iraqi officers, such as Nūrī al-Sa`īd and Mawlūd Mukhlis, played a major role in the British-sponsored Sharifian army, become the first group to carry out British policy in Iraq for about four decades, (4) and co-operating with the British to destroy the Ottoman Empire. (5)

- (2) The Mandate system was established, which was based on the view that people in the conquered areas were entitled to self determination. However, because they were not sufficiently developed politically and educationally they were incapable of self-rule, so that the two Great Powers were given a mandate by the league of Nations. This system found less opposition in Syria and Lebanon than in Iraq, probably because the Syrians and the Lebanese were more familiar with foreign intervention in their political life than the Iraqis. This may have been due to the influence of

the non-Muslim Arab and other religious minorities in the country. The foreign powers, apart from intervening in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire, strengthened and protected the religious minority as political units with a communal consciousness. Thus, France claimed the right to protect the Maronite Christians of Lebanon and Syria, who were attached to French culture and looked to France as the epitome of a country upholding historical freedom and the rights of the Christian minority against the Muslim majority.(6) The Russian Government claimed to protect the Greek Orthodox Christians. The British had friendly relations particularly with the Drūzes and the Jews.(7) It seems that this policy improved the lot of the religious minorities, but, at the same time, incurred the hatred of the Ottoman Government and the Sunni Majority, who regarded them as traitors and tools of European policy.(8) But in Iraq the situation was different. The Iraqis rejected both the British rule, and the Mandate, despite the fact that the British employed extreme measures to subordinate them.(9)

- (3) The Middle East's present boundaries, were established according to the British and French economic and strategic imperialist interests. This was demonstrated clearly in the case of Iraq, when the British annexed the Mosul Vilayet to Iraq, because of its potential oil resources, so that they



would have the possibility of developing its oil fields.(10) Then, the British created minorities, by adding a substantial area of Kurdistan to be part of Mesopotamia, in order to increase their influence, on the one hand, and to be a barrier to prevent ideas of the Russian Revolution from reaching Mesopotamia, on the other.(11) The British also placed the homeless group of Assyrians from Armenia and Georgia in Iraq as a minority and used them in the British army. These minorities welcomed foreign rule, in return for their protection from the Arab majority. In particular, the Assyrians and some Kurdish chieftains, such as Simko, Ṭāhā al-Shimrīnī, and Shaykh `Abd al-Qādir, declared their readiness to mobilise their forces, and to serve British interests.(12) However, this did not prevent some Kurds from joining their Arab co-religionists in a joint effort to get rid of the British. Some Kurds had an important role in the 1920 great Iraqi revolution of 1920. This revolution angered the British because it united non-Arabs with Arabs on religious grounds; such unity was the only effective weapon against British domination.(13)

The British also tried to use sectarian, divisive policies so as to isolate the Kurds from the Arabs by describing the Iraqi nationalist movement as an Arab Shi`ite mutiny.(14) They also tried to weaken the Iraqi national movement by buying off Arab tribal

chieftains, since they had control over the peasants. (15)

Many of the Ba`th Party's founders and leaders were of a feudal and upper class character, (16) and later used the same methods as the British in buying off tribal chieftains, so as to establish the Ba`th Party's power in Iraq, particularly during Saddam's regime.

- (4) The Arab Nationalist movement made its first appearance. The imperialist power recognised the danger of Islam and its ability to unite the Muslim territories behind their leader or Imām, if he called for a Jihād. This might lead to a serious uprising throughout the area, which would damage the imperialist, economic and strategic interests. However, a number of secret Arab Nationalist societies had already existed in the Ottoman Empire, and more came into being after the War. In particular in Syria and Lebanon, such as *al-Ḥizb al-Qawmī al-Sūrī* (the Syrian Nationalist Party), *ʿAşbat al-ʿAmal al-Qawmī* (the National Action League) and *Ḥarakat al-Iḥyā al-ʿArabī* (the Arab Revitalisation Movement), which became the Ba`th Party. Its spokesmen and leaders were selected from non-Muslim Arab intellectuals and political activists, who openly spread a secular message. This message was that the culture and the political aspirations of Arabs would

be better served by Arab nationalism than by religion. Thus, the idea of Arabism and Nationalism gained ground owing to these movements in large parts of the former Ottoman Provinces, in particular in Syria and Lebanon. Then it spread to the Iraqis, who were a very rebellious people, and were the first to revolt against British rule. The Iraqi uprising broke out in July 1920 and continued until the British cruelly suppressed it early in 1921.(17) The first military coup in the Middle East was also in Iraq in 1936. Iraq later became a hot-bed of pro-Nazi action as well. The danger of pro-Nazi control in Iraq, which was represented by the Rashīd `Ālī movement, led to the Anglo-Iraqi war of 1941, at the end of which the Rashīd `Ālī movement was crushed,(18) and its military leaders the four Colonels, were executed. After the second World War, Iraq became a fertile field for pro-Communist activity, which lasted throughout the Cold War period, with competition between the Western and Eastern bloc for strategic and economic influence in the Middle East.

This serious challenge by the Iraqis, which represented a reverse for the historical British imperial interest in Iraq, led the British to deal with the Iraqis, with great care. They attempted to break their internal resistance by subordinating them intellectually and encouraging them to adopt the Arab Nationalist movement, in order to direct the growing Iraq anti-colonialism and

imperialism sentiment into a pan-Arab, rather than a purely nationalist, channel.

## Middle East Situation After the Second World War

In the post-world war 2 period the Middle East area witnessed radical changes, exemplified by the major involvement in the area of the US, as a consequence of its emergence as a world super-power. It began to unseat Britain and France from their previous predominant position in the Middle East and to replace them. The US was helped in this by two factors. The first was, the continuous decline in the credibility of British and French creature regimes in the area, which were locked in a losing battle against the rising tide of nationalism. The US did not then face the same popular feeling of hostility that Britain and France were facing. It thus had a better opportunity than Britain and France to entrench its influence in the area. The second factor was the increase in Soviet penetration in the area through local communist movements, which gained strength because of the emergence of the Soviet Union as the second world super-power. Thus the US began its efforts to build local alliances, in order to stop Soviet penetration of the area, and put forward the Dulles Plan, which aimed at replacing the British/French power by US/Israeli power in the area. This plan was not welcomed by Britain, who then considered the Middle East to be her own responsibility. (19) It became clear that Britain and the US were involved in a competitive struggle against each other for the domination of the Middle East. This was nowhere clearer than in Syria, where the coup of Ḥusnī al-Za`īm was engineered by the CIA to make al-Za`īm sign the Tapline oil



pipeline Agreement, (the Tapline carried Saudi oil to the Mediterranean as a competitor to the British oil pipe-line from the Iraqi oil fields). Soon after that a second coup in Syria, led by Sāmī al-Ḥanāwī, who was in league with the British, froze the Tapline Agreement. We shall discuss these coups later. On the other hand, in Egypt, the US delivered severe blows to British interests through Nasir's regime. The US helped Nasir to expel British interests and influence from Egypt and to expand Egyptian influence to countries like Jordan, to the extent that King Ḥusayn was pressured by Nasirism to dismiss General Glubb, the British commander of the Jordanian forces, in May 1956. Britain then considered Nasir as a real threat to its interests.(20)

The Americans attempted to take over Iraq from the British. Muḥammad Ṣiddīq Shanshal, the general secretary of the Independence Party in the early fifties, claimed that the Americans had contacted him and offered help to topple the Royal Family, but he refused to switch from one Imperialism to another.

Britain's answer was through the Baghdad Pact, which assigned regional importance to Iraq, Britain's ally and not to Egypt, a friend of the US. Although the competitive struggle between, the US and Britain took the form of local coups and counter coups as well as alliances and counter-alliances, it did not degenerate into open warfare over Middle East domination. This was due to the lines drawn by

both the US and Britain that their competitive struggle should not cross. It was also Britain who frequently bowed to US pressure and accepted US predominance, especially in the case of Iran, following the collapse of Muşdiq's nationalisation of Iran's oil in the early 1950s and the subsequent return of the Shah, with the active support of the CIA.

The second and more important struggle that the US was involved in was that against the Soviet Union. In contrast to its struggle against Britain and France, the struggle against the Soviet Union was ideological and carried with it the potential of turning from a Cold War type struggle into a hot war. The Soviet Union paid some importance to the Middle East, due to its geographical proximity to Soviet territory, so that the US and its western allies could use it as a launching pad for an assault against it. The Soviet Union also had among its population tens of millions of Muslims, who were bound to be influenced by developments in the Middle East.(21)

The Soviet policy towards the Middle East aimed at achieving the following:

- (1) Strengthening anti-western regimes in the area;
- (2) Gaining military facilities;

- (3) Gaining influence at the expense of the US, through the mistakes of the latter, thus enabling the Soviet Union to play the role of honest broker in regional squabbles;
- (4) Supporting national liberation and radical movements;
- (5) Weakening pro-western regimes in the area;
- (6) Supporting the Communist movement and parties in the Middle East;
- (7) Opposing US efforts to impose solutions to regional squabbles in line with US interests;

However, what the Soviet Union achieved from the above strategy was almost nothing. The series of treaties of friendship and co-operation the Soviet Union signed with Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Yemen (North and South), as well as the wide range of agreements with Libya and Algeria, resulted in no material benefit to the Arabs. Soviet support for its Arab allies was minimal in comparison with US, British and French support for Israel. In fact the Soviets played their part in maintaining Israeli military superiority by ill-equipping Arab forces and making them dependent on third rate Soviet arms. The reasons for the lukewarm Soviet support for its Arab allies is that they were non-communists and the Soviet Union valued the stability of its relations with the West above its



relations with the Arabs.(22) Moreover, the Soviet Union did not agree with the Arabs about Palestine, and was the first country to recognise Israel. Both the US and the Soviet Union wanted to stabilise the Arab States and each wanted to exploit whatever it could exploit. The US wanted to exploit the Gulf oil and the Soviet Union wanted to spread Communism in populous poor countries with a historical dislike for the British and French, namely Egypt, Iraq and Syria. Thus, both the US and the Soviet Union agreed jointly to rescue Nasir from his humiliating defeat at the hands of the Israelis in 1956 and turn the whole episode into a humiliation for Britain and France.

The Arab regimes, that came to power on the wave of pan-Arabism and anti-western imperialism failed miserably in achieving any of their declared objectives. On the contrary, the ineptitude and corruption in dictatorships, from Nasir to Asad and Saddam, created ideal conditions for the Israelis to achieve their own objectives and for western powers to return to the Middle East with a vengeance. The post-Gulf-war period has revealed how the Americans and British have come to occupy the Gulf militarily.

The Ba`th regime in Syria, through its sectarian/family misrule, weakened Syrian resolve against Israel, which meant that Israel still occupies the Golan Heights. However, in Iraq, the crimes of the Ba`th regime and then the horrendous crimes of Saddam, literally broke

the back of Iraq and its people through war, sectarianism, and Saddam's family's appropriation of the entire wealth of the country.

## The early years of the establishment of the party

There is a difference of opinion as to who was the first to think of the concept of Ba`thism. There is even a difference of opinion among Ba`thists themselves. Some think that it was Zaki al-'Arsouzi (a Syrian Alawite) who first conceived the idea.(23) Others, however, think that the role of al-'Arsouzi in establishing the Ba`th is exaggerated, although he played a role to the extent that the first generation of Ba`thists were admirers of his ideas.(24) On the other hand, there are views which deny any role for al-'Arsouzi and assert that he was merely a theoretician and did not take a single step to establish a political party as did `Aflaq.(25) Another opinion accuses `Aflaq of isolating al-'Arsouzi politically and ideologically from others. He had stolen al-'Arsouzi's ideas and turned them into the bases of a political party, drawing all al-'Arsouzi's followers to himself.

This is vindicated by the fact that al-'Arsouzi himself accused `Aflaq and many others of plotting against him and he was, therefore, forced to give up politics.(26) Since plotting, deceit and treachery are central to the very nature of the Ba`th, al-'Arsouzi was probably quite right in his suspicions.

Whoever may have been the originator of the concept, it is now accepted that there are two groups who laid

claim to the name of the Ba`th -al-'Arsouzi's group and `Aflaq's group- and almost all accounts agree that the former bore the name first, and that he was primarily responsible for the ideas of the Ba`th. According to al-'Arsouzi's account, his group was divided into two parts: one was political, the Arab Nationalist Party, and the other was cultural, the Ba`th. The principal task of the membership of this group was to write or translate books on the renaissance of the Arab heritage.(27)

In November 1940, al-'Arsouzi formed a party of six of his admirers, after lecturing them for four hours about nationalism and socialism. He named this group "al-Ba`th al-Arabi".(28) This group grew in the course of the next two years, but never exceeded two dozen in number.

The French occupying authorities suppressed al-'Arsouzi's group and arrested three of them.(29) al-'Arsouzi himself was exiled outside Damascus and, following that, gave up politics. During 1944 his followers left him and joined another group led by Wahhāb al-Ghānim (an Alawite landowner). The following year this group existed side by side with `Aflaq's group. Meanwhile, al-'Arsouzi became volatile, accusing everybody of spying and plunged further into obscurity.(30) Some thought that he was consumed with jealousy of `Aflaq.(31) We can, however, conclude that if there was jealousy, there was good reason for it. While al-'Arsouzi and his followers were suppressed by the French authorities, which in the

end forced him out of politics, `Aflaq and his group were allowed by the French to flourish and grow. Jalāl al-Sayyid says:

"... as time went by, membership of the party grew through recruitment from all classes and sections of Syrian society with the knowledge of the French authorities, who did not take any anti-party measures and only in very rare cases attempted to caution some of the Ba`th Party members." (32)

With regard to this point, Devlin, who has researched the history of the Ba`th, compares the fortunes of the two groups:

"... what came to be the significant difference, however, was that `Arsouzi virtually dropped out of public and literary life in the early 1940s. `Aflaq and Bayṭār were just gathering momentum." (33)

We have here an irony, to say the least. For, while the French occupational authorities turned a blind eye to a party which declared publicly that it was in the business of fighting the French occupation and mobilising the population to liberate Syria from the French, it suppressed another party (al-`Arsouzi's group) which had exactly the same objectives. This lends weight to the



accusation that 'Aflaq's group was working in co-operation with the French. (34)

The Ba`thists themselves admit that their party did not differ in its ideas and principles from other Nationalist and pan-Arabist parties and groups which preceded it, such as *al-Kutlah al-Waṭaniyyah* (the Nationalist Forum) and *'Aṣbat al-'Amal al-Qawmī* (the Nationalist Action League), apart from their slogans for achieving Arab Unity and Socialism. The Ba`th Party hoped to fill the gap, to avoid the mistakes of these two previous groups, and to try to supply what was missing in them. These groups were almost identical with the Ba`th in terms of their objectives, the means of achieving those objectives and their socialist orientation. (35) The Nationalist Action League and others like it, which came into existence before the First World War, and then in the inter-war period were organisations created and led by Christian Arabs had, as mentioned before, western inclinations and found in pan-Arabism, as opposed to Islam, a useful tool to end the Ottoman occupation and the repression of all those who opposed the Turkish domination of Syria. Al-Ḥuṣrī says that Arab Christians do not concern themselves with Ottoman and Arab history because they regard it as purely Islamic history. (36) Such an acknowledgement by one of the leaders of Arab Nationalism may be regarded as convincing evidence for the relationship between Western Europe and Arab Christians, concerning the mission of the Arab Christians in the

emergence of Arab Nationalism. This Nationalism has created many problems in Arab society. These problems continue in each Arab country that has different ethnic and religious groups, like Iraq, which consists of two main ethnic groups, Arabs and Kurds, as well as others, such as Turks and Assyrians. In addition, there are different religious groups, such as Shi'ah, Sunnah, Christian and Jewish. Therefore, if either of these groups holds absolute power, it would provoke civil war. Thus, among the objects of foreign powers is to create hostility between the different ethnic and religious groups in the Arab world. They have so far succeeded in their task, and the Arab and Islamic World has been greatly fragmented.

Probably for this reason, the Ba'th adopted Arabism as an ideology since it appealed strongly to Arabic-speaking religious minorities, who hoped, through Arabism, to free themselves of their minority status.(37)

Other political parties also attracted the minority races and religious groups to their secular ideology, like the Syrian Nationalist Party, the Syrian Communist Party (its leader was Khālīd Bikdāsh from the Kurdish minority in Syria) and the Iraqi Communist Party, whose first secretary was an Arab Christian called Yūsuf Salmān (his clandestine party name was Fahd), which were under the direction of Moscow.

Pan-Arabism also became attractive to Syria's Muslims as a useful tool to extend their influence and, perhaps, Syrian political and cultural domination of other Arab lands nearby. (38)

Pan-Arabism was attractive to the two European powers that were engaged in a struggle against the Turks, namely Britain and France. T.E. Lawrence in his Seven Pillars of Wisdom, (39) expresses strong sympathy with pan-Arabism, which he helped to win the day against Turkey in his direct contribution to the Arab revolt in alliance with the western powers during the First World War. Lawrence was described by General Allenby as the real leader of the Arab revolt. (40) The French in their turn, through their councillor in Syria, George Picot, played the role of advisor to the pan-Arabists in Syria and acted as coordinator between them and France. (41) There are many sources who affirm the role of the Christian Arab thinkers in the vanguard of radical change in the Arab world through the ideology of pan-Arabism. (42) Owing to the absence of religious barriers between them and the west, Arab Christian thinkers were able to establish stronger links with the west than could their fellow Arab Muslims. Similarly the west also had a deeper, stronger and faster effect on Arab Christians than it had on Arab Muslims.

The British in the inter-war period generally viewed pan-Arabism as an ally, to the extent that even Arab Muslims were embraced. Lionel Smith, the British advisor



to the Ministry of Education in Iraq from 1920 to 1931, a period that saw turmoil in Iraq, considered such figures as Şāṭi' al-Ḥuşrî, who worked under his direction, efficient and energetic, and described them as such in his memoirs.(43) Al-Ḥuşrî, of course, was the pioneer of pan-Arabism in the education of Iraqis, education which, from the late thirties on, was to lead into the path of fascism, rather than into British democracy:

**"...the system, which carries our hopes and achievements is fascism."(44)**

`Aflaq's group, which had a co-founder, namely Şalāḥ al-Bayṭār, is historically the second group to carry the name Ba`th, a third co-founder, Jālāl al-Sayyid, said:

**"... I met `Aflaq and al-Bayṭār during April 1942. During the meeting `Aflaq said that since we had concluded that political parties in this country (Syria) could not, by the nature and composition, carry out their nationalistic and pan-Arabist duties. Since they believed in the necessity of establishing an organisation of a new kind, which could carry the burden of nationalist and pan-Arabist duties, in a manner better than what was available now, what would they say about forming a new political party with the three**

of them as its nucleus, entitled the Arab Ba`th Party.(45)

`Aflaq's nucleus was called the executive committee and began recruiting members for their party.(46) However, the birth of the Ba`th Party was not announced until 1947, a full five years after its foundation.(47) The first party congress was held, and a new five-man executive committee was formed, headed by `Aflaq, which sanctioned internal party rules and regulations. Hence, `Aflaq continued to consider his political career as having taken off during the early 1940s.(48) If we wonder why there was a five years' delay in announcing the birth of the Ba`th Party, we should look back at that particular period and take account of the regional and international situation, namely the developing of the Palestinian problem,(49) increasing American involvement in the Middle East and American's struggle to political movement in the area, particularly in Egypt.(50)

So, one may wonder the possibility that the whole of the Ba`th movement was ment to be born then, so as to be an outlet and a containment for Islamic emotions that were demanding the rescue of Palestine, and confrontation of Communism, which was the predominant Political movement in the Middle East after the Second World War. The Ba`th Party succeeded in fulfilling these functions, and did its best in later years to destroy Arab solidarity. `Aflaq was violently hostile to Nasir, whom the Arab masses

considered to be their true leader. The Islamic movement in Syria and Iraq were destroyed, and a deepening hatred grew between the Arabs and Iranians. This was partly due to Saddam's miscalculate policies and his ill-considered aggression against the Iranians and, finally, to Saddam's colossal blunder in invading Kuwait, and the consequent Gulf War, which delivered the Middle East in its entirety into the hands of America and Israel. In a sense, Saddam's failures have helped Israel to achieve favourable results that no other Arab failures could have done in the past. (51)

After their first congress, Aflaq and his fellow Ba`thists tried to reach power through parliamentary means, i.e. general elections, but they failed. (52) Majid Khadouri says with regard to this:

"....`Aflaq's three repeated failures in parliamentary elections proved to him that democratic means were not going to deliver him into power and achieve his objectives. After that he did not stand for election, instead he began publicly to call for the use of violence to achieve social and political change." (53)

Thus, he urged his followers to be vigilant in achieving their goals:

**"... the politically dominant and economically exploitative class will not voluntarily surrender its position." (54)**

On this point, Devlin's justification, with which I do not agree, is that the Ba`th was compelled to use violence and act as a clandestine organisation, owing to the lack of a legitimate means for political expression and the government's severe repression at that time. (55) The reason was not the impotence of the democratic process, as Khadouri says, nor those mentioned by Devlin, but that the Ba`thists could not possibly win power through democratic means because they were not popular. In Syria, which was their power-base, the Ba`thists only won twenty seats out of a possible 142 in the 1955 general election. (56) This surely indicates their meagre popular base and lack of general support among the population. Hence, they set out to destroy democracy in Syria and have deprived it of parliamentary democracy since then.

In Iraq they were even less of a popular party, to the extent that the monarchy considered them to be the lesser of two evils in comparison with the Communists, who were treated more harshly than the Ba`thists. (57) Devlin confirms that:

**"....the Ba`th received far gentler treatment than the communists during this period." (58)**



There are indications in Ba`th literature which confirm this:

" ... the Ba`th was alone in the field. The first half of the 1950s were years of stagnation and decline and of revolutionary movements in Iraq and the Arab world; however, at the same time, it was a period of establishment and formalisation of this new revolutionary movement and its progress and solidarity. Once these years were over, the Ba`th was immediately in the field of popular struggle." (59)

The practice during the monarchy in Iraq was for the secret police to infiltrate political organisations.(60) Although Nūrī al-Sa`īd was the first to characterise the Ba`th Party as a secret society, it did not receive the same harsh treatment as did the Communists, whose leaders were executed.(61) The reason may be that the Communists supported the creation of Israel and were in alliance with, and under the control of, the Soviet Union, and consequently threatened the pro-west regime in Iraq more than did the Ba`thists.

The Ba`th leadership welcomed Za`īm's coup in March 1949 in Syria, regarding it as a step towards a real revolution,(62) whilst `Aflaq's earlier writing said that the revolution or *inqilāb*, as he called it, should change



people in the Arab world, rather than the system, and that when people changed, the system would follow automatically.(63) This proves that the term *inqilāb* is attached to a coup d'état, while `Aflaq uses it in his romantic rhetorical style as the "rebirth of the Arab nation or awakening of the Arab nation". In the sixties, however, `Aflaq began to use the term *thawrah* frequently, instead of *inqilāb*, after the Ba`th had overturned the governments in Iraq and Syria through military coups.

However, the Ba`thist leadership in Syria soon began to attack Ḥusnī al-Za`īm, which led to the imprisonment of `Aflaq. `Aflaq subsequently, in an effort to avoid imprisonment, wrote a famous letter to al-Za`īm, requesting forgiveness and compassion, and he promised to give up politics.(64) This indicated the lack of personal stamina on the part of `Aflaq and his unwillingness to practise what he preached. That famous letter led to the collapse of `Aflaq's personal standing, even within his party, which was shocked by his behaviour.(65) However, the Ba`th Party issued no explanation and let the episode die down, allowing `Aflaq to remain as General Secretary of the Party.

Husni al-Za`īm's regime did not last long, since a new coup was staged by Sāmī al-Ḥanāwī and Adīb al-Shīshiklī. It seems that there was an Anglo-American agreement to oust al-Za`īm's regime,(66) by backing and probably even planning the al-Ḥanāwī / al-Shīshiklī coup, for which they

were rewarded by `Aflaq being appointed as Minister of Education during the period 14 August-19 November 1949. Ḥanā Batātū considered `Aflaq's assumption of the post of Minister of Education as a political mistake without specifying why. (67)

However, it appeared that regional and international considerations were behind `Aflaq's decision to assume the post of Minister of Education in al-Ḥanāwī's government. This was dominated by members of the People's Party *al-Sh`ab*, which was strongly in favour of unity with Iraq. (68) Since such a close relationship between Iraq and Syria was not in the interest of other regional and international powers, al-Ḥanāwī's government was doomed. `Aflaq left the government, as did 'Akrm al-Ḥawrānī, leader of the Arab Socialist Party, prior to its merger with the Ba`th Party. Their reason for leaving the government was claimed to be their desire to safeguard the republican regime in Syria, which would have been endangered by unity with the Hashemite regime in Iraq. (69) Al-Shīshiklī turned against his old comrade, al-Ḥawrānī, and staged a third coup in Syria. Al-Shīshiklī, although against unity with Iraq, was also against trying up Syria to other regional and international powers, which led in turn to his overthrow. The Ba`th Party with the co-operation of anti-Shīshiklī elements launched a denunciation of the al-Shīshiklī regime as authoritarian. (70) Some indicated that Britain had a hand in the downfall of al-Shīshiklī. (71) Jalāl al-Sayyid, who represented the Ba`th point of view,

put the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the Hashemite regime in Iraq.(72)

In November 1952, `Aflaq and al-Bayṭār united their party with `Akrm al-Ḥawrānī's Arab Socialist Party, while the three were in exile in Lebanon, after they had launched a campaign against al-Shīshiklī's regime. The party was called the Arab Socialist Ba`th Party and had adopted the Ba`th constitution in 1947. According to Batatu's account,(73) with which I agree, the reasons behind the merger of the two parties were the following:

- (1) The Ba`th Party lacked mass support, although its membership had increased to about 4,500.
- (2) The leadership was impatient and preferred quick and effortless political ascents.
- (3) Ḥawrānī was able to attract mass interest and sympathy.
- (4) Ḥawrānī had a foothold in the officer corps, and he persuaded many of his sympathisers to join the Homs Military Academy.

The merger was, at any rate, a step forward on the shortest route to power, namely through military coups, after it had failed to reach power through the ballot box;



there were however ideological differences between the two leaders, as the Ba`thists themselves admitted.(74)

After the merger the Party expanded greatly and recruited new members from the countryside, particularly after the first Syrian Congress for Farmers took place, organised and run by the Party in Aleppo.(75)

The Party also established branches in neighbouring countries - Lebanon, Jordan and, of course, Iraq. The Ba`th also played an important role in the union of Syria and Egypt into the United Arab Republic (UAR). It looks as if the Party was meant to play an important role in the future of the area. Jalāl al-Sayyid explains:

" ....The merger between the Ba`th and the Arab Socialist Party was an important event in the history of the Ba`th, if not the most important, with no other event approaching it in importance, apart from reaching power in Syria and Iraq."(76)

On 1 February 1958 the Ba`th leadership's project to unite Syria with Egypt was initiated as a first step towards the unification of the Arab world. The Ba`th decided to take this step when President Nasir's prestige was at its height. He became the hero of the hour, not only in Egypt, but around the Arab, Islamic and African

world. His following progressive achievements, later seemed artificial, as CIA records show: (77)

- (1) He ousted the British from Suez and eliminated foreign bases;
- (2) He was able to resist the tripartite attack in 1956;
- (3) He took a neutral foreign policy;
- (4) He nationalised the Suez Canal;
- (5) He supported the Palestinian cause;
- (6) He completed an arms deal with Czechoslovakia;
- (7) He fought the Baghdad Pact and the Eisenhower principle; (78)

The Ba`thists expected that they would take prominent positions in the new united state and, at the same time, save the Ba`th domestic political position, which had a severe inner crisis. In addition their rivalry with the Communists, who became the most influential force on the Syrian political scene, was another factor which precipitated the Ba`th into the Union. (79)

Sāmī al-Jundī says of the internal struggle within the Party at that time that on 1 February a regional meeting



was held at which the leadership put forward its decision to disband the Party organisation in Syria:

**"....the meeting approved unanimously. In fact the members felt as if a heavy burden had been lifted from their shoulders since they were exhausted by the squabbles within the Party."**

(80)

Thus, when the Ba'thist leaders proclaimed that they agreed to dissolve their Party as the price of Union to prove to Nasir their real intention for Union, Nasir commented on this point during the trilateral negotiations for a federal Arab Union between Egypt, Syria and Iraq which took place in March 1963:

**".... my information about the Party at the time of the talks about unity held in January 1958, was that it had problems which were almost insuperable, and we all imagined that you yourselves desired its dissolution." (81)**

During the UAR years the Ba'th Party faced many problems. It suffered from splits in many regions, which resulted in the loss of many early members. The Ba'thists lost their influence, owing to Nasir's dictatorship, and they were never allowed to share power. Thus, the dispute between the Ba'th and Nasir appeared soon after the formation of the UAR and the split between them seemed

inevitable. In September 1961 Syria seceded from the UAR, blaming Egyptian domination. Many sources prove that the Ba`th leadership (`Aflaq, Bayṭār and al-Ḥawrānī) were behind this departure.(82)

Nasir in his turn, did not agree to union in response to a genuine feeling, in spite of slogans similar to the Ba`th's, but, rather, as his political vehicle to control other Arab states, particularly in the field of foreign affairs. The Ba`th was more in the business of being in line with the interests of foreign powers.(83) Thus, when the USA turned against Nasir in the four years following 1958, the Ba`th leaders turned against him.(84) This served American policy at that time.

However, the Ba`th leadership's effort to take advantage of Nasir through union (which was partly to defeat the Communists) had failed.(85) The growing strength of the communists in Iraq caused the Western Powers to panic since they believed that Qāsim was under Communist influence. The CIA director, Allen Dulles, announced that the situation in Iraq was the most dangerous in the World at that time.(86) On this point Penrose had a different account, with which I agree:

" ....the United States Ambassadors in this period, Waldemar Gallman and John Jernigh, were experienced envoys of good judgement, who were well aware that the accusation of the

centre from internal and external pressures."

(87)

This is a testimony to the fact that Qāsim was pressurised, under the pretext of confronting Communism by the west and the Ba`th.(88) Consequently the Ba`th gave itself the right to move to rescue what they considered to be a threatening situation in the Middle East. A Ba`thist leader declared:

"....imperialism did not worry about its position in the Middle East more than it worried during the period preceding 1958 and the period immediately after it, since there was a unity of progressive forces in the Arab world." (89)

Ba`thist leaders met in Beirut some time in 1962 and formulated a plan to bring down the regimes in both Iraq and Syria.(90) Qāsim, in fact, destroyed western interests in Iraq and achieved the liberation of Iraq from western domination, so the Ba`th plan to bring down Qāsim's regime was, in fact, in the interests of western countries. One of the Ba`th Party announcements clearly declared:

"....the masses of our people in the Iraqi *quṭr* who are experienced in struggle, were able, during the morning of 8 February 1963 and in one decisive blow, to smash Qāsim's



military dictatorship. By doing so, it prevented imperialism and reactionary forces from bringing down Qāsim's regime themselves, thus preventing the return of Iraq to the imperialist reactionary camp." (91)

Since 1963 the Ba`th Party has been ruling Syria; it ruled Iraq briefly in 1963, and it has been ruling there again since 1968. In Syria, it institutionalised the rule of the Alawite minority, and has deprived the country of the chance of peace and democracy for more than three decades. In Iraq, it has institutionalised the rule first of the tribe and then of the family and it has eventually achieved the present destruction of Iraq. So the Ba`th Party has achieved for the enemies of the Arabs what would have been difficult for them to accomplish otherwise.

The Ba`th's hypocritical stance on Unity first came to light, in its attitude towards the proposed Iraqi-Syrian union in the late 1940s and early 1950s. That union was opposed by Israel because it feared the formation of a united Arab power on its borders; by France, who did not want to lose its influence in Syria; by Britain, who was the mentor of Iraq; by Saudi Arabia, who did not want an expansion of competitors to the destiny of al-Saud by the Hashemites; by Egypt, which was always in competition with Iraq and, of course, by the Ba`th.

Between 1954 and 1958 there were several major political changes in the area which put Syria into the centre of regional and international competition. Britain began to pressurise Syria to stay away from Egypt, when it began to understand that Egyptian ambitions in Syria might lead to problems for Britain's friends in the area, namely Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf shaykhdoms. (92)

Nasir began to gain ascendancy over Hashemite Iraq and to control the foreign policy of a number of Arab countries, with America's direction and support. (93) In 1957, when Jordan refused to join the Baghdad Pact, and dismissed General Glubb from the Arab Legion and followed Nasir's camp, (94) the British position in the area seemed precarious and so a plan was proposed to strike at Nasir's influence in Syria by forcing Syria to merge with Iraq. (95)

On the other hand, Syria faced pressures from both the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States wanted to prevent the obvious Soviet influence in Syria, while the Soviet Union was anxious to compel Syria not to join the anti-Russian alliances; this pushed it to compete with the Western Powers for influence in Syria.



## The Founders of the Ba'th Party

It is important to try to get to know the main characters who were responsible for the ideas of the Ba'th and who participated in the establishment of the Party:

(1) **Zaki al-'Arsouzi:** he was a middle class landowner from Alexandretta, educated at the Sorbonne in Paris. His family were Alawites. He was one of the active members of the *'Aşbat al-'Amal al-Qawmi* from 1938 to 1939, which was similar to the Ba'th Party. (96) He may have been involved in politics because of Syria's loss of Sanjak of Alexandretta and have moved into Syria after it was annexed by Turkey, with the approval of France. He led a campaign marked by extreme racism and aroused the youth section of his group to attack the Turks and the French. In one of his comments attacking the French treatment of the Arabs, al-'Arsouzi says:

".... the foreigner was afraid for his interests from Arabs, and used Jews to ward off this threat. It is only natural that the dregs of the earth should be preferred to us, past masters of the world." (97)

This extreme racism has allowed some researchers to explain why some of his supporters deserted him. (98) The dislike of al-'Arsouzi for the Turks was due to

nationalistic and sectarian reasons. Al-`Arsouzi considered all Sunnis as Turkish. He also used to confuse the origin of an Imam and his followers; for example, Since Abū Hanīfah was a Persian, his followers must be Persian, Turk or non-Arab. Since the Shi`ite Imāms are Arabs, all their followers must also be Arab.(99)

Jalāl al-Sayyid represents al-`Arsouzi in the following light:

"....when his name used to be put forward, other founding members of the Party used to exclude him on the grounds that he was a feudalist and not a socialist in his political philosophy. He was more of the Nazi way of thinking in fact, of the ancient Roman way of thinking, in which people were divided into masters and slaves. He was also severe with people who disagreed with him, he was a loner who did not fit in with others whom he was always down upon." (100)

Al-Sayyid relates the violence and severity of the Ba`th in dealing with others (which is, in any case, a frank admission by the third co-founder) to the al-`Arsouzi wing of the Party.(101) Al-Sayyid's attempt to relate the Ba`th's extreme tendency to violence to him is

implausible because violence and cruelty can be more easily related to `Aflaq himself, who says:

"....the national action that is susceptible to success is one which evokes hatred to the death toward those who personify an idea antithetical to nationalism. It finds its incarnation in a person who must perish so that it too may perish." (102)

The second Ba`th generation, whether Iraq's Ba`thists who became `Aflaq's followers or Syria's Ba`thists who became al-`Arsouzi's followers, practised violence, cruelty and the physical liquidation of their political opponents to a horrendous extent. They might differ, with the Iraqi Ba`thists being more brutal, but the mass slaughter in the Syrian city of Ḥamā, when the Syrian Ba`thist regime physically eliminated tens of thousands of its inhabitants on the pretext of their being members of the Muslim Brotherhood Party, proves that the Syrians could be equally cruel. (103) This was the biggest slaughter the Syrian Ba`thists undertook, but the Iraqi Ba`thists carried out bigger ones and are still doing so under Saddam's command.

The claim that `Aflaq stole al-`Arsouzi's views and used them in establishing the Ba`th Party is, in fact, near the truth. (104) Much research work indicates that although `Aflaq and al-`Arsouzi quarrelled, they were



competing for the position of supreme power in the Party, while they had identical views.(105)

Sāmī al-Jundī, who was one of al-`Arsouzi's followers later on, went on to say:

"...this Party was a group of strange and peculiar individuals, who mutinied on all values held by society and by all human beings and who had a religion other than that of God." (106)

These strange and peculiar individuals were the first seeds of Ba`thism that `Aflaq later usurped to form the Ba`th Party. Sāmī al-Jundī in his al- Ba`th gives a warning of the Ba`th horror to come.

(2) Michel `Aflaq and Ṣalāh al-Dīn al-Bayṭār: these are recognised as the founders of the Ba`th Party. Both were born in Damascus of middle-class merchant families. `Aflaq was a Greek Orthodox Christian, while al-Bayṭār was a Sunni Muslim, from a long line of Ulamā', which means that he had grown up in a very conservative environment. Both were educated at the Sorbonne in Paris where they first met in 1929. One account confirms that `Aflaq studied under the well known French Orientalist (Massignon), who was the spiritual supervisor of the Protestant Churches overseas and consultant to the French Colonies.(107)

After their return to Damascus they worked as teachers in secondary schools. They established their reputations in those days as writers in some Communist magazines which al-Bayṭār claims they founded. So they were known as Communists, but `Aflaq rejected any link with communism, (108) although he did not deny his admiration for the Communist organisation. In 1936, both turned against Communist politics and stopped writing. It seems that their attitude stemmed from the emergence of the Syrian Communist party from underground activities and the increase in its followers. `Aflaq said about this period:

**"....everyone sensed that there was a vacuum, that the old leadership had gone bankrupt ... that a new movement had to be established." (109)**

This feeling increased with the outbreak of the Second World War. Since then until the present day, the Ba`th and its leaders have not stopped displaying the aspect of their character that is usually exhibited in condemning all other forms of politics than their own, as well as describing all others as reactionary agents of imperialism and enemies of the Arab masses. Thus, according to the Ba`thists, there is no exemplary group apart from themselves. So they have created a huge gap between themselves and the mass majority of the society



they rule or, more accurately, misrule. This is why the Ba`th has become more of a military organisation than a political party.

They claimed that feudalism, imperialism and exploitation would be abolished only by their revolutionary changes and that they would create a prosperous and modern Arab society in which all citizens would find justice, brotherhood and equality. But, in practice, the only benefits from it have seemed to be personal, even if they have gone against their proclaimed principles, and when they gained power the outcome was the complete reverse of what they were calling for. The Ba`thists admitted this fact when one of their participants in the tripartite union talks, which were held in Cairo in 1963, said:

"....when revolutionary movements find themselves in power, they discover that many of their antecedent ideas need to be reconsidered. While still at the stage of popular struggle, they call for democracy, so that they can carry on their activity under the best possible conditions, but when in government they find that this bourgeois democracy is a great danger to the revolution." (110)

In October 1942 both of `Aflaq and al-Bayṭār resigned from their posts as teachers and decided to engage in politics.

The Ba`th is, in fact, an attempt to take the Arabs back to a pre-Islamic era, i.e. to the era of paganism which is considered by `Aflaq, al-Bayṭār and al-`Arsouzi as the golden age of the Arabs. What is clear is that the Ba`th as a political and, before that, as a philosophical movement, is similar to the European renaissance in which the latter opposed Christianity, particularly in the work of Niccolo Machiavelli whose thesis is the antithesis to Christianity. The Ba`th copied the European renaissance in the latter's attempt to return Europe to the pagan times of the Greeks and Romans. However, the Ba`th's aim was the destruction of Islam, and not to serve paganism but Christianity, in revenge for Islam's victory in the crusades. (111)

However, while the European renaissance took Europe out of the dark ages, the Ba`th first denied the golden age of Islam, which reached its zenith during the `Abāsīd rule in Baghdad, and then plunged Baghdad and the whole of Iraq into a new dark age governed by the values of tribal, than which one could hardly find more backward values anywhere in the world.

(3) **Akrm al-Ḥawrānī:** was born in 1912 to a prominent Sunni Muslim landowning family from Ḥamā. He graduated in

law from Damascus Law School. He both joined and left the *Ḥizb al-Qawmī al-Sūrī* in 1936.(112) Soon afterwards, he became the leader of *Ḥizb al-Shabāb*, which had been established by his cousin `Uthmān al-Ḥawrānī.(113) At the beginning of 1950, al-Ḥawrānī decided to change the name of his party into the Arab Socialist Party, promoting socialism and fighting the landowners who were harsh to the peasants.(114)

As Devlin says:

**"....this organisation became his political vehicle."(115)**

It indeed gave him a foothold between the peasants in Ḥamā and their neighbours, and he became the peasants' champion, which led him to become the single most powerful figure in Syrian politics.(116) He tried to create a power base in the army as well when he encouraged some of his followers to attend the Ḥoms Military Academy.(117) He also gained massive support as a result of his aid to Iraq's military movement in 1941, and his raids with some groups of Guerillas on Zionist settlements in 1948. He was elected as the Nā'ib for Ḥamā in 1943 and as a parliamentary Nā'ib in 1947 and 1949. He became Minister of Agriculture in August 1949 in Sāmī al-Ḥanāwī's government, but he left this post. He was Minister of Defence in Khālīd al-`Azm's cabinet from December 1949 to June 1950 under Adīb al-



Shīshikli's Presidency, but he left this post too. His party joined the `Aflaq/Bayṭār Ba`th Party, but he split from them in June 1962, as Devlin says, after nearly ten stormy years of association.(118) On his joint initiative with `Aflaq and Bayṭār, Syria joined Egypt in 1958 and, as a further result of his efforts, split from Egypt in 1961. Batātū says:

**"....he was surrounded with a certain shade of mystery and his enemies began to refer to him as the fox with manicured claws."(119)**

This accusation was not just because of his political changes and opportunistic behaviour, but because he took part in all three military coups that happened in Syria from 1949, which were linked one way or another with foreign powers, but not as a hero or patriot.(120) Other personalities that took part in these coups were extinguished, either physically or politically. In the next section we will further investigate the mental processes of these Ba`thist leaders, using Ba`th literature as our main source.

## The Ideology of the Ba`th Party

The general aims of the Ba`th Party, were, a secular society in which all Arabs, irrespective of their religions, could participate, Arab unity, freedom and socialism; its principal slogan was: "One Arab nation with an eternal mission". The message that `Aflaq delivered was fundamentally Arabism. The Arabs formed one nation, which had an apparent existence and a special role in the world. Thus, he placed prime importance on uniting the Arab people in a single state. He suggested that this aim could only be achieved by the transformation of Arab society from its present rotten situation to a new, vital society in which the Arab People could enjoy all their just glories in an independent united state. He predicted that the Ba`th Party would be an elite vanguard whose mission was to undertake this task, not through the elimination of divisive political boundaries, but by the reformation of the Arab character and society after freeing themselves from all regional, religious, and communal loyalties; to liberate from external control as well as from indigenous arbitrary rule.

However, in the early years of the 1940s and the 1950s, the distinctive quality of the Ba`th was intellectual and monopolised by `Aflaq and, to a lesser extent, Bitar.(121) This changed in the latter part of the 1950s and the 1960s in Syria because of the integration of



`Aflaq's Ba'th Party with Ḥawrānī's Socialist Party, on the one hand, and the rapid expansion of the Party's ranks on the other. Devlin sees the reason for this phenomenon as the differences between doctrine and practice.(122) As events proved, however, this was not the only reason, since it was also due to the Ba'thists' ambition to be the main influence.

In Iraq, however, the Ba'thists continued to adhere to `Aflaq's doctrine and moved under his direction. Any member could lose his position, or even his life, if he displayed any disloyalty to the Ba'th and `Aflaq's doctrine.

`Aflaq's ideas, however, were not always the same. He did not examine them carefully and, as a result, they seem to contain contradictions when viewed as a whole. This may be accounted for by the different principles which formed his doctrine. Thus his opponent's accusation of taking different ideas from different sources and placing them together to create a final misleading and contradictory doctrine, as a result of his own philosophising, is near to the truth.(123) Some neutral sources have commented on this point that it was based on `Aflaq's taste, as he relied on feelings rather than an analysis at and deduction from the facts, and his language is rather poetic, characterised by suggestions rather than logical propositions.(124) Another source says about Aflaq's language and ideas:

"... to read `Aflaq's main contribution to the post-1967 debate is to perceive fully the bankruptcy and incoherence of the politics of the Ba`th. Nearly three hundred pages of text yield no insight, on his part, into what went wrong and what needed to be done; there is only the visible infatuation with words and `Aflaq's summons to the Party to renounce power and go back to its "pure essence".(125)

These defects, characterise `Aflaq's general aims. Below are some of his more general notions, selected from official Party documents (writings, speeches, the Party constitution and instructions to the membership) in which `Aflaq gives the theoretical justification for the Ba`th party doctrine, which enlighten us on Ba`th ideology. The most distinctive feature of Ba`thism is its pan-Arab ideology. According to `Aflaq, the Arabs are one people *ummah Arabiyyah* and have a special role in the World. This is expressed in the slogan:

"....one Arab nation with an eternal mission". This nationalism is mixed up with humanism."

`Aflaq says:

"....the Arab is bound not only to his nation, but also to mankind", (126) and "....Arab nationalism is humanitarian in tendency." (127)

`Aflaq regarded the nation as a living organism and eternal (128) and the individual's association with the nation as organic. (129) He believed that the individual Arab had no meaning apart from the nation and could only achieve things as part of his nation, otherwise his life would be dull and unfruitful. (130) `Aflaq was here echoing the German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) the founder of modern dialectic philosophy, who considered human history as having been moulded by the dialectical process. `Aflaq believed, as Hegel did, that the nation's spirit is the force behind the dialectical process. This is why `Aflaq repeatedly stressed the nation's spirit, exactly as Hegel did. (131) For Aflaq the spirit of the Arab nation is like a fuel, which will propel it to a new era of excellence, which will mark the end of centuries of Arab decline and domination by foreign powers, which has corrupted the Arab character. (132) Hence, the eternal message that Aflaq gave the Arabs is the service of humanity; which he considered not to be merely a slogan or even a principle, but an article of faith. (133) `Aflaq was not echoing Islam here, but, rather, Hegelian and Marxist beliefs in a worldly faith or ideology for, through faith in the eternal Arab message in the service of humanity, the Arab character will be liberated from centuries of decline. It is worth noting



that `Aflaq later (unusually speaking in a religious contexts) declared the Arab message to go beyond Islam and to the other two faiths before Islam, i.e. Christianity and Judaism, on the grounds that these two also came from Arab lands and were delivered by Arabs or pre-Arab semitic people. `Aflaq tried to explain Islam in terms of Arab nationalism:

**"....Arabism is a body whose soul is Islam and Islam is a tremor that stirs the latent forces of the Arab nation." and ".... Islam produced a revolution .... in the soul of the Arabs." (134)**

`Aflaq's aim behind his romantic rhetoric in these quotations was to exploit the emotions derived from Islam in the service of his Party. His rhetorical Language about Islam gave the impression to some researchers, that he did not consider Islam to be of secondary importance to Arabism. (135) Elsewhere he considers Islam to be another form of the eternal Arab genius, accepted and referred to as a civilisation or a national culture. `Aflaq clearly indicated that Islam was not God-given alone, but was a response to Arab requirements during Muḥammad's time:

**"... Islam, in its pure essence, arose out of the heart of Arabism." and "....today the force of Islam discloses itself in a new form, that of Arab nationalism." (136)**



`Aflaq's objective was quite clear; it was to isolate the Arabs from Islam on the grounds that Islam was not the only pillar of the Arab national existence. There were other pillars, namely language, a joint history, a common interest and a geographical unity. This is specious, because if it was not for the Quran, the Arabic language might easily have been overwhelmed by Persian, Greek or Turkish, or by a western language such as French or English. `Aflaq's claim that he wanted to rebuild the Arab nation on new foundations, and that Islam could not be the only basis upon which a new Arab emergence could be based, stemmed from his fear that non-Arab Muslims, e.g. Persians and Turks, could use Islam as a means to deny Arab nationalism and identity, particularly through religious sectarianism. He thought that through relegating Islam to a secondary position in Arab life, sectarianism might be avoided. He did not attempt to reduce it through tolerance and liberalism, but through a one-nation party rule. `Aflaq's Ba`th party actually increased sectarianism to an unprecedented level in Syria and Iraq, and both countries are now ruled by elite Ba`thist minority sects. Although they appeared to be pursuing an ideology that wanted to do away with sectarian, regional and tribal loyalties, when they took power they found themselves forced to revert to those loyalties in order to strengthen their regimes. As we have seen now in Syria, the Alawite minority rules over the mass majority of Sunnis and in Iraq a minority within a minority rules over the majority;

the Tikrītī clan, which is a minority within the Sunni minority, rules over the Shi'ite majority.

`Aflaq claimed that the slogans of "Unity, Freedom and Socialism" were not his invention, but were derived from the depths of the Arab soul. They express not only the interest of the nation, but also the truth that it possesses, which will declare itself, whatever the existing conditions.(137) According to `Aflaq, Arab society could only be revitalised through Arab unity. He regarded this unity not as a means to an end, but as a natural right.(138) `Aflaq regarded this unity as historically inevitable, because he believed that the nation had a natural and irresistible tendency to cohere, to gather its parts. He proclaimed this in Article I of the constitution:

**"....none of the Arab countries can, in isolation from others, fulfil the conditions necessary for its life; all differences among the sons of the nation are incidental and false and will vanish with the awakening of the Arab consciousness."**

He considered all the differences between the members of one nation as either accidental or bogus, created by foreign powers, e.g. borders between Arab countries. By this rather false logic, `Aflaq completely ignored history, such as the eternal competition between the

civilisation of Mesopotamia and the Nile delta and the competition, particularly since the emergence of Islam, between Iraq and Syria, as well as a whole host of differences that have proved to be only too real in keeping the Arabs apart. `Aflaq totally ignored the lessons of ancient, as well as of modern, history and proceeded to build a party that declared as its prime objective the unity of the Arab nation, which was supposed to be already united. (139)

In a way, `Aflaq was echoing another German philosopher, Karl Marx (1818-1883), who claimed that the revolution of the proletariat was inevitable and yet spent most of his life in writing and political activities, trying to bring about that revolution, which he claimed to be an inevitability. Another similarity between Marx and Aflaq is that the latter respected philosophy that aimed at changing existing conditions, which is why he repeatedly used the term *inqilāb* as a synonym for *Thawrah*. Like Marx, Aflaq also despised philosophies that were not revolutionary. (140) Arab unity was regarded by the Ba`th as the keystone to Arab liberation. The second fundamental theoretical slogan of the Ba`th is:

**"....the Arab people will never unify their struggle until they struggle for unity." (141)**

The Ba`th called for Arab liberation from external control. It attacked the regimes under the mandate because



these regimes had allowed special military privileges to the foreign power, and it accused them of being subservient to latter's desires. It also refers to the freedom of the Arab individual, which is embodied in the second principle of the Ba`th constitution:

**"....freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of belief and artistic freedom are sacred things which no authority can diminish."**

The apparent implication of this article seems to affirm the primacy of the individual. `Aflaq emphasises tries to the importance of the individual:

**"....the individual alone renews the group and the group produces only relative values." (142)**

But in other clauses, the tendency of the Ba`th and `Aflaq to restrict individual freedom is apparent:

**"....the State shall be responsible for the protection of freedom of speech, publication and assembly ... within the limits of the higher Arab national interest." (143) Individual freedom is bound up with the spirit of the nation. (144) `Aflaq also says:**



"....the individual has to achieve the condition that the national tie imposes." (145)

This higher Arab national interest body, as 'Aflaq suggests, is embodied in the Ba`th Party:

"....the living idea of the nation." (146)

In theory the Ba`th adhered to a democratic state. Article 5 of the constitution asserts that:

"....The people alone are the source of all authority."

Article 14 asserts that:

"....the governmental system in the Arab state is to be a constitutional elective system, with the executive responsible to a directly elected legislature."

One of the Ba`thist leaders commented on parliamentary government on follows:

"....it is not possible for this sense of community (among the individuals in a society) to be completely achieved except through a popular democratic system; by 'democratic' meaning a freely elected parliamentary system

with the government directly responsible to the representatives of the people; by "popular" meaning based on the will of the majority of the Ummah wherein each person enjoys freedom of thought and opinion in the widest application." (147) And "...democracy is indispensable, but by virtue of inefficiency, poor education, perversion of morals and bad economic and health conditions, the people may not be able to exercise their rights in a proper manner and to the fullest extent. We do not, on that account, call for depriving them of their rights. On the contrary, we ought to work through them ... and in this way strive to raise their standards ... for us they are the end and the means. Our aim is to serve the people by means of the people." (148)

But, at the same time, the constitutional provisions embodied a political attitude that permitted the Party to adopt a tutelary stance towards the people, because, the Ba`th, as `Aflaq suggests, constitutes the "higher Arab national interest." (149)

`Aflaq displayed no confidence in or respect for the people in this regard. He considered them incapable of deciding what was good or bad for them. Thus he placed himself and his Party as guardians of the masses, without

their permission (the masses did not elect him or his Party) so to do. Indeed, by this tutelary stance, `Aflaq gave himself, his Party and, eventually, the absolute ruler permission to subordinate the Arab masses.

The third objective of the Ba`th, Socialism, `Aflaq proclaimed to his followers, like the other objectives, issued from the depths of the Arab nation.(150) Because it was nationalist, it could not constitute a factor of internal division and conflict.(151) He pointed out, in order to exclude the influence of the Communists, that the Ba`thist vision of socialism was non-Marxist, even anti-Marxist, in that it emphasised the primacy of the national ethnic identity and rejected the notion of antagonistic social classes. However, when his monopoly on the Ba`th doctrine was broken and some of his followers had shifted to the left, he was compelled to make some changes in his position:

**"....I am not against Marxism, but the Ba`th is scientific socialism added to spirit."(152)**

He continued to stress that there was a basic difference between him and the Communists because his Ba`th project connected with the "spirit":

**"....because our socialism is nationalist, it can not be a factor of internal division and conflict."**

Here, then, he is in agreement with Articles of his constitution, that "the people are the source of all authority".

However, in another place he contradicts himself:

"....owns most of the wealth of the nation and controls and disposes of power in a manner that accords with its desires. This exploiting class will not give up its wealth or its interest by a mere appeal in the name of nationalism or of the spirit or of progress. Struggle is, therefore, inescapable."(153)

The contradiction of `Aflaq's ideas in this essay, (a) that class struggle is inevitable and (b) that socialism is opposed to internal division, is very clear because they appear in the same article.

The Party Constitution, article 26, reads:

"....the Party of the Arab Ba`th is a socialist party. It believes that the economic wealth of the fatherland belongs to the nation"

`Aflaq is thus in agreement with fascist and Marxist doctrines of the supremacy of the state over the



individual and complete state control over all means of production.(154)

In article 34 he contradicts the previous article:

**"....Property and inheritance are true natural rights. They are protected within the limits of the national interest."**

As always, `Aflaq turns away from communism because Communism demands of private property.(155) The justifications which the Ba`thists gave for their socialism were varied and theoretical. On one occasion `Aflaq terms it "scientific socialism" and on another he calls it "nationalistic issues from the soul of the Arab nation", but without specifying what socialism means and what the particular characteristics in socialism are that are specifically Arab. Again, his justification stresses the benefit of the Ba`th:

**"....the national struggle at the present time can only be based on the generality of the Arabs and these will not take part in it if they are exploited."(156)**

However, he regarded socialism as a necessity issuing from the depths of Arab nationalism and being the ideal system to allow the Arab people to realise their potentialities and develop their genius to the full.(157)

This led to the Ba`th belief that once the Arabs were united, they would be liberated, and class conflict would disappear. This belief was generally accompanied by a similar conviction, that development and modernisation would come as a result of national liberation and unity, and that the Arabs would then be able to recapture their former glory. Thus the Ba`thists regarded unity, liberation and socialism as interdependent.

Turning to the means by which `Aflaq thought they could achieve Ba`thist goals, he uses the word *inqilāb*. (158) The sixth article of the Ba`th constitution clearly states that the Ba`th Party is a revolutionary Party that believes that its objectives in the renaissance of the Arab nation cannot be achieved without revolution. The Ba`th rejected evolutionary development and reforms as a means and insisted on compulsion. `Aflaq claimed that this term, *inqilāb* referred to revolution, rather than the more usual coup 'd'état':

"....revolution *inqilāb*, being a political and social programme, is that prime propelling power, that powerful psychic current, that mandatory struggle, without which the re-awakening of the nation cannot be understood. This is what we understand by revolution." (159)

The *inqilāb* is regarded as:

"...awakening or rebirth of the Arab spirit, the curing of the nation before the curing of the state, for what is that state ... but a body without a soul." (160)

Thus, *inqilab* must change people, rather than the system. Once the people, or enough of them, have undergone an interior transformation, liberating the intellect and releasing the source of faith in the soul, change in the system will follow automatically. (161)

'Aflaq gave himself the right to change the present condition, which he described as backward:

"....we fight the status quo not only because it is diseased, but because we are compelled to fight for the nation, which, despite its backwardness ... possesses truth, and this truth manifests itself, whatever the power of the existing facts. The *inqilāb* is this manifestation, this attestation of the existence of truth. The practical expression of the idea of *inqilāb* is struggle ... and by 'struggle' is meant the recapturing by the nation, after that long slumber, ... of its yearning to wrestle with life and with fate; its viewing of existence deeply and heroically; and its appreciation of the value



of before its sight of the fruit of effort." (162)

`Aflaq excluded peaceful means to realising the *inqilāb* of the nation, and he passed to the Ba`th Party the mission of reshaping the Arab nation with fire and iron. In order to justify giving the Ba`th elite this task, he tried to reverse the principle of majority sovereignty and to make an elitist concept: leadership should remain in the hands of an elite:

".... it was characteristic of the revolutionary stage in enlightened minority."

He also said:

"....the *inqilāb*, in its incipient form as a conscious feeling of the necessity for change, takes effect at first, not in the wide mass of the people, but in a minority." And ".... by the nation I intend the greater number. In this connection numbers are not in themselves sacred, the notion is not an arithmetical collection, but an idea embodied in all or some of its members and that, therefore, those in whom this idea is personified have the right to speak in the name of the whole." (163)



`Aflaq considered this elite as representative of the interest of the people, which must be chosen and specially ready to use violence. Thus he says:

**"....its members will be hard on themselves and hard on theirs."(164)**

`Aflaq then reduced this elite to the supremacy of the leader, the dictator. This is a particular characteristic of fascistic philosophy. `Aflaq thus says:

**"....our movement is the destiny of the Arabs in this age."(165)** which echoes Lenin's statement:

**"...the future is with us in any case."**

This is the ideology of the Ba`th Party and the means of achieving its objectives, according to its author. One may consider Ba`thism as an echo of German idealistic and materialistic philosophy. Certainly Ba`thism contains most aspects of German philosophical eccentricities and downright extremism, whether in Fascist or Marxist form. `Aflaq camouflaged his philosophical and political extremism with slogans of freedom, unity and socialism, all leading to the progress of the Arab nation. But freedom and progress meant no more to Aflaq than it meant to Hitler and Stalin. The kind of freedom and progress that `Aflaq preached and, before him, Stalin and Hitler,

has been exposed for what it is worth and has been rejected by humanity at large.

## The Set-Backs Suffered by the Ba`th Party

From its early years and through its long history before and after seizing power, the Ba`th Party has experienced set-backs and divisions that were many and dangerous. Since there have been so many set-backs and divisions, I will only refer to the most important ones.

**(1) Preliminary failures:** Aflaq began his political life by calling enthusiastically for parliamentary elections, in which he stood, in 1943 (he alone), 1947 and 1949 (with some followers), but was completely unsuccessful. Afterwards `Aflaq and his followers began to denounce the parliamentary system and accused it of being a tool in the hands of the bourgeoisie and feudalist classes and the state.(166) The destruction of democracy and its institutions was the chief political doctrine of `Aflaq's school and its followers, who went on to preach the theology of violence,(167) which praises dictatorship. `Aflaq's theology is still followed by his former pupils in Syria, who expelled him in 1966, while his disciples in Iraq still consider him to be their spiritual mentor. `Aflaq addressed a critical memorandum to Husni al-Za'im on 24 May 1949;(168) This led to his arrest by al-Za'im and the closure of the Ba`th Party paper.(169) Under threat of ill-treatment, according to Devlin's account,(170) `Aflaq lost his nerve and it was reported that he signed an obsequious letter to al-Za'im, asking

for mercy and announcing his intention to retire from politics:

**"....as for me, I have decided to retire definitely from politics and believe that my mission has come to an end and that my method is not appropriate to the era."(171)**

The prevailing opinion is that 'Aflaq was not physically tortured when he took this humiliating position. This event still dominates the Party's history. (172) It created a huge tremor in the Party and in many political quarters.(173) 'Aflaq's followers were shocked by his defeatism at his first experience of prison and severely attacked him. His influence sharply declined, to such an extent, that they wanted to put him on trial. However, the Party did not discuss the event publicly and issued no statement, but merely discussed it in an internal meeting in 1949. As the years passed, both his followers and the public forgot this affair and 'Aflaq remained the philosopher and historical trustee of the Party. His followers in Iraq, particularly Saddam, were shaped by 'Aflaq's doctrine and regarded him as spiritual leader. It seems that Saddam has inherited this particular character trait from 'Aflaq. Samir al-Khalil says that Saddam had all the qualities that 'Aflaq needed, such as loyalty and physical stamina.(174) I do not agree with al-Khalil, because Saddam's defeatist record throughout his political career, before and after his arrival in power,



has been worse than Aflaq's. Saddam is willing to sacrifice his entire people and country for his political career.

**(2) Adherence to principles:** `Aflaq was a bad example to his followers as a defender of his political ideology. He capitulated on his first confrontation with the authority of Ḥusnī al-Za`īm, the leader of the first military coup in Syria, when `Aflaq wrote a memorandum criticising him.

**(3) The disbandment of the Ba`th Party:** The Ba`thists in Syria played a major role in the formation of the (UAR) in 1958, uniting Egypt and Syria, following Nasir's decision to cancel political parties in Egypt, (175) although there has never been a Ba`th Party in Egypt. The Ba`th Party in Syria disbanded itself at its third conference, in the belief, held by its leaders, that they would play an important role in the UAR as personalities and would not need the Party for their personal positions in the UAR. However, once they felt that the UAR was going to be dominated by the Egyptians and that Nasir would not give them much power, they realised that they had made a mistake and went back on their decision to disband the Party. (176)

**(4) The Ba`th set-back in Iraq (18 November 1963):**

It was known as the *Tishrīn* (November) set-back. The coup was led by `Abd al-Salām `Ārif against the Ba`thists in Iraq and resulted in expelling them from power after nine months' rule, which had caused the Iraqi people great suffering, as will be discussed in greater detail in later chapters. One measure of the true nature of the deception and intrigue among the Ba`thists was that leading members, who were mainly from Tikrīt, took part in the `Ārif coup in the hope of receiving political positions in the new `Ārif regime. Later on, `Ārif dropped most of them, including Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr al-Tikrītī, who became Vice President, Ṭāhir Yaḥyā al-Tikrītī, who became Prime Minister, Ḥārdan al-Tikrītī, who became Minister of Defence, and Rashīd Muṣliḥ al-Tikrītī, who became Minister of the Interior. Another Ba`thist, Dr `Izzat Muṣṭafā, remained Minister of Health, while Ṣāleḥ Maḥdī `Ammāsh was appointed ambassador to Egypt.(177) `Aflaq issued a call to the Party to stop resisting the change because it was necessary, in view of the mistakes committed by the Nationalist Guards.(178) `Ali Ṣāleḥ al-Sa`dī later denounced `Aflaq as the person who was responsible for appointing the military bureau of the Party, who were right-wing Tikrītī officers, who were the ones to conspire with `Ārif against the Party.(179) This created many problems within the Party leadership in Syria. On 21 November 1963, the Syrian President, Am`n al-Ḥāfiẓ said that those who took up posts in the new `Ārif government were not Ba`thists any longer, because Ba`th rule ended on 18 November.(180)

According to an eyewitness account, Saddam attacked Party offices on 18 November with security men and other supporters. The underground Ba`th leadership issued an order for Saddam's arrest, but he was whisked away and protected by his relatives, the Tikrītī clan.(181)

**(5) The phenomenon of withdrawal from parties and division within parties:** Devlin comments:

"....the splits, defections and expulsions the Party organisation suffered in its four principal regions, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, resulted in the departure from the Party of a substantial number of members who had been associated with it for a long time. In many cases those who left or were expelled had been among the first to adopt the doctrine in their country.(182)

The Ba`th Party, in its literature, acknowledged this phenomenon and described the divisions in and the withdrawals from the Party as attempted sabotage of the Party, particularly after the withdrawal of one of those implicated, al-Rīmāwī. The others leading members were al-Rīkābī and al-Sa`dī. In a report the Party acknowledged the crucial positions that the splinter Ba`thists held.(183)



(a) Jalāl al-Sayyid, a Syrian and one of the three founders of the Ba`th Party, who withdrew in 1955, in his al- Ba`th, revealed his disagreement with the other two founders and with the Party on political and social issues: Al-Sayyid says:

"....when I could not correct the mistakes of the Party, in accordance with my beliefs, I found no course of action but to withdraw from it"

Al-Sayyid goes on to make serious accusations against the Party:

"....the Ba`th Party has been taken over by foreigners and does not belong to the Arab nation any longer. I felt as if the Party was following a course drawn for it." (184)

(b) Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Bayṭār, another Syrian co-founder of the Party, declared in his letter of resignation:

"....more than a few knew that I moved away from the Party in all its aspects (its leadership, institutions and



ideology) a long time ago, particularly after 8 July 1963." (185)

Some Ba`thist quarters put the responsibility for removing al-Bayṭār from the Party leadership on the committee for reorganising the Party because al-Bayṭār had signed the declaration of the separation of Syria from Egypt and had attempted to take up an appointment in the government of Bashār al-`Aẓm which took power after the separation. Al-Bayṭār attempted to stand up to the military committee who carried out the 8 March 1963 coup, despite the fact that they had made him Prime Minister after the coup. In the following election he was removed from the Party leadership and, later, was dismissed from the Party. (186) He was assassinated in Paris on 21 July 1980, following his publication of several articles, in his opposition Journal *al-Iḥyā al-Arabi* (the Arab Reviva), the original name of the Ba`th Party before it was officially founded in 1947. (187) Many accounts agree that the regionalists and Marxist factions in the Ba`th Party helped the military organisation to exclude al-Bayṭār from the Party. (188)

- (c) Akrm al-Hourānī, another Syrian who was among the first in the national leadership in 1954 and who

elevated to the same rank as `Aflaq and al-Bayṭār, following the merger of the two Parties. Later, he differed with the Party about union with Egypt and socialism and left the Party in 1962. (189)

- (d) Sāmī al-Jundī, who was from al-`Arsouzi's group, was one of the founding members of the Ba`th. He later left the Party and declared that their hands were stained with blood and their faces covered with shame. (190)
- (e) Fu'ād al-Rikābī, an Iraqi, was a member of the first Ba`thist cell in Iraq in 1949. In 1954 he became a member and General Secretary of the National Leadership in Iraq. He held a press conference in Beirut three months before the separation of Syria from Egypt in which he accused `Aflaq and his leadership of serious misdemeanours, to which `Aflaq replied to. (191) Al-Rikābī later joined al-Rimāwī's group, who had also left the Party. Al-Rikābī was later to be murdered in prison in Iraq in 1969 on Saddam's orders after `Aflaq had dismissed him in 1962 for disobedience.
- (f) `Ali Ṣāleḥ al-Sa`dī, an Iraqi and an early member of the Ba`th and among the first members of its regional leadership during the Regional

Congresses in 1960, 1961 and 1963. He became General Secretary of the regional leadership. Al-Sa`dī was among the leading Ba`thists who came to power in 1963. After their dismissal by `Arif in November of the same year, al-Sa`dī and his supporting wing, which included al-Fakaykī and al-Shaykh Rāḍī, were dismissed by the National Leadership in February 1964. They were accused of fomenting lies and rumours and indulging in non-ethical behaviour against the Party.(192) Al-Sa`dī attacked `Aflaq severely and accused him of being a right-wing reactionary.(193)

- (g) `Abdallah al-Rimāwī, a Palestinian was a member of the National Leadership when it was first formed in 1954. He became a representative for Jordan with `Abdallah Na'wās. He left the Party in May 1960 and formed what he called the National Revolutionary Leadership, which was supported by the UAR and named *Ḥizb al-Ba`th al-Arabī al-Thawrī al-Ishtirākī* (the Arab Ba`th Revolutionary Socialist Party).(194) Al-Rikābiī took his Iraqi supporters with him and joined al-Rimāwī. However the al-Rimāwī wing did not last long but withered away; each of its members went his separate ways, but they all remained enemies of the Ba`th.



There is a long list of those who left the Party quietly, without fanfare, such as Dr `Abdallah `Abd al-Dā'īm, who was a founder member and was among its early ideologues.(195) Dr `Abd al-Rahmān al-Munīf, who became a member of the National Leadership, later withdrew and became editor of the journal Oil and Development, which used to be published in Baghdad. There were also Dr `Abd al-Wahhāb al-Kayālī, Munīf al-Razzāz, Mas`ud al-Shāwī and `Izzat Muşţafā.(196)

**(6) The set-back of the Party in Syria in February 1966:** This was the most serious set-back suffered by the Party after losing power in Iraq. The Party military committee in Syria, led by Saleh Jadid, took over. The struggle between the civilians and military in the Party dated back to 1963 when al-Bayţār had lost that struggle to the military Ba`thists, who were either Alawites or Druzes. `Aflaq and his close allies, such as the Syrian President Amin al-Ḥāfiz, allied themselves with the military against al-Bayţār.(197) However, later the Alawites, led by Şalāḥ Jadīd and Ḥāfiz al-Asad, ordered the Druze Colonel Salīm Ḥātum on 23 February 1966 to attack government offices, including the presidential palace. The then Syrian President, Amin al-Ḥāfiz, was wounded but left Syria with `Aflaq and al-Bayţār and went to Lebanon and then Iraq.(198)



The reasons for these divisions and problems within the Party are as follows:

(a) The Party failed to develop intellectually. It substituted slogans for real understanding and programmes with realistic objectives.(199) The Party was, and still is, characterised by an extreme state of shallowness and ignorance of all forms of the philosophical and intellectual side of politics. Instead of developing a real and comprehensive commitment to modernisation, the Party, in fact, has reverted to old concepts of loyalties, sectarian, tribal and family.  
(200)

(b) The Party opted for the easier method of change, namely change from above, which meant seizure of power through military coups.(201) A leading Ba`thist admitted that there was a gap between the historical task of the Party and its organisation and membership as a tool to achieve that historical task.(202) The Ba`th Party substituted for historically declared objectives in achieving a new and modern Arab society a desperate desire to seize and retain power.

## The Seizure of Power

Before discussing this topic it is important to analyse the political environment on the eve of the Ba`th's coming to power.

The 1950s and early 1960s witnessed an intensification of the regional and international struggle in the Middle East. The main reason for this was the 1958 coup in Iraq, which ushered in a Communist deluge, never seen before in an Arab or Muslim country. The USA considered what was happening in Iraq to be a preview of what was going to happen in the rest of the area, which would transform it into a Soviet stronghold. Qāsim's regime was against western interests in Iraq.(203) This was manifested primarily by Qāsim's withdrawal from the Sterling Monetary Area and by his issuing Law No 80, which took over control from the foreign oil companies. He also supported Arab liberation movements, particularly the Algerian revolution against France.(204)

There was another Arab regime governed by a charismatic leader at this time - Egypt, led by Nasir. Nasir followed his humiliation of the British and French in the Suez fiasco, which clearly exposed the latter as allies of Israel and mortal enemies of the Arab people, by trying to unseat the Maronite Christian regime in Lebanon during the summer and autumn of 1958. This compelled the

USA to send its troops to Lebanon to protect the Christian Maronite minority regime. After the collapse of the union between Egypt and Syria, Nasir sent his troops to Yemen to support the Republican regime there against the onslaught on it by the Saudi regime. Nasir thus appeared to the west as a man bent on destroying their interests and influence in the area. The USA therefore made a strategic decision to end Qāsim's regime, which was more of a threat because of his close relationship with the Communists in Iraq, and then to turn on Nasir, to defeat him in a military campaign executed by Israel and then to isolate him in Cairo. (205)

During these critical circumstances, conditions were not quite right for the Ba`th Party because of the following:

- (1) The Party had already disbanded itself in obedience to Nasir's direction to cancel political parties.
- (2) The Party failed to obtain power and privilege through the merger of Egypt and Syria, which led it to plot against the merger later on.
- (3) The Party failed to assassinate Qāsim, which led to a severe set-back for its organisation in Iraq after the coup suspects were rounded up.



(4) There were widespread withdrawals and divisions within the Party, (206) due in part to its series of failures.

Since the Ba`th Party had proved its inability to achieve its objectives through a genuine mass popular movement, because of the mistrust that the mass majority of the people in Syria and Iraq had for `Aflaq, it set out to seize power through military coups. Aflaq began gathering around him adventurous young army officers, in Syria and Iraq to help him achieve his objective. In the National Party Congress, which was held in Homs, in 1962, `Aflaq put the finishing touches to his plan to destroy Qāsim's regime and then to confront Nasir and isolate him in the Arab world after he had taken control of Iraq and Syria. (207)

Despite `Aflaq's plans, the Ba`th Party in Iraq suffered from the following:

- (1) It was small, with not more than eight hundred members. (208) This was based on Ba`thist figures, so that it may have been even smaller than that.
- (2) Some of its leaders were in prison, owing to their involvement in the assassination attempt against Qāsim, while others were in hiding, in exile, or had left the Party.



- (3) 'Aflaq reorganised the Ba'th Party section in Iraq and readied it for seizing power. However, there was a deep division between its former General Secretary, Tālib Shabīb, and its later General Secretary, 'Ali Ṣāleḥ al-Sa'dī. This conflict was to explode nine months after the Party seized power; this led to the expulsion of the Party from power in Iraq. We will discuss this later when we come to evaluate the Party's experience in power in Iraq. (209)
- (4) Most members of the military wing of the Ba'th Party in Iraq who were entrusted with the execution of the coup and who later became leading figures in the Party and State, were recent Ba'thists and did not graduate from the Ba'th Party's cadre school, such as al-Bakr, Ḥardān al-Tikrītī and 'Amāsh. They did not have any military credentials or even respect among their peers; (210) there were other Ba'thist and non-Ba'thist officers who had much better credentials and were highly respected among their peers, who had also taken part in the February 1963 coup, but who did not have comparable posts. The reason for the ascendancy of these Tikrītī Ba'thists in the Party was that they were very cliquish by nature, and very sectarian, and bent on the domination of Iraq. Al-Bakr, for example, took part in a haphazardly arranged counter coup one month after 14 July 1958. (211)

(5) More important than all of the above is the fact that Qasim had massive support among the Iraqi people, and that the Communist party was the most dominant force in Iraqi politics at that time.

Hence the Ba`th Party, taking into account its internal conditions and circumstances, could not have achieved its tasks, in particular that of overthrowing the popular regime of Qāsim, without regional and international support as follows:

(a) **Jamal `Abd al-Nasir:** Nasir considered Qasim to be a competitor and wanted him out of the arena, despite the fact that Qāsim was supported by the Iraqi people and was friendly with the Soviet Union, which was Nasir's main backer. Nasir admitted, during the unity talks which he held with the Ba`thists after seizing power in Iraq and Syria, that he had paid money to the Ba`th Party to help it stage the coup.(212) There had been before that a clear Egyptian involvement in the Shawāf 1959 uprising in Mosul.(213) Nasir was also involved in the attempted assassination of Qāsim by the Ba`thists. `Ali Şāleḥ al-Sa`dī admitted that Fu'ād al-Rikābī received the sum of seven thousand Egyptian pounds through Khālīd `Ali Şāliḥ and Ayād Sa`īd Thābit, who were then members of the Ba`th regional leadership, to liquidate Qāsim physically.(214) In addition to this the Egyptian

radio station, *Voice of the Arabs*, was agitating against Qāsim's regime throughout the area.(215)

**(b) The Arab National List:** This consisted of various groups, including the Independence Party led by Siddīq Shanshal, the Movement of Arab Nationalists,(216) which was led by another non-Iraqi, namely Dr George Habash, and the Arab League of Hishām al-Shāwwī and `Adnān al-Rāwī. Following the split up of the Independence Party in 1960, a new party was formed by `Abd al-Razzāq Shabīb, Fayṣal al-Wā'ily and Aḥmad al-Habūbī,(217) which was called the Arab National Party. There was also what was then called the Iraqi Gathering in Cairo. This group represented disparate individuals and interests who fled to Egypt through Syria following the failure of the al-Shawwāf uprising and the failed assassination attempt on Qāsim. However disparate they may have been, they had one thing in common, to remove Qāsim from power. These groups were all on the payroll of Egypt.(218) Then, in 1961, the Ba`th, the Independence Party and the Movement of Arab Nationalists formed what was called the National Front, which was dominated by the Ba`thists. The Ba`th Party was able to exploit the efforts of all these pan-Arabist groups for their own ends and thus push their efforts into destabilising Qāsim's regime. However, all these groups had to pay a terrible price for their trust in the Ba`th Party.(219)



**(c) The Communists:** The Iraqi Communist Party is fully responsible for advertising Ba`thism as a major force against Qāsim. In fact, the Iraqi Communists were the ones who drew people's attention to the Ba`th Party. In addition to this, the Communists parted company with Qāsim and began to support the Kurdish uprising, despite their admission that al-Barzānī was on the payroll of the Shah of Iran. The secret communist radio stations began to broadcast in support of the Kurds and against Qāsim and his army, taking pride in reporting Kurdish victories against the Iraqi army, (220) despite the clear admission by the communists that the Kurds were in league with the British and Americans. (221) The real explanation is that the Iraqi Communist Party was, and still is, heavily dominated by non-Arabs and non-Muslims, so that these have always found, as individuals, more in common with non-Arabs and non-Muslims from Iraq, who were sympathetic to the Kurds.

**(d) The Kurds:** The Kurdish mutiny against Qāsim was a major factor in facilitating the Ba`th seizure of power despite the fact that Qāsim was highly sympathetic to the Kurdish population of Iraq, and all other non-Arab and non-Muslim minorities in Iraq. This is because he found himself from the very first few days after the 14 July 1958 revolution in a power struggle against the Arabist army officers and politicians. So, Qāsim looked towards the Kurds and



all other non-Arabs and non-Muslims in Iraq as allies. However the Kurds had a different ally to that of Qāsim. Menachem Begin admitted that the first group of Kurds had come to an Israeli base near Ramlah in the mid-1950s for training in sabotage. Rafael Eitan, later Israel's Chief of Staff, had himself paid a clandestine visit to Iraqi Kurdistan. By the mid-1960s, Israel had become one of the Kurds' main supporters. As for the Kurds' link with America and its ally, Iran, it was reported that both were arming and financing the Kurds as a means to weakening Iraq and sapping its strength.(222) It may have been that one of the motives behind Saddam's offensive against the Kurds and their allies, the Communists, was his determination to end his opponents' dependence on external forces outside his control.

The Kurds thought that Qāsim was not being forthcoming in agreeing to their demands and believed that if they co-operated with his opponents and helped to overthrow him, then the new government would be weakened and agree to their demands. There are plenty of indications that there was some tacit, if not open, collusion between al-Barzānī and some leading Ba`thists. Even after the Ba`th began its war against the Kurds (223) some leading Ba`thists, such as al-Sa`dī himself and al-Fakaikī, publicly called for the recognition of the Kurdish right to self-determination, i.e. independence from Iraq. The al-

Sa`dī/al-Fakaikī wing was to lose the power struggle when the Tikrītī and Dulyīmī officers took control of the Party during the war against the Kurds.

However, the constant element in the policy of the Kurdish movement in Iraq was, and is, to oppose each and every government in Baghdad and to ally itself with whoever is in opposition to the government. Thus, those forces and elements represented great danger to Iraqi national independence, owing to their subservience either to foreign power or to a foreign philosophy. Indeed, most leaders of the Communist movement in Iraq are Kurdish.

**(e) Religious leaders:** The Ba`th Party was able to exploit the opposition of the Islamic religious leaders to Qāsim's regime, particularly after the latter issued a decree covering personal issues that were in clear and direct violation of Quranic laws. In addition, Qāsim's collaboration with the Communists brought down on him the wrath of the religious leaders since the Communists went on the rampage against all traditional beliefs and customs of the Iraqi Muslims, to the extent that Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm, the chief Shi'ite religious leader, issued a *fatwā* banning the Communist party on the grounds that it was anti-God. The Ba`thists seized the opportunity and supported al-Ḥakīm's stand against Communism, despite the fact that some leading members of the Ba`thist front were very

anti-Shi'ah, among them 'Abd al-Salām 'Ārif, al-Bakr and the rest of the Tikrītīs, Dulaimis and the Mosul clans. The Ba'th Party extended Ḥakim's fatwā to Qāsim's regime, as they began to describe it as anti-Islam, in spite of the fact that their leaders in Syria were either Christians or Druze monarchists. The Ba'thists were also able to establish links and co-ordinate with many monarchists, (224) who had an axe to grind against Qāsim.

**(f) Foreign Intelligence Agencies:** It is certain that the British intelligence agency was involved in anti-Qāsim activities. The then British Ambassador to Baghdad, Humphrey Trevelyan, in his The Middle East in Revolution, recalled that he visited what he called the Iraqi mountains and met with Kurdish chiefs who were rebelling against Qāsim. (225) Isma'īl 'Ārif, a close ally of Qāsim, said in his memoirs that the British Embassy paid half a million Iraqi dinars for anti-Qāsim activities by the Kurds. (226) Qāsim himself accused the British and American intelligence agencies, in a press conference, of being behind the Kurdish mutiny in the north. (227) The British government was keen to be rid of Qāsim's regime. British intelligence had dealings with the Ba'th Party, even before they seized power. After seizing power, the British government began supplying them with weapons. Official British government documents recently released revealed that Sir Alec Douglas-



Home's Government agreed to supply the Ba`th regime with weapons, on the advice of the Minister of Trade, Edward Heath, who held that supplying the Ba`th regime in Iraq with weapons was a good policy for halting Iraq's dependence on the Soviet Union. However, Home himself was hesitant, because he thought that the Ba`thists in Baghdad might attack Kuwait. Thus, British weapons would be used against British oil wells in Kuwait, or they might be used against the Kurds, who were Britain's allies in Iraq. On the strength of these reservations by the British Prime Minister, weapon sales were reduced.(228)

**(g) Iraq's neighbours:** Neighbouring countries, particularly Iran and Turkey, gave direct support to the Kurdish mutiny against Qāsim, since both were British and American allies and as happy as their masters were to see Qāsim go.(229)

Despite all these favourable internal and external circumstances, the Ba`thists still needed direct US support:

(1) Hana Batātū remarks:

".... a member of the 1963 Iraqi Ba`th Command, who requested anonymity, asserted in a conversation with this writer that the Yugoslav Embassy in Beirut had warned certain Ba`th



leaders that some Iraqi Ba`thists were maintaining surreptitious contacts with representatives of American power." (230)

- (2) In an interview seven months after the coup, King Husayn told Haikal:

"....you tell me that American Intelligence was behind the events of 1957 in Jordan. Permit me to tell you that I know for a certainty that what happened in Iraq on 8 February had the support of American Intelligence. ....numerous meetings were held between the Ba`th Party and American Intelligence, the more important in Kuwait. Do you know that ....on 8 February a secret radio beamed to Iraq was supplying the men who pulled the coup with the names and addresses of the communists there so that they could be arrested and executed." (231)

- (3) In their Iraq: International Relation and National Development, Professors Penrose and Penrose say:

"....Hāshim Jawād, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, told us later that the Iraqi Foreign Ministry had information of complicity between the Ba`th and the CIA. In many cases, the CIA supplied the Ba`th with the names of

individual Communists, some of whom were then taken from their homes and murdered." (232)

(4) The American Ambassador to Baghdad, Waldemar Gallman, said:

"....it was plain from the beginning that Qāsim's regime could not be overthrown without a superior, speedy and external force." (233)

(5) The British Foreign Office has released some of its documents which reveal secret links between British intelligence, the CIA and the seizure of power in Iraq by the Ba`thists. This confirms the near certainty of a joint venture between the Ba`th Party and imperialism in bringing down Qāsim's regime. (234)

In addition, one might read into the Ba`th Party's denial of the accusations made against it by several sources that it was working in league with British and American intelligence agencies an unwitting acknowledgement of cooperation with these agencies:

"....the masses of our people, in the Iraqi *quṭr* (a Ba`th term for the Arab States, which denotes them as parts and not a whole) were able on the morning of 14 Ramaḍān (8 February 1963) to destroy the isolationist military dictatorship, which was erected by the Qāsimite

regime whilst, at the same time, depriving the reactionary forces and imperialism the opportunity to destroy Qāsim's regime and thus transform the situation in Iraq once and for all to its advantage in Iraq." (235)

Yūnis Baḥrī, in his The Revolution of 14 Ramadan, defended the coup and praised its Ba`thist heroes, on the grounds that they were in a race against British and American imperialism to see who would be the first to bring down Qāsim's regime. (236)

A month after the Ba`th coup in Iraq, a second Ba`th coup took place in Syria, on 8 March 1963, against the regime which separated Syria from Egypt in September 1961. It was accused by the Syrian Ba`thists and Nasirists of being separatist and reactionary, while, in fact, they were behind that regime and were the ones who signed the declaration of separation from Egypt. (237) Furthermore, the leader of that coup, was a non-Muslim Drūze general, who was directly involved with the west and Israel. (238)

The coup of 8 March 1963 was not entirely Ba`thist but, like the one in Iraq a month earlier, a joint effort by Ba`thists and non-Ba`thist pan-Arabists. (239) The real financier of the coup was Egypt. (240) Nasir acknowledged that he had put a large sum of money at the disposal of `Aflaq and al-Bayṭār to finance their political work, as



the best allies he could find in Syria in the hope of reuniting Syria again with Egypt.(241)

The Ba`thists, did the same thing in Syria as in Iraq by out-manoeuvring their former allies, the Nasirists and other pan-Arabists. In Syria, the latter were physically liquidated, while in Iraq they were saved in the nick of time by the 18 November 1963 coup, which ejected the Ba`thists. The Ba`thists in Syria were bent on ridding Syria of the Nasirists.(242)

It is strange that East and West were in agreement that the Ba`thists should be allowed to smash Nasirism. The East saw Nasir as fundamentally anti-Communist because of his hostility to single party rule, while the Syrian Ba`thists, despite the bloody suppression of the Communists in Iraq by the Iraqi Ba`thists, could be made to turn and formally adopt Marxism as the only socialist doctrine. The West, in turn, saw the Syrian Ba`thists' anti-Nasir stand as the best guarantee of Israeli security(243) from Syrian and Egyptian co-operation. The West was accurate in its diagnosis - much more accurate, in fact, than the Soviet Union, which kept encouraging so called "marxist thinkers" to lead the Ba`thists slowly on the road to Marxism, Leninism and Stalinism. One of these so called Marxist thinkers was Yāsīn al-Ḥāfīz, who formulated what were called *muntalaqāt naẓariyyah* (theoretical stepping stones), which formed the basis for the sixth regional congress of the Syrian Ba`th Party. The



Iraqi Communists and the rest of the assorted Marxists, who were more prevalent in Iraq than in Syria, went ahead and heeded Moscow's orders to form a front with the second Ba`thist regime in 1972, which was worse (merely because of the presence of Saddam) than the first.

The Syrian Ba`thists were riven with divisions, as were their counterparts in Iraq, and were dominated by the Alawite religious sect (an extreme form of Shi`ahism, which had been excommunicated from Islam by the Shiah themselves in the Middle Ages), just as the Party in Iraq was dominated by the Tikrītī clan. The divisions within the Syrian Ba`thists were between two wings and took many forms - left against right - military against civilian -pan-Syrian against pan-Arab- Alawite, Drūze, or Ismā`ilī minorities against Sunni Muslims, Christians and so on. The truth, however, was that the `Aflaq/al-Bayṭār/al-Ḥāfiẓ wing was going to be liquidated by the Alawite/Drūze wing - Ṣalāḥ Jādīd, Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad and Salīm Ḥātūm - in the second Ba`thist coup of 23 February 1966, which ended, once and for all, `Aflaq's destructive rule in Syria and resulted in the expulsion of him and his disciples from Syria. Unfortunately, as soon as Syria was finished with him, it was Iraq's turn.

Later on, as was expected, the struggle was resumed between the Alawites on the one side and the Drūze on the other. Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad, who was the Minister of Defence during the disastrous defeat of 1967, blamed everybody for

the defeat except himself. First, al-Asad liquidated Hātūm, who had twice plotted coups against the Alawites and then proceeded to liquidate his partner, Şalāḥ Jadīd on 1 January 1971, in what was termed a "reforming move".(244)

The `Aflaq wing remained in the wilderness for more than two years, during which `Aflaq travelled to Brazil, as guest of some of his relatives, breeding rumours that he might become a Brazilian immigrant. However, he quickly returned to the Middle East when his supporters in Iraq seized power in July 1968. The division between the two wings, the Syrian and the Iraqi, was initially characterised as left (Syrian) and right (Iraqi), which suggests an ideological division.(245) This was far from the truth, since the two wings were dominated from the beginning by two minority clans - the Alawites in Syria and the Tikrītīs in Iraq - and by two totalitarian dictators - al-Asad in Syria and Saddam in Iraq.

The artificial dislike of the West and the pro-Soviet stance of the Iraqi Ba`thists (particularly adopted by Saddam), were much greater than those of the Syrian Ba`thists, particularly al-Asad, who openly wanted to appear moderate and conciliatory towards the west. He received US President Nixon in Syria in 1974, while the Ba`th in Iraq did not resume diplomatic relations officially with the US until 1985; this resumption was immediately clouded by Irangate in 1986 and the sinking of

the US frigate "*Stark*" by Iraqi jet fighters in the Gulf in 1987.

In fact, if anything, neither Saddam nor al-Asad was true to his pan-Arabism or his desire for revolutionary change and other ostensible objectives. Both of them were intent on extending their influence as far as possible in the name of pan-Arabism. Both wished to give their regimes a revolutionary image, to present themselves as opposed to the west in general and to the USA in particular. When al-Sadāt concluded his peace treaty with Israel, Saddam had ambitions to assume the vacant seat of leader of the Arab world and to put himself forward as the guardian of the Arab Nation and the foremost champion of Arab rights in Palestine. (246)



## False Slogans

The two Ba`thist coups of February 1963, both in Iraq and Syria, were not merely reactionary, they were carried out to bring a fascist-style party to power. They had first institutionalised the role of the tribe and then the family, and, in the end, they achieved the destruction of Iraq and deprived Syria of the chance of peace and democracy for three decades.

The Ba`thist demagogic slogans, and all the public professions of Arab unity, freedom, socialism, revolutionary change, anti-imperialism and anti-Zionism, the creating of modern Arab society, were used only to retain the enthusiasm of the People and to disguise the fact that the Ba`th Party in general had proved in practice to be an instrument used by outside powers and their allies in the region to re-establish the domination over the Middle East. In fact, the Ba`th in Iraq had declared from its earliest days its respect for western interests. (247)

In Iraq, the Ba`thist coup of February 1963 was welcomed by all reactionary forces (monarchy supporters) and the enemies of Qāsim's regime, since it achieved for them what would have been difficult for them to accomplish otherwise (we will discuss this subject in the next chapter).



In Syria, there is a justified question mark against the Syrian Ba`thist role, in particular that of al-Asad, in the disastrous defeat of the Arabs in 1967. First, for supporting Palestinian guerrillas who launched many raids provoking the Israelis into launching retaliatory raids.(248) Secondly, he escalated tension, by launching a propaganda war and retaliating to Israeli provocation, which changed the struggle between the two sides from border clashes to a large-scale military engagement, in April 1967, in which Syria suffered a serious military reverse.

Thus, the Syrian Ba`thists gave Israel a good excuse for launching attacks, not against Syria, to punish the Ba`thists for their sponsorship of the guerrilla pinpricks, but against Jordan, which had nothing to do with the Palestinian actions. Israel's aims from this escalation sharpened the Arab divisions by provoking and dragging Jordan into war. Nasir, who was regarded as the champion of the Arabs, was broken by being dragged into the crisis.(249) More importantly, Israel became an equal partner with the US in the Middle East.(250)

The Syrian army sat tight, did not fight at all and left the Golan Heights for Israel to conquer easily. This was probably the reason behind the Israeli Ministerial Committee on Defence's decision against attacking Syria.(251) It seems as if the Syrian Ba`thists' strategy was to arrange a war with Israel for Nasir and the rest of

the Arabs, which Israel was most certain to win, thus giving up Arab territory, including the Golan Heights.

Later on, the Syrian Ba`thists led by al-Asad, carried their disagreement with the Iraqi Ba`thists, led by Saddam, to its natural and ultimate conclusion, when Syria was in the vanguard of the US-led military build-up for the war against Iraq in 1991.

The Syrian Ba`thists, particularly since their defeat of 1967, had become increasingly ridiculous; every defeat Syria suffered was interpreted as a victory by their Nazi-like and Stalinist propaganda. Thus, after the 1967 defeat and the loss of the Golan Heights, the Syrian Ba`thists claimed a victory, because they saw that the aim of the imperialists and Zionists had been to overthrow the "progressive" regime in Syria. Since they had failed to do so, they could claim that the Israelis had been defeated. The propaganda machines churned out such nonsense to the Syrian people, but what gave it a real force, although only for a while, was the support it received from the Soviet propaganda machine, which also spread a similar evaluation of the 1967 Arab defeat on the grounds that the imperialists and Zionists wanted to get rid of the progressive regimes in Egypt and Syria, but failed.(252) Similar logic was to be used by Saddam after his disastrous defeat in 1991.

However, the Ba`thists were very careless in both Syria and Iraq about internal achievements. This was particularly so in Iraq, which is far richer in natural resources, particularly oil, than Syria. Any other government in Iraq with such resources would have achieved the transformation of Iraq into a modern society. Yet, due to the backward, fascistic attitude and bloody repression of the Ba`th, (253) Iraq is probably now the poorest nation on earth. Before the Ba`thists took power, they concentrated on issues related to the seizure of power, which resulted in a bloody power struggle with their political rivals. This led to instability and restlessness in both countries. Then, when they gained power, mostly through setting up coalitions, and after consolidating their position and widening their support, they started to alter the balance of power to their advantage and systematically eliminated their allies, as well as any opposition, even within the Ba`th Party itself. This Stalinist type of policy was applied and encouraged by the Ba`th leaders and thinkers. (254) The Ba`thists' lacked a considered development programme, apart from the radical economic policies they were keen on introducing, such as Arab socialism, (255) which they interpreted as the control by the state of all resources in the economy, and then the creation of a new class of people who were first of all family members and then members of the Party, from Tikrīt in Iraq and the Alawites in Syria. (256) Such socialism could be described as the socialism of one clan or sect. Iraqi and Syrian society was deprived of the chance to



develop, either on real Marxist lines, such as the former East European States, or on western lines. Instead they followed the most corrupt, backward, cruel and despotic path of Ba`th ideology and policies.(257)

On the social level, the Ba`th have followed a policy, over the last three decades, which has resulted in the destruction of the social forms in Iraq, dragging it back into a society that is run by a petty tyrant. In reality, Saddam is not a modern dictator, but a more backward type, which is sometimes referred to as a "village tyrant", such as `Idi Amin was in Uganda. Saddam has worked to make village medieval values triumph over city values. It is erroneous to think that Saddam is a moderniser; he is not. He may build palaces and weapons of mass destruction, but these are hardly examples of modernity. His mental capacity is very limited, and his values are no more modern than those of a medieval condottiere. This is a direct result of the Ba`th ideology and policies which stress Arabism and Arab values of a bygone age.

The Party did not achieve its main declared objective, namely Arab unity. It was so transparently insincere on this point that it worked behind the scenes to separate Egypt from Syria and, when it gained power in Iraq, it began tripartite discussions about unity in Cairo, which failed miserably.(258) Nasir exposed the insincerity of its belief in Arab unity when he published



the tripartite (Egypt, Iraq and Syria) unity talks, (259) which clearly placed the two Ba`th delegations, one led by `Aflaq with al-Bayṭār for Syria and the other by al-Bakr and al-Sa`dī for Iraq, as most hostile to the idea of a merger with Nasir on the lines of 1958, or on any other lines.

The second objective of the Ba`th Party, freedom, has been ridiculed since Iraq, in particular, and Syria have become slave societies.

The third Ba`th concept of socialism, which is state socialism, and which is supposed to liberate the individual and society from need and exploitation, as the Ba`thists claimed, (260) has resulted in the creation of the Ba`thist elite, which has monopolised power and wealth and enslaved the rest of the people.

The Ba`th ideology and policy is a unique Third World blending of Italian Fascism, German Nazism and Marxist-Stalinism. (261) The emergence of the two tyrants, Saddam in Iraq and al-Asad in Syria, is a clear vindication of such a conclusion. (262)

The most despotic, backward aspect of Ba`thism is the formal institutionalisation of minority elitist rule. In Syria the Alawites, which is not even considered Muslim, rule over the mass majority of Sunni Muslims, (263) and in Iraq an elite of villagers from Tikrīt have established a

Tikrītī dynasty that is above the law, as was evidenced when Saddam's family executed his sons-in-law, Ḥusayn Kāmal Ḥasan, his brother and their entire family on 23 February 1996.

## NOTES

- 1- See, among others, Devlin, John F., The Ba`th Party, A History from its Origins to 1966, Stanford, California, 1975; al-Jundī, Sāmī, al-Ba`th, Dar al-Nahār li al-Nashr, Beirut, 1969; Şafadī, Muṭā`, Ḥizb al-Ba`th: Ma'sāt al-Mawlid, Ma'sat al-Nihāyah (The Ba`th Party; Tragic Birth, Tragic End), Dar al-Adab, Beirut, 1964; Abū Jābir, Kāmil, Ḥizb al-Ba`th al-`Arabī al-Ishtirākī (The Arab Ba`th Socialist Party), Syracuse University Press, New York, 1966; al-Razzāz, Munīf, al-Tajribah al-Murrah (The Bitter Experience), Beirut, 1967; Majdalānī, Jibrān, "The Ba`th Experience in Iraq," in *Middle East Forum*, Vol 41, No 2, Autumn 1965.
- 2- Under the terms of this agreement, the Fertile Crescent was split into British and French spheres of influence; Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine went to Britain, while Syria and Lebanon went to France. See *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol 11, p. 454.
- 3- See Kedourie, Elie, England and the Middle East, London, 1965 and Nevakivi, Jukka, Britain, France and the Arab Middle East 1914 -20, London, 1969.
- 4- Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1914-1939, the Public Record Office, FO 371/5231. It appears that the Tikrītī family were encouraged to join the Iraqi army because of Mawlūd Mukhliş's influence; they became, in subsequent years, the dominant figures in the Ba`th

Party and resolved to continue to follow the same policy of the nationalist ascendants. See Iraqi Policy File, No 281, Mawlūd Pasha Mukhlis and Great Britain Personalities (confidential), Baghdad, 1921, p. 72.

- 5- Lloyd, Seton, Twin Rivers, A Brief History of Iraq from the Earliest Times to the Present Day, Third edition, Bombay, 1961, p. 212.
- 6- Penrose, Edith and E.F. Penrose, Iraq: International Relations and National Development, London, 1978, p. 29.
- 7- See Shakīb Ṣālih, The British-Druze Connection and Druze Rising of 1896 in the Hawran, in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.13, No.2, May 1977, pp. 251-257.
- 8- See Hourani, A.H., Minorities in the Arab World, London, 1947, p. 24.
- 9- For more information on this point see al-`Umar, Fārūq Ṣālih, al-Siyāsah al-Brītāniyyah fi al-`Irāq, 1914-1921 (British Policy in Iraq, 1914-1921), Baghdad, 1978.
- 10- Maurice, Frederick, "Our Commitments in Mesopotamia" in *The New Europe*, 18 March 1920, p. 227.
- 11- Public Record Office, London, FO 371/4342.



12- Public Record Office, London, FO 371/13428.

13- Hirtzel, Arthur, Memorandum to the secretary of political and secret department, Indian Office, and to W.H. Clark, Department of Overseas Trade, 31 December 1917. In this memorandum, he stated: " ...the Turkish menace has apparently been removed. But another has taken its place, of a different kind, and one which, I think, makes it imperative for us to get to work. What I mean is that we must at least consider the possibility of a peace which will not give us the absolute political control of Mesopotamia that we should like to have." Public Record Office, FO 368/1999/1071.

14- See Wilson, A.T., Mesopotamia, 1917- 1920, A Clash of Loyalties, London, 1931, p. 288. The allies adopted the same policy against the post-Gulf War Iraqi uprising of March 1991, which they branded as a Shia uprising.

15- See concerning this subject the book of the Russian Orientalist, L.N. Katlof, The National Liberation Uprising in Iraq in 1920, Moscow, 1958, p. 61.

16- Batātū, Ḥannā, The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movement of Iraq, Princeton University Press, 1978, p. 1016.

17- For an Iraqi point of view of the rising and suppression of the Iraqi revolt, see al-`Aṭiyyah, Ghassān, al-`Irāq bayna 1908 wa 1921: Dirāsah Siyyāsiyyah (Iraq 1908-1921, A Political Study), Beirut, 1973. From a British point of view, see Wilson, A.T., Mesopotamia 1917 - 1920, A Clash of Loyalties, London, 1931, and Haldane, A.L., The Insurrection in Mesopotamia, Edinburgh, 1922.

18- Hirsowicz, Lukas Z., The Third Reich and the Arab East, London, 1966, pp. 166-172.

19- Eden, Anthony, Memoirs, London, Part 3, pp. 95-99.

20- According to the revelations which appeared in Peter Wright's Spy Catcher, a book which created a storm in the UK, Eden issued an order to the British intelligence to liquidate Nāsir for this reason .

21- For a different appreciation of Soviet strategic objectives in the Arab area and the Middle East, see, Golan, Galia, Yom Kippur and After: The Soviet Union and the Middle East Crisis, 1977.

For an Arab point of view on this subject see, Haykal, Muḥammad H., The Sphinx and the Commissar, New York, 1978.

- 22- Panic, Jabber and Roman Kalkowicz, The Arab/Israeli Wars of 1967 and 1973.
- 23- al-Jundī, *ibid.*, p. 26.
- 24- Dandishlī, Muṣṭafā, Hizb al-Ba`th al-`Arabī al-Ishtirākī: al-Idyūlūjiyah wa al-Tārīkh al-Siyāsī (The Arab Ba`th Socialist Party, Part 1, The Ideology and Political History), Beirut, 1979, p. 19.
- 25- al-Sayyid, Jalāl, Hizb al-Ba`th al-`Arabī (The Arab Ba`th Party), Beirut, 1973, pp. 19-29.
- 26- Ṣafadī, *ibid.*, p. 66.
- 27- Batātū, *ibid.*, quoted on p. 724.
- 28- al-Jundī, *ibid.*, p. 26.
- 29- *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- 30- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 724, and al-Jundī, *ibid.* Indeed, the Ba`th Party strategy was, in general, based on this policy, which denounced all non-Ba`thists as traitors and agents. This probably explains its isolation.
- 31- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 9.
- 32- al-Sayyid, *ibid.*, p. 41.

- 33- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 10.
- 34- According to the French researcher, Daniel Loughak, "Aflaq and, to a lesser extent, al-Baytar, who are the two founding fathers, are indebted at least partly to France for the establishment of the Ba`th Party." Loughak, D., "In the Name of Palestine, Syrian Ba`th Party," in *Political Studies*, No 16, p. 64.
- 35- Jalāl al-Sayyid, a founding member of the Ba`th Party, claims that the Ba`th Party differs from other nationalist parties in that it is a popular party while the others were aristocratic. al-Jundī regards the Ba`th Party as a descendant of the Nationalist Action League. See al-Sayyid, *ibid.*, pp. 21-25 and al-Jundī, *ibid.*, p. 20.
- 36- al-Ḥusarī, Abū Khaldūn Ṣāṭi`, Muḥāḍarāt fī Nushū' al-Fikrah al-Qawmiyyah (Lectures on the Birth of the Nationalist Idea), Institute of Arabic Union studies, Beirut, 1985, pp. 119-120.
- 37- See `Umrān, Muḥammad, Tajribatī fī al-Thawra (My Experience in Revolution), Beirut, 1970, p. 8.
- 38- There are several standard works on the subject of Arab nationalism and the prominent role of non-Muslim



Arabs in Arab nationalist movements. Most notable of these works are:

Antonius, George, The Arab Awakening, London, 1938.

Cleveland, W.L., The Making of Arab Nationalism, 1971.

Nusaybah, Hāzim Zakī, The Ideas of Arab Nationalism, Ithaca, New York, 1956.

39- Lawrence, T.E., The Seven Pillars of Wisdom, London, 1926.

40- Antonius, G., *ibid.*, p. 71.

41- al-Sayyid, *ibid.*, p. 126.

42- Sharābī, Hishām, Al-Muthaqqafūn fī al-`Ālam al-`Arabī wa al-Gharbī (Arab and Western Intelligensias), p. 80.

43- The memorandum is reprinted in *Middle Eastern Studies*, 19, No.2, April 1983, p. 259;.

44- See Cleveland, W.L., The Making of Arab Nationalism, Princeton, 1971. Cleveland's work is a study of Ṣāṭi` al-Ḥusarī, a prolific exponent of the concept of Arab Nationalism and Unity.

- 45- al-Sayyid, *ibid.*, pp. 15-17.
- 46- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 15.
- 47- Niḍāl al-Ba`th: 1, Beirut, p. 171.
- 48- `Aflaq, Michel, Thawriyyāt al-Wiḥdah al-`Arabiyyah fī Ma`rakat al-Maṣīr al-Wāḥid (The Arab Union Revolution in the Battle of the One Fate), Beirut, 1958, p. 18.
- 49- Sluglett, Marion-Farouk and Peter Sluglett, Iraq Since 1958, From Revolution to Dictatorship, London, 1990, p. 88.
- 50- For more details concerning religious movements in Egypt during that period refer to:  
  
Hughth, Don, Political and Religious Trends in Modern Egypt, Washington, 1950.  
  
al-Ḥassānī, Musā Iṣḥāq, al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn (The Moslem Brotherhood), Beirut, 1956.
- 51- The top official at the White House has acknowledged, surprisingly, after the Gulf War that they had successfully achieved all their objectives in the Middle East. See Chapter 8 and, in particular, Henry Kissinger's statement in *The Herald Tribune* on 3 August 1992 about how much Israel benefited from the

Ba`th regime's and Saddam's decision to embroil Iraq in the Second Gulf War.

- 52- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 30.
- 53- Khadūrī, Majīd, `Arab Mu`āsirūn (Contemporary Arabs), Beirut, 1973, p. 378.
- 54- `Aflaq, Michel, Fī Sabīl al-Ba`th (In the Cause of the Resurrection), p. 737.
- 55- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 188.
- 56- Seale, Patrick, The Struggle for Syria, A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945 - 1958, translated into Arabic by Samīr `Abdah, Beirut, 1983, pp. 4-5.
- 57- Caractacus, Lenon, Revolution in Iraq, p. 54.
- 58- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 108.
- 59- Niḍāl al-Ba`th: 5, p. 7.
- 60- Revolution in Iraq, p. 53.
- 61- The Baghdad-based newspaper al-Akhabār reported on 20 January 1952 that a new party, under the name of the Arab Ba`th Party, had taken a leading role in demonstrations and disturbances throughout Iraq. See

Ibrāhim Zahīda, Mukhtaṣar al-Jarā'id wa al-Ṣuḥuf al-Ṣadīrah bi Baghdād (A Digest of Baghdad Newspapers and Magazines), Baghdad, 1976.

62- Niḍāl al-Ba`th: 1, p. 291.

63- Fī Ṣabīl al-Ba`th, *ibid.*, p. 178.

64- The text of the letter was published in most Syrian newspapers and reprinted in *Al-Akḥbār*, 17 February 1963.

65- *al-Sayyid*, *ibid.*, p. 62.

66- Copeland, Miles, The Game of Nations, London, 1969.

*Le Monde*, 16 August 1949.

67- *Batātū*, *ibid.*, p. 728.

68- *Devlin*, *ibid.*, p. 56.

69- The Ba`th accused Ḥināwī's regime of being a tool of imperialism and a monarchy; see the Party statement of 9 January 1950 in Niḍāl al-Ba`th: 2, pp. 33-38.

*Seale*, *ibid.*, p. 82.

70- Niḍāl al-Ba`th: 2, p. 217.



- 71- *Le Monde*, 21 April 1953.
- 72- al-Sayyid, *ibid.*, p. 94.
- 73- Batātū, *ibid.*, pp. 728 & 729.
- 74- al-Sayyid, *ibid.*, pp. 98-100.
- 75- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 729.
- 76- al-Sayyid, *ibid.*, p. 91.
- 77- See The Game of Nations. The CIA admitted that it created, out of Nāṣir and for as long as he remained a friend of the USA, a hero and a legend for the Arabs, Islam and the rest of the Third World. At least initially, he helped expand US influence in the area.
- 78- The CIA also admitted that the Eisenhower Principle and the Baghdad Pact were a weapon used by Nāṣir to embarrass those of his enemies in the Arab world who refused to join him, contriving thus to appear to the rest of the world as a leader confronting the West.
- 79- al-Sayyid, *ibid.*, p. 165. See also Penrose and Penrose, *ibid.*, p. 215.

As concerns the Ba`th internal crisis, see the Party Internal Document for Party members only, "Azmat Hizbinā, Naẓrah `Āmmah" (The Crisis of our Party, a General View), 1957, a report submitted by the preparatory committee to the provisional Party Conference of the Syrian Region on 9 July 1957.

80- Al- Jundi, *ibid.*, p. 76.

81- Transcript of the Unity Talks in *al-Ahrām*, Cairo, 1963, p. 73.

82- Ṭāha, Riyāḍ, Beirut, 13 for the Union Talks.

Penrose and Penrose, *ibid.*, p. 300.

83- See al-Sādāt, Anwar, Qisṣat al-Waḥdah al-`Arabiyyah, (Story of Arab Unity), 1957.

See also Seale, P., *ibid.*, p. 312.

84- Copeland, *ibid.*, Chapter 10.

85- Devlin, *ibid.*, pp. 149-154.

86- *New York Times*, 29 April 1959.

- 87- Penrose and Penrose, *ibid.*, p. 288.
- 88- Niḍāl al-Ba`th: 4, p. 77. Internal circular issued by the Party's General Secretariat for members only, March, 1959.
- 89- al-Razzāz, *ibid.*, p. 81.
- 90- Penrose and Penrose, *ibid.*, p. 286.
- Fakaykī's statement to al-`Alawī is quoted in Ḥaṣan al-`Alawī, *ibid.*, London, 1990, pp. 26-27.
- al-Razzāz, al-Tajribah al-Murrah, footnote (1), p.78.
- 91- Niḍāl al-Ba`th, p.159: the communiqué of the National (pan-Arab) Leadership during the period 1963-1966; al-Ba`th newspaper with its leading article on 15 July 1964 on the occasion of the 6th anniversary of the 14th July 1958 coup. This communiqué was intended to dampen rumours about the Ba`th's relationship with foreign intelligence agencies in arranging the 8 February 1963 coup.
- 92- Eden, Anthony, Memoirs, London, 1960, p. 349.
- 93- Copeland, *ibid.*
- Seale, *ibid.*, p. 264.

- 94- King Ḥussein of Jordan was put in an uncomfortable situation when Ḥasanayn Haykal, chief-editor of al-Ahrām, asked him at Hotel Crillon in Paris if American Intelligence was behind the events of 1957 in Jordan. See Batātū, p.985, for Ḥussein's statement.
- 95- Proceedings of the Special Military High Court, Part 1, Iraqi Ministry of Defence, 1958, p. 349. At his trial by the Special Military High Court, known as the People's Court and headed by Colonel Fādīl `Abbās al-Mahdāwī, General Ghāzī al-Daghīstānī confessed to the existence of a detailed military plan to invade Syria.
- 96- al-Sayyid, *ibid.*, pp. 21-25.
- 97- al-Khalīl, Samūr, Republic of Fear, London, 1989, note (ii), p. 186.
- 98- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 724.
- 99- al-`Arsūzī, Zakī, al-Ummah al-`Arabiyyah: Māhiyyatuhā, Risālatuhā, Mashākilulā (The Arab Nation: Its Essence, Mission and Problems), Damascus, 1958.
- 100- al-Sayyid, pp. 18-19.



- 101- Ibid.
- 102- Fī Sabīl al-Ba`th, *ibid.*, pp. 29, 40-41, 103.
- 103- On the massacre in Aleppo, see Seale, Patrick, Asad: the Struggle for the Middle East, University of California Press, 1989, pp. 326-334.
- 104- Şafadī, *ibid.*, p. 66.
- 105- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 8.
- 106- al-Jundī, *ibid.*, p. 27.
- 107- Kāẓim, Fu'ād, Arqām wa Arā' Hawla Nidhām al-Ba`th fī al-`Irāq, Islamic Institute for Political Research, Tehran, No.2, p. 85.
- 108- *MERIP reports*, 110, November - December 1982.
- See abū Jābir, p. 187.
- 109- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 726.
- 110- Batātū, *ibid.*, note (48), p. 735.
- 111- al-`Alawī, *ibid.*, p. 68. It appears that this is the reason why the Pope and the Vatican awarded Michel `Aflaq the Vatican decoration for services to

Christianity, although he was not a catholic, but an Orthodox Christian.

Kāẓim, *ibid.*; `Aflaq's former teacher, Professor Louis Massignon (1883-1962), a French orientalist, advisor to the French government on Islamic affairs, and a specialist on Islamic philosophy, said of `Aflaq that he was 'the brightest and cleverest student of my career'.

On Massignon's attempts to infiltrate the Islamic world, see `Āmir, Adīb, "Māsīnyūn, al-Mustashriq wa al-Insān" (Massignon, the Orientalist and the Man), *al-Fikr al-`Arabī*, No 31, Beirut, January - March 1983, p. 350.

112- To help create political groups that hoisted pan-Arabism in western circles and oppose forces such as the Syrian Nationalist Party.

113- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 728.

114- Lewis, Bernard, The West and the Middle East, translated into Arabic by Nabīl Subḥī, Beirut, 1965, p. 95. In connection with the phenomenon of socialism which appeared in the middle of this century in the area and which the Ba`th party appropriated as one of its three objectives, the British orientalist and Professor of history at SOAS, Bernard Lewis, declared

that the 1945 British election, won by the Labour Party, was thought by many Arabs to prove that socialism was a beneficial and commendable path to follow. This explains the emergence of the Arab Socialist Party in Syria in 1950, which merged with the Ba`th in 1953 to form the Arab Ba`th Socialist Party.

115- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 4.

116- Considered as the most able Arab politician during the post-war period; see *Political Encyclopaedia*, Part 1, Beirut, p. 249.

117- Van Dusen, Michael H.M., Intra and Inter-generational Conflict in the Syrian Army, unpublished PhD thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 1971, p. 313. This work provides further information about Ḥawrānī's associate officers.

118- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 169.

119- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 729.

120- He is well described in Man Hum fī al-`Ālam al-`Arabī (Who's who in the Arab World), Damascus, Maktab al-Dirāsāt al-Sūriyyah wa al-`Arabiyyah, 1957, Vol 1.

121- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 23.

- 122- Ibid.
- 123- al-`Alawī, *ibid.*, p. 69.
- 124- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 730.
- 125- 'Ajamī, Fu'ād, The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967, 1982.
- 126- 'Aflaq, Michel, Fikratunā, 1948, pp. 27-28.
- 127- `Aflaq, Michel, Sharḥ al-Dustūr (Explanation of the constitution), undated.
- 128- Sharḥ al-Dustūr, *ibid.*, undated, p. 18.
- 129- `Aflaq, Michel, Fikratunā, *ibid.*, p. 20.
- 130- Fī Sabīl al-Ba`th, *ibid.*, pp. 31-32.
- 131- al-Tamīmī, Walīd, al-Dīmuqrāṭiyyah, al-Mārksiyyah wa al-Fāshiyyah (Democracy, Marxism and Fascism), London, 1997.
- 132- Sharḥ al-Dustūr, *ibid.*, pp. 17-18.
- 133- Fī Sabīl al-Ba`th, *ibid.*, pp. 76, 79, 109, 149.



- 134- Ibid., pp. 26-27, 45-49, 76-82, 109-110, 149-150.
- 135- Van Dan, Nicholas, The Struggle for power in Syria - Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba`th Party, London, p. 17.
- 136- Haim, Sylvia G., Arab Nationalism: an Anthology, London and Berkeley, University of California Press, 1962.
- 137- Fī Sabīl al Ba`th, ibid., p. 147.
- 138- Sharḥ al-Dustūr, ibid.
- 139- al-Sayyid, ibid., p. 109.
- 140- al-Tamīmī, ibid.
- 141- `Aflaq, Thawriyyāt al-Waḥdah al-`Arabiyyah fī Ma`rakat al-Maṣīr al-Wāḥid, pp. 23-24.
- 142- `Aflaq, Michel, Fī Sabīl al-Ba`th al-`Arabī, ibid., pp. 81, 82, 125.
- 143- Sharḥ al-Dustūr, ibid., Article 41 (2).
- 144- Fikratunā, ibid., pp. 28-29.

- 145- Fī Sabīl al-Ba`th, ibid., p. 154.
- 146- Ibid., pp. 740-741.
- 147- al-Razzāz, Munīf, Ma`ālim al-Hayāh al-`Arabiyyah al-Jadīdah (Landmarks of the New Arab Life), 4th edition, Beirut, 1960, p. 166.
- 148- Sharh al-Dustūr, ibid., pp. 43-44.
- 149- Batātū, ibid., p. 736.
- Sluglett, Marion-Farouk, "Liberation or Repression: Pan-Nationalism and the Women's Movement in Iraq," in Derek Hopwood, Habib Ishow and Thomas Koszinowski, Iraq: Power and Society, Reading, 1993, pp. 61-62.
- 150- Sharh al-Dustūr, ibid., Article 4.
- 151- Fī Sabīl al-Ba`th, ibid., p. 89.
- 152- Ibid., p. 1021.
- 153- Ibid., pp. 90, 107.
- 154- al-Tamīmī, ibid.
- 155- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels, Selected Works, Moscow, 1951, 1, p. 45.

- 156- Fī Sabīl al-Ba`th, ibid., p. 87.
- 157- Sharḥ al-Dustūr, ibid., Article 4.
- 158- Fī Sabīl al-Ba`th, ibid., p. 126.
- 159- Ibid., pp. 176-180.
- 160- Ibid., pp. 92, 101, 103, 145.
- 161- Ibid., p. 178.
- 162- Ibid., pp. 102, 146, 147.
- 163- Ibid., pp. 64, 116, 125.
- 164- Ibid., pp. 18, 33, 116, 119, 120.
- 165- A speech made by Michel `Aflaq during the visit of some Lebanese Ba`thists to the headquarters of the Party in Damascus on 10 April 1955.
- 166- al-Razzāz, ibid., pp 29-32.
- 167- Khaddūrī, Majīd, `Arab Mu`āṣirūn (Contemporary Arabs), p. 378.
- 168- Nidāl al-Ba`th: 1, pp. 292-297

- 169- The reasons for which `Aflaq criticised Ḥusnī al-Za`īm and his coup, after first supporting it, are outlined and discussed in the second part of this chapter.
- 170- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 55.
- 171- The letter was published by most Syrian newspapers and the text was reprinted in *al-Akḥbār*, Beirut, 17 February 1963.
- 172- al-Jundī, *ibid.*, p. 54.
- 173- al-Sayyid, *ibid.*, p. 62.
- 174- al-Khalīl, Samīr, *ibid.*, p. 225.
- 175- Nāṣir published a clear statement of his views in the *Middle East Mirror*, 21 May 1955, p. 2.
- 176- al-Razzāz, *ibid.*, pp. 709-71.
- 177- Dandishlī, *ibid.*, Note (2), p. 368.
- 178- *Ibid.*
- 179- Azmat al-Ba`th al-`Arabī al-Ishtirākī min Khilāl Tajribatihi fī al-`Irāq (The Crisis of the Arab Socialist Resurrection Party in Light of its



Experiment in Iraq), Beirut, 1964, p. 49; listed on p. 120 are the names of some of those rightists in the Military Bureau, including Ṭāhir Yaḥya, Ḥardān al-Tikrītī and Rashīd Muṣlih.

180- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 273.

181- al-`Alawī, *ibid.*, p. 29.

182- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 187.

183- Niḍāl al-Ba`th: 9, *ibid.*, p. 214.

184- al-Sayyid, *ibid.*, pp. 138-140.

185- The letter of resignation was published in a Beirut newspaper and also in the annual book of *al-Nahār*, 1967, p. 312.

186- al-Razzāz, *ibid.*, p. 110.

187- See al-Bayṭār's articles such as "Syria is critically ill and going through ordeal and tragedy" and "The question of the moment: what is the alternative?", *al-Iḥyā' al-`Arabī*, May 1980, Nos. 15, 16.

188- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 285.

189- *Ibid.*, p. 224.

- 190- al-Jundī, p. 162.
- 191- Most Beirut newspapers covered the conference; for instance, an article entitled "al-Rikābī" in *Sawt al-`Urūba* on 25 June 1961 exposes the plots of the Ba`thist leadership. For accusations against al-Rikābī see Nidāl al-Ba`th, *ibid.*, pp. 127-141.
- 192- Nidāl al-Ba`th: 9, *ibid.*, p. 213.
- 193- al-Razzāz, *ibid.*, p. 227.
- 194- *Middle East Record*, 1960, pp. 462-498.
- 195- al-Mawsū`ah al-Siyāsiyyah, No.3, p. 850.
- 196- *Ibid.*, mentioned the departure of Dr al-Kayyālī from the Ba`th Party.
- 197- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 297; Damascus radio broadcast the resolutions of the conference on 4 May 1965.
- 198- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 302.
- 199- al-Razzāz, *ibid.*, p. 59.
- 200- *Ibid.*, p. 63.

201- Ibid., p. 8.

202- Ibid., p. 9.

203- The achievements of the July revolution constituted a severe blow to western interests in the area. These achievements included:

(a) Withdrawal of Iraq from the Sterling Area (see text of the joint declaration of representatives of the Iraqi and British Governments, *Iraqi Gazette*, No 188, 23 June 1959.

(b) Liberation of Iraqi oil resources from the monopoly of foreign companies, see *Iraqi Gazette*, No 1, 23 July 1958, p. 4.

(c) Withdrawal of Iraq from the Baghdad Pact and the liberation of Iraq from foreign, especially British, control and influence. The Iraqi Foreign Office issued the text of the Iraqi Government's decision to withdraw from the Baghdad Pact on 24 March 1959 and the text was communicated by the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Hāshim Jawād, to the Ambassadors of Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and the UK.

(d) Conclusion of military, economic and commercial agreements with the Socialist camp and with neutral states to break the monopoly of Western countries on

Iraq's trade and defence requirements. Ibrāhīm Kūba,  
This is the Road of 14 July, Beirut, 1969, p. 73.

204- Speech by Qāsim on 2 March 1959 on the help which Iraq gave to the Algerian revolution.

205- *al-Dustūr* published letters exchanged between Washington and Riyādh in 1969.

206- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 187.

207- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 967.

208- *al-Razzāz*, *ibid.*, p. 89.

Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 192.

209- Batātū said that the immediate task that the Military Bureau set for itself was not so much the widening of the foothold of the Ba`th in the army as the winning over to the idea of a coup of the chief officers of important striking units; see Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 970.

210- Batātū, p. 969.

211- *Ibid.*

212- Muhādathāt al-Wahdah (Unity Talks), *ibid.*



- 213- al-`Arīf, Ismā`īl, "Memoirs", *al-Khalīj*, 15 December 1985. According to Kadourie, Nāḍim al-Ṭabachlī and `Abd al-Wahāb al-Shawwāf sent secret emissaries to `Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Saraj (Nāṣir's representative in Syria) and al-Saraj promised to send a radio station as well as military equipment; see Kadourie, Republican Iraq, *ibid.*, footnote (56), p. 157.
- 214- Dandishlī, *ibid.*, p. 244.
- 215- al-Zubaydī, Layth `Abd al-Ḥasan, Thawrat 14 Tammūz 1958 fi al-`Irāq (The Revolution of 14 July 1958 in Iraq), Baghdad, Second edition, 1981, p. 430.
- 216- al-Kubaysī, Bāsil, Harakat al-Qawmiyyah al-`Arabiyyah (Arab Nationalist Movements), Beirut, 1974, p. 79.
- 217- Office of National Culture, Political Parties in Iraq, pp. 61-106.
- 218- al-Zubaydī, *ibid.*, pp. 428-430.
- 219- For further information on the formation of the National Front in Iraq, see Shanshal, Moḥammad Sādiq, "Memoirs", No.7, *al-Taḍhaniyyah*, No. 35, 10 December 1985.
- 220- East Berlin Radio declared on 23 June 1962 that, in attacking the Kurds, Qāsim showed a lack of political

wisdom and began to broadcast Communist propaganda in support of the Kurdish mutiny.

221- "On the Conditions Prevailing in Kurdistan", Communist Party statement, 22 August 1961.

222- See Menachem Begin's admission on the Israeli Home Service, 29 September 1980 and BBC Summary of World Broadcasts ME/16537, October, 1980.

Kissinger, H., Years of Upheaval, New York and London, 1982, p. 941.

223- Jawād, Nājī Sa'īd, al-'Irāq wa al-Mas'alah al-Kurdiyyah (Iraq and the Kurdish Question), London, 1990, p.95.

al-Zubaydī, *ibid*, 432.

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225- Trevelyan, Humphrey, The Middle East in Revolution, Macmillan, London, 1970, p. 203.

226- al-'Arīf, Ismā'īl, *ibid.*, 29 December 1985.

227- Fawzī, Aḥmad, al-Qiṣṣah al-Kāmilah li 'Abd al-Karīm Qāsim (The Complete Story of 'Abd al-Karīm Qāsim), Cairo, 1963, pp. 182 - 195.

Mushtāq, Ṭālib, *ibid.*, pp. 348-349.

al-Durrah, Maḥmūd, al-Qaḍiyyah al-Kurdiyyah, al-Qawmiyyah al-`Arabiyyah fi Ma`rakat al-`Irāq (The Kurdish Question, Arab Nationalism in the Battle of Iraq), Beirut, 1963, pp. 171-172.

228- *al-Qabas* published the British Foreign Office documents on 2 January 1994.

229- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Iraq, Facts about the Iraq-Iran and Iraq-Turkey borders, undated.

230- Batātū, *ibid.*, p.986.

231- *al-Ahrām*, Cairo, 27 September 1963.

232- Penrose, *ibid.*, p. 288.

233- Ṣafwat, Najdat Fathī, *ibid.*, p. 261.

234- *Ibid.*, Footnote (228).

235- Niḍāl al-Ba`th (communiqués of its national leadership), 1963 - 1966, p. 159.

236- Baḥrī, Yūnis, Thawrat 14 Ramaḍān al-Mubārakah (The Revolution of 14 Ramadam), Beirut, 1963, pp. 89-150.

- 237- Penrose, *ibid.*, p. 299.
- 238- Torrey, Gordon H., Syrian Political and the Military 1945-58, Columbus, Ohio, 1964, pp. 350-355.
- Seale, P., pp. 238-46.
- 239- Rabinovitch, Syria Under the Ba`th, 1963-1966, Jerusalem, 1972, pp. 42 - 46, 57 - 66.
- 240- Zahr al-Dīn, `Abd al-Karīm, Mudhakkarati an fatrat al-infisal fi Surriya ( my memoirs of the separatist period in Syria), Beirut, 1968, p.200.
- 241- Tripartite unity talks in Cairo, *ibid.*
- 242- Seale, P., Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East, 1989, p. 74.
- 243- For an account of Nāsir's early readiness to negotiate, see R. Gideon, Destination Peace, London, 1981, pp. 36ff.
- 244- Seale, *ibid.*, Chapter 10.
- 245- Carre, Olivier, Le Mouvement Idéologique, Paris, 1980, pp. 185-224.



- 246- Arab Report and Record, 17 April, 12 August, 9 September and 1 October 1973.
- 247- Bahrī, Yūnis, *ibid.*, p. 106.
- 248- With regard to his backing of the Palestinian guerrillas, Asad, in an interview with British writer Patrick Seale in Damascus on 12 May 1985, declared that " ... it was in Syria that the lungs of the Resistance were filled with oxygen." Quoted in Seale, *ibid.*, p. 124. See also the PLO representative, Shafīq al-Hūt's interview with Seale in Beirut on 15 February 1987.
- 249- Nāsir fell into the trap laid for him by the Ba`thists in Syria; his reputation would not have survived intact if he had ignored the Israeli threat to Syria and Jordan and had not contributed to the imminent battle. See Robert Stephen, Nāsir, London, 1971, 1973, p. 506.
- 250- Kissinger, Henry, White House Years, Boston, 1979, p. 618.
- 251- Rabin, Ishaq, Memoirs, London, 1979, p. 90.
- 252- Seale, *ibid.*, p. 143.

- 253- Penrose, E.F., "Une Année de coups d'état", in *Orient Magazine*, No.8, 1993, p. 25.
- 254- al-`Aysamī, Shiblī, Hizb al-Ba`th al-`Arabī al-Ishtirākī, Marḥalat al-Arba`īnāt al-Ta'sīsiyyah 1940-1949 (Arab Ba`th Socialist Party - the Forties, 1940-44), Beirut, second edition, 1975, p. 31.
- 255- Seale, *ibid.*, p. 205, (footnote II in the Arabic translation). See also "Waḥda, Ḥuriyyah, Ishtirākiyyah" (Unity, Liberty and Socialism), in Niḍāl al-Ba`th, Party documents since 1942, Part One, 1963.
- 256- Sādiq, Muḥammad, Hiwār Hawla Sūriyyah, London, 1993.
- 257- *Middle East Economic Survey*, 25 July 1975, indicates that 90% of Iraq's industrial projects were awarded to Western firms, compared with 19% during Qāsim's time.

For more information on this point refer to:

Directorate General of Industrial Planning, The Industrial Sector of the Economy of Iraq, Baghdad, June, 1964 as well as Penrose, *ibid.*, Chapter 18

- 258- Seale, *ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

Kerr, M.H., The Arab Cold War, London, 1965, chapter 3 and pp. 68-76.

- 259- Tripartite unity talks in Cairo, *ibid*.
- 260- al-Atasī, Jamāl, Fi al-Fikr al-Siyāsī (Political Thoughts), Damascus, 1963, p. 153.
- 261- A leading Jordanian member of the Ba`th leadership, Dr Munīf Al-Razzāz, a close aide to `Aflaq and a fellow Christian, admitted the inflexible orientation of the Syrian Ba`thists towards Fascism, Nazism and Stalinism. Al-Razzāz was later liquidated by Saddam in Iraq.
- 262- The Ba`th leadership routinely blames others for its failures. Asad blamed Ṣalāh Jadīd and Hātūm for Syria's 1967 defeat, even though Asad himself was the Commander-in-Chief and Minister of Defence. Saddam went even further than Asad; he blamed Ḥarḍān al-Tikrītī for failing to come to the help of the Palestinians when they were liquidated by King Hussein in 1970, Kẓar for the murders between 1968 and 1973, most of his colleagues for the failure of the proposed unity with Syria in 1979, Saudi Arabia for the war with Iran and Kuwait for the Iraqi invasion in 1990.
- 263- Tāqī, Sharaf al-Dīn, Ḥaqā'iq `an al-Tā'ifa al-Nuṣayriyyah fī Sūriyah (Truths on the Nusayri Sect in

Syria), Beirut, 1983. See also several issues of *al-Naḍhir* (opposition paper published by the Muslim Brothers in Syria) and Qaḥṭān `Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dūrī et al., al-Nuṣayriyyah Harakah Haḍmiyyah (Nuṣayriyyah, a Destructive Movement), Baghdad, 1986.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE BA`TH PARTY IN IRAQ**

## The Foundation of the Ba`th Party in Iraq

In the last chapter the Ba`th Arab Socialist Party has been discussed briefly in general. To complete the picture, it will be necessary to add more details about the Party through out assessment of it in Iraq.

The Ba`th came to life in Iraq at a time when Iraq was moving increasingly towards change because of the following factors:

- (1) The poor living conditions of the majority of the people, owing to crude economic exploitation, leading to an excessive rise in the cost of living. This was particularly true because of the inflation of the Second World War. At the same time the privileged class in society, represented by the Government, its narrow circle of officials and its supporters, the senior officers (with Ottoman upbringing), the merchants, bureaucrats, sheikhs and mallāks, enjoyed a good time and held the upper hand.
- (2) The British 1930 Treaty, which obliged the Iraqis to accept the British as their overlords.(1)
- (3) The Portsmouth Agreement, signed in January 1948, which tied Iraq to Britain more than the 1930 Treaty had done.(2) It was abrogated, owing to the widespread uprising and bloody events (mostly due to communist influence), called *al-wathbāh* following this Treaty.(3)

- (4) The Palestine crisis. All political life in the Middle East was soured by the consequences of the Zionist invasion, which established the State of Israel in Palestine; this was encouraged and supported by foreign powers. Arab failure in the war to restrain Israel caused embarrassment, widespread unrest and violent opposition to those governments which had supported it. This event aroused further strong anti-British and anti-Government feeling in the Arab East, particularly in Iraq, where Britain and its ally al-Sa'id government were regarded as the leading culprits.
- (5) Political movements which represented the middle classes, such as the National Democrats, the Liberals and the Independents. These were running mainly for political gain, rather than for mass satisfaction.
- (6) The appearance of the Communist Party in the political arena in the forties and fifties. This brought widespread, suppressed resentment into open action against the monarchy and their British advisers. The Communists re-educated Iraqi thought about poverty and wealth, which people had previously accepted as ordained by fate, according to their religious beliefs. The Communists concentrated their efforts in particular in the intellectual field, which was barren, due to the political underdevelopment of society. This was so because the Government was afraid of freedom of thought and did not introduce any political programmes into

schools or colleges; these might have raised questions about the foundations of society and, thus, the possibility of rejecting the status quo. As a result of political repression and subservience to British, there was an insurrection in 1948 *al-wathbāh*, and demonstrations in 1952 *al-Intifāḍah*. Then came the flood-tide of discontent against the series of military and security pacts and treaties in the period between 1954 to 1955, which culminated in the political military pact between Iraq, on the one hand, and Britain, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and the USA, on the other. In addition, regional events contributed to increased internal incidents in Iraq, like the nationalisation of Iranian oil in 1951, which gave the Iraqis the incentive to make similar demands for their national wealth.

- (7) The emergence of Nasirism and its political system, which was a mixture of socialist ideology, and in which the administration was dominated by military officers, directed by a single dictator. Nasir was introduced to Egypt as the leader of the progressive Arab world, the model leader of a new kind of pan-Arabism which soon became popular throughout the area. So a new kind of doctrinal dispute was created in Middle Eastern politics. Both internal and external policies adopted by Nasir raised his prestige and, in particular, appealed greatly to the Iraqis. These were disappointed with their reactionary government, which they felt merely served the interests of feudal landlords, rich merchants and imperialists, at the expense of Iraq and Iraqi



interests. This strong new current of feeling put Nūrī al-Sa`īd's government and its associates at home and abroad under increasing attack. It came at a time when Nūrī had committed Iraq to the Baghdad Pact and so did not react strongly enough on the Suez crisis; this outraged Iraqi feeling, causing anti-government riots and demonstrations in many Iraqi cities in support of Egypt.

In these troubled years on both a national and a regional level, with violent opposition to puppet governments and their foreign policy in the Arab East, Ba`th ideas began to come to life in Iraq. It seems, as appeared later, that it was a scenario for containing the gigantic storm, that had slowly been gathering over the years and had almost reached breaking point, for replacing the current formulae and for thwarting Western plans. This new current of pan-Arabism, socialism, unity, neutralism and anti-imperialism, which was greatly encouraged by Nasir (under American direction, as noted before) and adopted by the Ba`th Party, as their slogans reveal, achieved foreign plans for the whole region, as events were to prove later.

However, the new Ba`th organisation used this restless political mood to promote its appearance in the political field, as a Baghdad newspaper mentioned at the time.(4) In the beginning, it was no more than an aggregate, which was basically of a preparatory nature and largely confined to the propagation of ideas by painting them on the walls of cities from time to time, as Devlin notes.(5) There is a difference

of opinion among sources as to when Ba`thist ideas first appeared in Iraq. One gives the first half of 1949.(6) Another thinks it was the beginning of 1951.(7) Ba`thist sources cite the year 1947 as the date for the formation of the first Ba`thist cell in Iraq,(8) while the official Party organ gives the years between 1949 and 1951.(9) However it is evident from the above that the first Ba`thist cell in Iraq was organised around the end of the forties and the beginning of the fifties. This was due, in some way, to the initiative of a few students and teachers from Damascus and Beirut, who came to study and teach at Baghdad's universities and colleges. Additionally, some Iraqi students studied at Syrian and Lebanese universities and were influenced by Ba`thist doctrines, like `Izzat Muṣṭafā, who studied medicine in Syria, and Sa`dūn Ḥammādī, who studied at the American University of Beirut.(10)

The students constituted the backbone of the Party, as in the parent Ba`th Party in Syria and other branches in Lebanon and Jordan. It was, in the main, an extremely young party, of students and junior officials. Although it tried to broaden its base and claimed to have representatives of the peasants and the workers, the proportion of these in its ranks was always small.(11) The new Ba`th organisation gradually extended its influence to other parts of the country, particularly the south, as many Baghdad students who had joined the Party were originally from there and, indeed, the leader who took the helm of the Party for the first eight years was from Nāṣiriyyah. The first Ba`thist organiser was the Syrian Fā'iz 'Ismā'il. After his return to Syria in 1950,



`Abd al-Rahmān al-Dāym from Basrah became the leader of the new-born organisation. In 1951 the leadership passed to Fu`ād al-Rikābī, who joined the Party in 1950. This sudden promotion came under suspicion. Some put it down to al-Rikābī's ability to organise and attract supporters.(12) In 1952 the Party was recognised as a constituent branch by the national command in Syria and in 1954 it adopted internal rules. Thus the structure of the organisation came into existence.(13) Under al-Rikābī's leadership the Party's numbers and supporters somehow increased. Most of them were his friends and relatives. The parent Ba`th Party in Damascus had been built up on the same basis. Members were connected to each other by a common sectarian, regional or tribal background, rather than by ideological principles. This shows, as the Ba`th has proved in practice, that recruitment relied on family and social relationships, rather than on ideology. This phenomenon subsequently led to negative consequences when the Ba`th gained power in Iraq and Syria and caused a serious power struggle, as the Ba`th Party admitted in its official report:

**"... the weakness of objective relationships within the Party, whether between members or in the (Party) organisation, has most negative and dangerous consequences for its organisational cohesion, for its capacity for unity and action and for its homogeneous development. These ineffectual relations are manifested in the lack of comradeship shown by the members, the presence of personal relationships, rather than Party**

relationships, and the division of loyalty between the organisation and the blocs that exist in the Party. The result of all this is that the Party is threatened by the infiltration into its midst of the disorders of bourgeois, feudal, tribal and sectarian realities." (14)

However, the distinctive character of the Party in Iraq, prior to 1963, was that the majority, both of members and of officials, were Shi'ites. Batatu notes that this phenomenon may be explained by the fact that the majority of the Shi'ite sect were deprived under the monarchy. (15) As indicated previously, the Ba'th Party was founded by a group of non-Muslims, primarily Christians, but also Druzes and Alawites, who thought that pan-Arabism would achieve the interests of non-Muslim minorities in two ways. First, these minorities would not be second-class citizens any more, but the real intellectual powerhouse in the Arab world, and even the ultimate political leadership, as 'Aflaq, in fact, did become. Secondly, it would a way with Islam, politically at least, and tie the Arab world to the Western world, which was nominally, co-religionist with the Syrian Christians.

Anyhow, Ba'thism was not imported into Iraq by Iraqi Christians. On the contrary, they were fervent Marxists. It was brought by Muslim Shi'ites, who represented more than half of Iraq's population. The Ba'th Party, until November 1963, had more Shi'i members than Sunni ones. After this the Shi'is left the Party, which was subsequently taken over by the Sunnis, who were primarily Tikritis and others coming from



the north western Sunni part of Iraq. One may argue that the Ba`th Party was seen by the Iraqi Shi`ites as a convenient vehicle for them to affirm their Arabness and take the leading role in Iraq, a role that they were deprived of during the monarchy when only four of the many prime ministers were Shi`ah.(16) It is ironic that it was only Qāsim who was prepared to award the Shi`ah equal treatment with the Sunnah, something neither the monarchy nor later republican regimes were ready to do -yet it was the Ba`th Party who murdered Qāsim. It can be clearly observed from the composition of the Ba`th Party in Iraq, as well as in other regions, that the leaders were drawn predominantly from minority sects and religions and from the underprivileged. According to Ba`thist doctrine the minority ruled the majority, as noted in Chapter One.

Despite the fact that the Ba`th Party was known as the party of educated people, the organisation in Iraq could not issue its clandestine newspaper until 1953,(17) because of their intellectual bankruptcy and organisational inefficiency. Another feature of note which distinguished the clandestine newspaper is that it continued to change its name. The first two issues in October 1953 were called *al-Arabī al-Jadīd* then the next issue was called *al-'Ishtirākī*..(18) In 1958 the name was changed to *wa'y al-Ṭalī'ah* and then three issues were published in 1960 entitled *Ḥizb al-Jamāhīr*. It then ceased publication, although it was succeeded by the internal Party magazine, entitled *al-Thawrah al-Arabiyyah*. This phenomenon may be explained by the suggestion

that the Ba`thists felt that they could benefit by reflecting the prevailing political atmosphere.

In the beginning, as Batātū notes, the Ba`thists were known as "the League of Nationalist Youth"(20) and issued their first publication over the signature of the "Arab University Youth In Iraq".(21)

## Ba`th activities throughout the Monarchy

With regard to Ba`th activities in the political field in Iraq in its early years, the objective situation was favourable to it at the beginning of the 1950s, for the following reasons:

- (1) The Communist Party adopted an extreme line from the beginning of 1951 with regard to its relations with other opposition parties. The national bourgeoisie became more reactionary, lost its links with the people and became the main enemy of the liberation movement, so they placed them in the imperialist camp. This attitude was adopted in Syria, as well, by Khālīd Bīkdāsh, (22) and by other Communists in the Arab east. The strict ideological direction of the Communists seems to have been dependent on Soviet policy, (23) since this action was inappropriate to the political situation of that period. It was induced by the predilection of Iraqis to go to extremes in all things they get involved in, and it revealed the low political level of the Communist leadership in the Arab east; it left the Communists isolated and offered little scope for political manoeuvring. They could not attract the other opposition parties to create a front against western designs.
- (2) The suppression of the Communists changed the balance of the local forces in favour of the monarchy, which enabled it to prevent any proper opposition to the regime, and to paralyse political forces.



(3) Nasir accelerated the Suez crisis with his purchase of arms from the Soviet bloc and the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, which resulted in the tripartite attack on Egypt by Britain, France and Israel. This increased his prestige, as did his pan-Arabism and his neutral policy, which relied on a defence strategy based solely on collective Arab security throughout the Middle East. This policy, which was keenly adopted by the Ba`thists, mostly attracted the nationalists in Iraq, (24) while it was opposed by the Communists who wanted an alliance with the socialist Bloc and its leader, the Soviet Union. The Communists regarded neutralism and the "third force Bloc" as an attempt to cover up opening links with foreign imperialism. (25)

(4) The monarchy used special tactics to infiltrate political organisations, particularly the Communist Party, (26) in order to contain the acute popular dissatisfaction with its pro-western policy, which was reinforced by the course of international events. It is likely that the monarchy's security police used the newcomer to the Iraqi scene, the Ba`th Party.

The following evidence supports this suggestion:

(a) Batātū notes that the Ba`th Party in that period (the first half of the 1950s) was the only active opposition party. (27)



(b) Devlin notes that the Ba`th Party received far gentler treatment than the Communists during that period.(28)

(c) The Ba`th Party itself admitted in its literature that it organised the whole of the struggle against Western plans on its own, because it was alone in the political field.(29)

(d) Since the Ba`th Party was a secret organisation, it was able to diffuse itself in society as informers for the security Forces.

However, even though this situation helped the Ba`th Party to promote its appearance on the political scene and to increase its numbers in its early years, the Communists continued to have a greater influence on the streets, and the Ba`thists did not amount to much until after 1958.(30)

Thus, the Ba`th Party exploited the political mood of the 1950s in Iraq and the Middle East in general to its benefit. Feelings against the old pro-western politicians, who controlled power in most Middle Eastern countries and who relied on their western ties to develop their countries, were extremely high. The younger generation wanted complete independence from the west and its military arrangements, which implicated the area in the Cold War conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. In Iraq the struggle was very obvious, owing to the monarchy's internal repression and its visible involvement in foreign affairs. Its failure

to react strongly over the Suez affair (as noted above), which outraged the feelings of many in Iraq, put the monarchy in a critical position; the entire country feeling restless and riotous. Indeed, the most damaging element which confronted the monarchy with a crisis almost as severe as the one threatened by the Iraqi Communists, was the propaganda campaign broadcast by the Voice of the Arabs in Cairo.(31)

However, as far as the Ba`th Party was concerned in those turbulent years, there is evidence that it collaborated with the Communists in the demonstrations and riots of 1952, known as the *Intifāḍah*.(32) The *Intifāḍah* came to nothing and the regime declared martial law to maintain order. The political situation called for a new defence arrangement and, more importantly, following Stalin's death, the Communists altered their tactics in their anti-bourgeois stance.(33) In Iraq they did not have the same flexibility in their attitude as the Syrian communists, or any other Middle Eastern Communists. They continued with their struggle and daily clashes with the monarchy and challenged all the other opposition groups who participated in the parliamentary election of June 1954, which was regarded as one of the most free in Iraqi history. The National Democrats and the Independence Party participated in this election. On 12 May they agreed to enter into a national front with some individual Communists, workers, peasants, students, lawyers and physicians. The Ba`th Party did not enter into this front under the pretext that it was preparing for the Second National Congress, which was more important for it than the parliamentary election, as Devlin notes.(34) It seems that



the main reason was that, despite the manipulation of the electoral procedure and Nūrī's success, the election was not in favour of Nūrī's regime. It set the stage for the rebirth of the legal opposition, and al-Sa'id would not accept a parliament that included even Communist sympathisers.(35) However, the Communists did not change their line until the dissolution of the parliament and the formation of the National Front, which was suppressed by Nūrī. A series of harsh decrees was designed to put an end to any kind of open political activity, particularly communist, which, however, the government was unable completely to stop,(36) in order to pass the Baghdad Pact legislation through Parliament unopposed. It is ironic that Nūrī al-Sa'id's regime became so fervently anti-Communist, while, during the Second World War, his British masters established the Freedom Club in Baghdad, of which leading members of the Communist Party and Nūrī's regime were founders. Of course, the Iraqi Communists, who were totally subservient to Stalin, were ordered by Soviet military intelligence to co-operate with military intelligence in hunting down pan-Arabists who were sympathisers with Nazi Germany.

Eventually the Communists relinquished their domineering and over-confident attitude, after they realised how inappropriate their policy was. It was pursued without consideration of the weighty facts of the political situation in Iraq. They had to come to terms with other opposition parties in the face of what it necessarily implied to hinder the regime and western plans.(37) The Communists and other opposition groups were in a state of paralysis, enabling

Nūrī's regime to conclude the Baghdad Pact and, more importantly, to ride out the Suez affair, which came later. The Ba`th Party used this situation to try to generate an anti-western campaign against the collective defence arrangements, the Baghdad Pact, (38) and the Suez crisis in particular. (39)

The Ba`thist role in these events seems exaggerated. The communists held the upper hand in the streets, despite the ruthlessness with which they were treated by the monarchy's security police. The consequences of the regime's failure in foreign and domestic policy, the Suez crisis and the Soviet positive reassessment of nationalist revolutionary movements, (40) such as Nasir's, and the crucial shifting of the Iraqi middle classes against the regime, made it possible to smooth the way for joint action against the regime. This first took the form of the National Front, which was established in February 1957 between the four Iraqi parties, the two democratic ones, i.e. the National Democratic Party and the Independence Party, and the two revolutionary ones, i.e. the Communists and the Ba`thists. The programme of the National Front was issued on 9 March 1957 from the secret printing press of the Iraqi Communist Party. (41) The Front played a prominent role in creating the circumstances that led to the Revolution of 14 July 1958, in particular after building a link with some opposition elements in the army known as "the free officers" (42) who succeeded in bringing down the Monarchy.



## Activities of the Ba`th throughout the Qāsim regime

It is impossible to assess Ba`thist activities during this period without taking into consideration the intra-regional and external conditions in and before 1958 which led to the July Revolution, as well as the actions which were taken almost immediately by the Revolution and threatened forces inside and outside Iraq.

The complication of the regional and international political situation after the Second World War, which was noted in the last chapter, led to many political developments, such as the struggle between Britain and America for influence; the Cold War between the East and the West; the upsurge of democratic principles provoked by the allies during their fight against Nazism; the spread of rebellion in the Middle East, and the vast increase in the return from the oil industry in the occupied territories, which caused a huge increase in consumption and a widening of the gap between the rich and the rest of society. All these developments emphasised the need for social changes. This, in turn, pressurised colonialist states to give some democratic freedom to their dependencies, including freedom to found political parties.

In the absence of bourgeois democratic parties to express the hopes of the biggest segment of society, communist parties sprung up. To a large degree this was because they were founded on the need to bring about

revolutionary democratic changes. These parties began to put rulers under pressure to prevent foreign monopolies making military treaties, especially after the declaration of the Iranian Prime Minister, Dr Muşdiq, on 15 March 1951, of the nationalisation of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, which was owned by British interests.(43)

It was essential for the West, particularly America, to avoid the loss of these strategic areas and even more essential to prevent their forming alliances with their enemies. On the other hand, as mentioned above, a power struggle began to develop between the British and the Americans.(44) Because of these two factors various coups were engineered.

America refused to sell weapons to Nasir because of its pro-Israel policy and its wish to ensure Israel's superiority. Nasir, therefore, changed his allegiance from the west to socialism, taking Syria with him to form the United Arab Republic (UAR). It has been admitted by the CIA that their policies failed and that they lost Egypt and Syria by causing them to switch to the communist side and the Soviet military machine, which would be used against Israel.(45) However, whether it was with America's or the Soviets' help, Jamal `Abd al-Nasir was able to become a hero and a leader for the Arab world. He was a strong nationalist with a charismatic personality, who took a stand against the West and its plots.(46) The events which took place in Egypt caused a strong wave of resentment in the Arab World, especially Iraq, against the west and their military

treaties. Thus, a group of patriotic Iraqi officers, calling themselves the Free Officers' Movement, started to prepare a plan to terminate the Monarchy. This plan was supported by the UAR. According to some sources, (47) the Commander in Chief of the Syrian Army began to negotiate with the Iraqi Free Officers about the possibility of arming a revolution in Iraq. Ḥusayn Jamīl was the representative of the Free Officers in consultations with Jamal `Abd al-Nasir about his attitude towards the overthrow of the Monarchy. He answered that the west regarded its interests in Iraq as more important than the Royal family and that he would back the revolution with any required aid. (48)

Nasir was especially interested in a revolution in Iraq because he suspected Nūrī al-Sa`īd of conspiring with the US and Britain to overthrow the Syrian regime. When the revolution started he was the first to recognise it and announced that any aggression against Iraq would be regarded as aggression against the UAR, which had excellent relations with the Soviet Union. The second to recognise the July Revolution was Khrushchev, who sent letters to Harold Macmillan, the British Prime Minister, and Eisenhower, the President of the United States, warning them of the consequences of intervening against the revolution in Iraq. (49)

But in his The Strategy and Tactics in the Soviet Foreign Policy, Macintosh writes:



**"....all the evidence suggests that the July Revolution in Iraq was a surprise, not only for the Western Secret Services, but even to the Soviet Union and the United Arab Republic." (50)**

Many documents and quotations show that `Abd al-Karīm Qāsim had no connections with any Western or Eastern Powers and was hoping for an independent policy for Iraq. This is suggested in Foreign Minister Hāshim Jawād's speech:

**"....our policy is not Eastern or Western." (51)**

With regard to the attitude of the Ba`th, in the beginning they supported the 14 July Revolution. The Ba`th gained one post in its first cabinet, Minister of Development, held by the Regional Secretary, Fu`ād al-Rikābī. Many other elements far better known than al-Rikābī for their opposition to the old regime, or their participation in the Revolution, were excluded. The reason for this is still unclear.(52) However, the alliance of forces which the National Front reflected and had largely met on the common ground of enmity to the Monarchy and the west, particularly between the Ba`thists and the communists, did not last long.(53) It changed soon after the Revolution to a tragic conflict between them and allowed the Ba`thists to rise to great prominence in Qāsim's time.

It seems that this change in the Ba`thists' attitude towards the 14 July Revolution resulted from the reaction of



the west and their allies in the region against the Revolution, as follows:

- (1) Britain was stunned and the cabinet was convened three times in twenty-four hours. NATO Council meetings were held on 15-16 July. The British Foreign Office asked its Ambassador to Iraq to meet Qāsim in order to discover the intentions of the new Iraqi government. He did so on the first day of the Revolution and sent back a report to the Foreign Office in which he assured his Government that the new system was concerned only with internal reforms and had nothing to do with any ideologies, such as Arab Unity or Communism. The Foreign Office then wrote a report to this effect to the Prime Minister, entitled The Revolution in Iraq. (54)
- (2) In Washington the surprise was even greater and the CIA itself admitted its failure to predict the revolution, being busy at the time with Britain assembling an Iraqi force on the Syrian border in an attempt to organise a coup in Syria. The Free Officers managed to stage their coup in Baghdad and bring western control in Iraq to an end. (55)

The July Revolution was a reformist one, which led to important social and economic changes. The new agricultural reform law affected the political influence of the landowner classes and the bourgeoisie. Housing problems were made easier by building houses for the poorer classes. The Resources Law and Iraq's withdrawal from the Sterling Area

were basic to her economic and financial independence. Other developments were the withdrawal from the Raceme Union and the Baghdad Pact, (56) the establishment of diplomatic relations with the socialist countries, the recognition of the People's Republic of China, and the signing of treaties of economic and technical co-operation with non-aligned countries. The most important was Oil Law Number 80, which took back 90.5% of the non-exploited lands given previously to the oil companies. (57)

These achievements were a great shock to the political balance of that time. They affected international oil and financial markets. It was obvious that a challenge like Qāsim's would not pass easily. The echoes of the July revolution went too far. The CENTO Pact was in great disarray and Great Britain had fears of losing her influence over an entire region, especially after Qāsim's demand for the annexation of Kuwait. (58)

In April 1959 in Washington, the CIA chief, Alan Dulles announced:

**" .... The situation in Iraq is the most dangerous in today's world." (59)**

However, with regard to the activities of the Ba`th throughout Qāsim's time - a time which the Americans regarded as the most dangerous in the world - they erupted more than once in violent clashes and led to a number of serious

political results on the domestic front and abroad, as follows:

- (1) Early disunity developed between the two prominent figures of the Revolution, Qāsim and `Ārif, about the issue of Arab Union.(60) The Ba`thists took the opportunity to deepen the differences. In the first week of the 14 July Revolution, the branch of the Ba`th Party in Iraq raised the question of unity with the UAR. The Secretary General, Michel `Aflaq, personally came to Iraq and launched a campaign on behalf of pan-Arabism.(61) `Aflaq used `Ārif for his own motives, without any approval from the new government, to bring up the question of unity with the UAR on the very next day after the Revolution, when he met Nasir in Damascus on his way back from Moscow.(62) `Ārif's enthusiasm for pan-Arabism was largely encouraged by the Ba`th Party in Iraq. He was pushed to consider uniting Iraq with the UAR, which was not to the liking of Qāsim and his desire to keep Iraq's policies independent from Nasir's influence. Widespread fear was aroused among Iraq's mixture of ethnic and religious groups because the change in the status quo would have affected their survival as an effective force. The Iraqi army was also concerned about the way in which the Egyptian and Syrian armies had united. There was also concern that parties and social organisations might be disbanded and freedom of thought prevented. Co-operation between the Iraqi and Egyptian economies would undoubtedly set back Iraqi economic development. Thus, the project of unity with



the UAR had strong opponents inside Iraq, particularly from the communists.(63)

That was the beginning of the disagreement between Qāsim and Nasir, which led to hostilities used by the west to separate the Arabs and hit the real nationalist movements. Nationalism and Arab unity were just tactical ideas for `Aflaq and his Party and had never been a strategic political choice. This is why they did not do anything for Arab unity when they came to power, but became its sworn enemies and even hostile to Nasir.(64)

However, events ended in defeat for `Ārif and the pan-Arab movement after a rapid series of incidents, such as the removal of `Ārif from all his jobs; the uncovering of the conspiracy led by Rashīd `Ālī al-Gaylānī; the resignation of the pan-Arabist ministers from Qāsim's cabinet in February 1959; the failure of the al-Shawāf military coup in March 1959; the massacre of non-Communists in Kirkūk in July 1959 and the failure of the attempt on Qāsim's life in October 1959.

- (2) Setbacks to progress in the field of civil and political liberties led Qāsim to take power into his hands to maintain control. He did not show any interest in the development of political parties or parliamentary constitutions, owing to the troubles that the nationalists, Ba`thists and Communists inflicted on him.



- (3) All the latent differences between the Iraqis were brought into the open because of the bloody events in Mosul and Kirkūk. Tribal, ethnic, religious and class conflicts in Iraqi society were revealed.(65)
- (4) The conflict between the nationalists and the Communists all over the Arab East came out into the open.(66)
- (5) A wedge was created between Iraq and the other leading Arab power, the UAR, particularly after the Mosul revolt and Nasir's undoubted connection with the conspirators behind this revolt.(67)
- (6) A crisis was accelerated between the UAR and the Soviet Union.(68)
- (7) Iraqi society was weakened, thus facilitating the task of foreign imperialists in achieving their interests. So the nationalists, Ba`thists and Communists had worked to the advantage of those whom they claimed to oppose Ba`thist and Communist conflicts throughout Qāsim's time left Iraq with a series of crises that set back all his efforts to find a balance between them. Even Qāsim's characteristic ability of maintaining a balance was not as good as in the beginning and his grip on events was weakened as time went by to the extent that he failed to put in place a successful plan to crush the Ba`thist plot. He barricaded himself inside the Ministry of Defence with a few followers, while his army outside the capital remained neutral.

Thus, although Qāsim was somehow able to defeat the Nationalists and the Ba`thists in the beginning, his tragic end in February 1963 proved that his defeat by the Nationalists and Ba`thists was caused by indecisiveness. The reasons for this are as follows:

- (1) The regime's tolerance of the political forces which helped them to organise intrigue behind the scenes with various groups inside and outside Iraq.
- (2) The isolation of the Communists, due to Qāsim's continuous strikes against them, eased the way for the Ba`thists and Nationalists to gain the upper hand and prevent the Communists from defending Qāsim's regime. In spite of this the Communists did not turn their back on Qāsim.
- (3) Qāsim's policy of maintaining a balance allowed the Nationalists and Ba`thists to take a place in the political arena.
- (4) Qāsim's failure to build a solid base of support for his rule and to articulate an ideology of his own. His support-base was only the common people who had genuine affection for him because he improved their living conditions and did not make empty promises.
- (5) The outbreak of the Kurdish war, which greatly helped the Ba`thists and Nationalists. The British Ambassador,

Humphrey Trevelyan, in his book, Middle East in Revolution, admits that he took trips to various parts of Iraq and set up a number of puppets to make troubles for Qāsim's government.(69) One of the results of his attempts was the start of the war with the Kurds in the north, which played a great part in Qāsim's fall. It is interesting to note that the Kurds, who were favoured by Qāsim's independent policy, also stood against him and co-operated with his enemies to diminish his regime.

- (6) Qāsim's failure in his foreign policy, particularly with regard to Kuwait, which increasingly isolated his regime from the Ba`thists and their allies in Iraq and abroad.
- (7) The most important factor was Qāsim's oil policy, which sealed his fate and made his downfall inevitable. Ḥasan al-`Alawī writes:

"....I was told by the great scholar al-Sayyid Murtaḍā al-`Askari, while visiting him in London on 30 June 1990, that one of Qāsim's Ministers told him the following: during the meeting of the Cabinet of ministers in which we discussed and signed the Oil Law, `Abd al-Karim Qāsim said, 'Let us sign our own death sentence with our own hands.' So he signed and we signed after him".(70)

- (8) Qāsim's characteristic 'Iraq first' policy roused nationalist sentiment against his regime inside and outside



Iraq. From the viewpoint of Arab politics there were huge differences in the understanding of Arab Nationalism between Qāsim and Nasir. Qāsim insisted that Arab nationalism was to unite the efforts of all Arab countries to strengthen their integrity and independence in the face of external imperialist influence, without assaulting the independence of any individual Arab country. In his speech in February 1959, Qāsim announced that:

**"....Iraq is part of a whole, not part of a part." (71)**

Nasir felt Qāsim's challenge to him and his reputation as sole leader of the Arab world. He began a large campaign against him in his radio broadcasts, newspapers and speeches, accusing Qāsim of narrow-minded localistic Iraqi policies which cared only about Iraq and betrayed Arabism and the Arab world. He also accused Qāsim of giving too much freedom to the communists and having relations with socialist countries, even though he himself had opened the doors of Egypt and other Arab countries wide to the interests of the socialist bloc and had not hesitated to ally himself with Russia when he was denied any support from the west.(72)

The British intelligence services, supervised by the British Ambassador to Iraq, Michael Wright, with the help of the American intelligence services, did their best to widen and deepen the differences and hostility between Qāsim and Nasir in order to contain the revolution in Iraq. In April 1959 Alan Dulles announced:



"....Although the Communists in Iraq are very close to complete control of power, the situation has not used the bad relations between Qāsim and Nasir. The last can play an important role in rescuing Iraq." (73)

President Eisenhower, himself, praised Nasir for being a strong leader in anti-Communist activities.(74)

Thus America, Britain and Nasir played their roles in finishing Qāsim and diminishing the July Revolution. The interests of all western and Arab forces were harmed by Qāsim, so they decided to eliminate him. Their instrument in this was the Arab Ba`th Socialist Party, which at once changed from a supporter of the Revolution to an opponent, and made many efforts to put barriers in the way of the Revolution.(75)

The Ba`th itself admitted that there were nine attempts on the life of Qāsim, but all failed.(76) This is why `Aflaq called a conference in West Germany in summer 1962, called the "Third Regional Conference", at which it was decided to begin a counter-revolution against Qāsim's government. It should be borne in mind that this was not a proper conference, that there were no delegates from the regional committees and it was limited to a narrow group.(77)

The culmination of attempts at power by the Ba`th was the general strike called by the National Union of Iraqi

Students, a front for the Ba`th Party, in January 1963. This was a violent, well-prepared student strike with the participation of many gangsters and thugs well known for cruelty and murder. Such people were often used initially by the Ba`th to eliminate political opponents. Later they came to control the government and included men like `Ali Şāleḥ al Sa`dī from Bāb al-Shaykh, who became Deputy Prime Minister after the coup of February 1963, Muḥammad Fāḍil from al-Karkh, al-Fāḍil, Şabāḥ Mirza (Saddam's bodyguard during the 1970s) from al-Ji`afr and, of course, Saddam Husayn himself, who gained complete control after the coup of 17 July 1968 (78), as well as common thugs like Jabbār Kurdi. The timing of the strike was to coincide with the oil companies' threats to `Abd al-Karīm Qāsim after 22 October 1962, after his announcing the Oil Law. It was expected that, after confrontation with the oil companies, Qāsim's end would be close.

The student strike did not end until 8 February, when Qāsim was executed by the Ba`th, and the threats of the oil companies were realised. At the first press conference after 8 February, the Ba`thist Foreign Minister assured the oil companies that his regime would not harm British Petroleum or the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) and would respect all agreements with them and guarantee continuous supplies of oil.(79) Now, after the opening of the British Foreign Office documents, we know that the coup of 8 February was planned by the USA.(80) As Wilbur Crane Eveland admits,(81) this was just part of many secret service operations carried out by the Americans in the region. We hardly need further proof



that the Ba`th was an instrument of American and Western plans in the Middle East, especially Iraq.

However, despite the above-mentioned failures by Qāsim's regime to control the domestic crisis caused mainly by the violent clashes between the Communists, the Nationalists and the Ba`thists, accompanied by foreign policy failures and accusations of Qāsim's military autocracy, it can hardly be denied, from the course of events and from the activities when they (Ba`thist and nationalist throughout `Ārif regime) gained power, that Qāsim was a patriotic leader. He wanted to create an independent Iraq. He wanted to liberate the national wealth and he wanted equality and justice for all Iraqis. Even his attacks on the Communists were the result of their devotion to Soviet policy, which did not accede to his independent policy for Iraq. He refused to arm the Communists or the angry populace, who gathered outside the Ministry of Defence and in the streets of the capital to defend him, unarmed except with canes, and launched a bitter two-day fight with the Ba`thists. Qāsim revealed his sense of responsibility for his country by refusing to the end to hand out arms to the people, even at this crucial time. His opponents obviously lacked this quality. They called Qāsim a traitor to the Arab cause and claimed to champion unity, liberty and political freedom and to fight Zionism and imperialism. But, when they gained power, the outcome was the complete reverse of all that they had been calling for, as will be examined in the next section in our assessment of the Ba`th in power.

## The First Ba`th Regime - February 1963

This section will not analyse the details of the Ba`thist coup of February 1963, as this has been done by many researchers, (82) or the massive Ba`thist conspiracies throughout Qāsim's time, which were fully described in Chapter One. This section will refer briefly to the particular and more specific Ba`thist practices while they were in power in Iraq.

As noted before, the Ba`th Party, after it had failed to assassinate Qāsim, faced a severe retreat and went underground. Its secretary general, Fu'ād al-Rikābī, the organiser of the plot, managed to escape to Syria, and then Cairo, with the other assassins, including Saddam Husayn, while other suspects were rounded up. Many others left the Party following this incident. Ḥāzim Jawād was appointed to be in charge of the few remaining cells. After two months, in January 1960, an Iraqi bureau was set up in Damascus to help Ḥāzim Jawād to reorganise the scattered Ba`th members in Iraq. `Ali Ṣāleḥ al-Sa`dī was in charge of this bureau with two other members, Ṭālib Shabīb and Fayṣal Ḥabīb al-Khazarān. In April al-Sa`dī took charge of the Iraqi region of the Ba`th Party, instead of Jawād, and returned to Iraq to reform and solidify the splintered organisation. It seems that the main reason for the choice of al-Sa`dī by the National Command for this job, as Batatu notes (83) was his talent for conspiracy and underground activities, which suited Ba`thist operations against Qāsim at that desperate time to oust him and destroy the Communists. Al-Sa`dī somehow managed to rebuild the Party.



This was facilitated by the public trial of those accused of the attempt on Qāsim's life in the People's Court, which became a forum for Ba`thist political views, because of the way they used them in their defence. At all events, al-Sa`dī deviously managed to put the finishing touches to the plan to overthrow Qāsim and the Communists, which was adopted at the National Party Congress in Homs in 1962.

As mentioned before, the Iraqi Ba`th Party was involved in military and civilian intrigue and was helped by external and regional countries to seize total power in Iraq. The coup was concluded when Qāsim and his close associates were executed on the second day.(84) However, the situation was not fully in the hands of the plotters. The Communists fought the Ba`thists and their militia, the National Guard, in bloody street battles for two days.(85) Thousands were killed, mostly Communists.

Initially the Ba`th Party maintained its secrecy, hiding behind the Nationalists, to make it look as if the coup was a Nationalist achievement. The reason for this lay in the fact that the Ba`thist leadership were mostly unknown youth elements.(86) It was probably also due to their fear of revenge attacks resulting from their purge of the communists.(87) On the first day, `Abd al-Salām `Ārif was formally appointed President of the Ba`th government. This choice was probably made to appeal to all sides, both inside and outside Iraq, as he was well known and popular with the army and the general population. The real power lay in the National Council of Revolutionary Command (NCRC), which was

established on 8 February, and was controlled by the Ba`th Party, since it held all the key positions of power.(88) There was a shortage of Ba`thists in the military, which led to many sensitive military posts being held by non-Ba`thists.(89) This thinness of military support was one of the reasons which led the Party to give more weight to the National Guard in the beginning as its power-base.

On the first day of the coup, the new plotters declared their initial proclamation, which contained grand promises. On 15 March the internal programme was broadcast by al-Bakr, who was the Prime Minister of the new regime, which called for an administration in which the masses would take part in running, guiding and supervising the government, which would rely not only on the Ba`th Party, but also on a Front embracing all progressive and nationalist organisations.(90) But the Ba`thists fulfilled none of these promises and stuck to none of their slogans.

The Ba`thists' performance was politically bankrupt in every sphere:

**(1) Internal affairs** Most assessments, including pro-Ba`thist,(91) and official Party statements,(92) agree that the Ba`thists did not have a clear, considered programme. There is evidence which proves that the Ba`thists did not prepare any political programme in advance.(93) This was due to the following:

(a) Most of the leadership were young and lacked the political vision and administrative experience to run the country. This was probably because success in the Party had depended on ability at clandestine activities and conspiracy.

(b) Ba`thist ideology was intellectually barren, as al-Sa`dī acknowledged later:

**"....we searched till weary for a socialist thinker who might help us, but could find none." (94)**

(c) They could not get succour from the National Command of the Ba`th Party because it was itself in a state of paralysis, with no idea of the difficult nature of Iraqi society. (95)

(d) Most important of all, they were busy struggling among themselves for influence and power.

Thus, as Batātū notes, the Ba`thists used violence and adopted one party rule in order to maintain their power-base and control their domestic crisis. (96) Indeed the one party rule and violence were not only due to the above reasons alone, nor were they practised only by some radical members of the Party, like al-Sa`dī, as Devlin notes, (97) and as the National Command of the Ba`th Party proclaimed, (98) to clear itself of the atrocities committed by the Iraqi Ba`thists, which embarrassed the Ba`th Party, but they formed one of the



Ba`th Party's doctrines. Atrocity was the natural result of their philosophy and teaching, as expounded by their leader, `Aflaq, which relied on it and suppressed and purged all those who did not share their central ideas.(99) Ba`th violence and ruthlessness became more visible when they gained power. It appeared soon after the coup and continued for most of their nine months in power. On the first day of the coup the Ba`th leadership officially authorised the annihilation of any opposition to the regime.(100)

They proclaimed that they had to crush all resistance to the revolution, which harmed the interests of the people and the State. Their main target, initially, was the Communists, whom they wanted to expunge completely from the political scene in Iraq. It is puzzling that, although the Communists had warned Qāsim of the Ba`thist coup and told him to beware of their activities in the army,(101) they did not take care themselves to protect themselves against the coup. The reason for this may be the fact that they underestimated the Ba`thists' ability and the extent of their intrigue behind the scenes, internally and externally. They also overestimated themselves because of their influence in the army and other mass organisations. They did not notice that Qāsim had allowed too many Ba`thists and Nationalists to gain a foothold in the army, particularly in some combat units, regardless of the risk, in order to balance the concentration of the Communists, according to his famous see-saw policy, enabling Ba`thist conspirators and their allies the opportunity they had so long awaited.



The savagery of the Ba`th's ruthless campaign against the opposition, particularly the Communists, was beyond words. There are many stories of brutality and torture. Thousands of people were arrested, including women and children. Some of them were killed in secret, while others were hanged in public.(102) The news of Ba`thist atrocities spread throughout Iraq and beyond and increasingly affected their reputation. The criticism came most of all from the Communist countries. The Soviet media attacked the Ba`th, with Pravda speaking of "a wave of terror in Baghdad".(103) It caused a sharp deterioration in relations with the Soviet Union. Soviet economic aid to the Ba`th slowed down. Arms deliveries virtually ceased, particularly after the outbreak of the Kurdish war. This slowed down the fighting against the Kurds, owing to the shortage of spare parts for the Soviet-supplied weapons.(104) However, the British began to supply the Ba`thists with weapons on request, in order to fight the Kurds, who were supposed to be protected by the British Government because of their previous promises to them.(105)

The National Front, from the Nasirites, *Ḥarakīyyin* and the newly-formed Arab Socialist Party, all became hostile to the regime after these atrocities and the stifling of political activity in Iraq.(106)

The wholesale murder of the Communists by the Ba`thists disturbed the Kurds, although the Ba`thists initially declared that they would deal with the Kurdish problem peacefully. This was, in fact, a holding measure by the Ba`thists until they were ready to deal with them, after they

had been rearmed by the British Government, as mentioned above.

The Kurds welcomed the Ba`thist coup and proclaimed a cease-fire because of their secret, prior agreement to co-operate with them in the overthrow of Qāsim in return for Ba`th recognition of Kurdish demands, as noted in Chapter One. Devlin notes that the Ba`thists did not propose an official agreement with the Kurds before the coup, except for an individual attempt by Ṭāhir Yaḥyā, who was a shallow military Ba`thist.(107) This comment indicates the negative attitude of the Ba`thists towards their allies, in the overthrow of Qāsim; they wanted to renew the war and purge the Kurds, the wish of the Ba`thists and the military alike.

Reading Ba`th Party history proves that the Ba`thists were a small ineffective minority, passionately eager to gain influence and power, which could only be reached through negotiating successful alliances. As soon as they felt settled and ready for confrontation, they systematically eliminated their allies, as well as all other political organisations, including any opposition within the Ba`th Party itself, branding them as traitors and instruments of external powers, in order to justify their attempts to extinguish them.(108)

**(2) On the objective Ba`th Level** The Ba`thists and Nationalists had opposed Qāsim precisely on the grounds of his luke-warmness about Arab unity. Thus, when they gained power they decided that they should be seen to be acting on behalf



of Arab unity and began tripartite discussions about unity in Cairo, which failed miserably because both the Ba`thists and Nasir were insincere on this point and both worked against it behind the scenes. The tripartite discussions were just an attempt to display their credibility on this subject and to corner the other party.(109) It was one of the reasons that Nasir's hatred for the Ba`thists did much to bring about a change in the Ba`th government in November 1963 through the pro-Nasir element in Iraq, with the co-operation of the Ba`thist officers (Tikrītīs).(110)

With regard to their second slogan, freedom, the Ba`th Party made it clear from the first day of the coup that they did not tolerate any opposition to their regime. They decided to impose their own point of view on the opposition, except when it seemed beneficial to their own interests, not to do so even though this may have been contrary to their principles. They thought that all the opposition were unpatriotic and an instrument for outside forces and that Iraq and the Arab nations were lucky to have the Ba`th Party to purge the deleterious attitude that had prevailed before.

Their third concept was socialism. Devlin notes that the Iraqi Ba`thists, particularly al-Sa`dī and some other factions within the National Command in Syria were not keen to apply socialism in Iraq or Syria.(111) They approached socialism in their attempt to proclaim their ideological purity over their opponents, who called them rightist. This was due to the struggle for influence and power between the two wings within the Party, which suddenly appeared after the Ba`thists gained

power in Iraq and Syria, rather to a change of political line.

**(3) Internal Ba`th Feuding** The deep split in the Party leadership in Iraq played a major role in the Ba`th debacle in November 1963. The differences and splits were deep-rooted and had existed since the early years of the Ba`th Party on the political scene, as noted in Chapter One. They then developed into a chronic feature of the Ba`th Party, but when it gained power they became more serious and acute.

Most sources, including Ba`thists and pro-Ba`thists, regarded the main source of these differences among the Ba`th leadership as being the ruthless activities of the National Guard; these led many nationalist elements and superficial Ba`thists in the army to overthrow the Ba`th Party.(112) This is far from the truth. The real reason for the split in the leadership was the influence of the National Guard, who acted on behalf of the al-Sa`dī faction, more than of the `Aflaq faction, both in civilian life and in the army and threatened the latter's position. This is borne out by the fact that the initial ruthlessness of the National Guard, exercised on behalf of the Ba`th Party, which was instrumental in the success of the coup, the crushing of the Communists and the safeguarding the regime, was not rejected by the Ba`th Party or their allies, the Nationalists; quite the contrary, it had the blessing of Michel `Aflaq and the support of all the Ba`thists. Furthermore, most of them also were guilty of committing atrocities as shocking as those of the National Guard.(113)



The differences were also given an ideological slant by the two factions.(114) The moderate wing, led by Ḥāzīm Jawād and Ṭālib Shabib, linked with most of the senior Ba`thist officers, in order to strengthen its power-base in the state and the army. The militant wing, on the other hand, led by al-Sa`dī, consolidated its hold largely on the Ba`th Party and its militia, the National Guard, to balance its thinness in military support and in the NCRC, in particular after the Shabib/Jawād wing succeeded in shifting al-Sa`dī from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Guidance. This was regarded as a blow to al-Sa`dī's personal power and an attempt by the moderate wing to reduce the influence of the al-Sa`dī wing.

The apparent success of the al-Sa`dī wing was revealed when al-Sa`dī and his partisans dominated the Party Regional Congress of September 1963. Al-Sa`dī and three of his followers were elected to the new regional command while al-Sa`dī's opponent, Ṭālib Shabib, was defeated, despite the military support for his wing in the Congress; This was later to seem to be superficial. After this al-Sa`dī and his wing placed themselves on the left, together with extremist infiltrates from Syria. This tactic added, in no small measure, to the success of al-Sa`dī and his wing at the Sixth National Congress of the Ba`th Party in October 1963, when he won most of the seats with his radical socialist ideas. These manoeuvres gave a clear signal that al-Sa`dī and his supporters were rebelling against `Aflaq and his partisans, the "rightists" who lost their influence over the Party. Thus

they decided to clear out the extreme left group, both from Iraq and Syria. This was done by employing the Ḥāzim Jawād and Ṭālib Shabib groups, which had been expelled from the Regional Congress, and by calling for an extraordinary regional congress to settle the problems within the Party.(115) However, Devlin notes that the true intention was to elect new members for the Party leadership in Iraq.(116) The extraordinary regional congress began on 11 November 1963. It was confronted by an armed group led by Colonel Muḥammad al-Mahdāwī, who claimed that Michel `Aflaq had informed him that a number of extremists (i.e. the al-Sa`dī/al-Fekakī/al-Raḍī group) had tried adversely to affect the sixth pan-Arab Congress contrary to the interests of the Party and demanded a new leadership (i.e. `Aflaq). The new leadership was elected under the naked guns of Colonel al-Mahdāwī, and was entirely made up of right-wing members, including a large number of army officers, while the al-Sa`dī group was ejected and escorted by soldiers to a waiting plane which flew them to Madrid, without even their passports.(117) These gangster methods, employed by the Jawād/Shabib wing, were largely condemned by the rank and file of the Party, who demanded the immediate return of those who had been exiled. Al-Sa`dī's supporters were particularly outspoken and attacked the al-Rashīd airforce base and the Presidential Palace. The Party rank and file and the National Guard took a grip on the political situation in Baghdad. This sequence of events did not favour `Aflaq and his supporters in Iraq urged two Ba`thist officers (al-Bakr and `Ammāsh) to appeal to the National Command for help.(118) On 13 November, `Aflaq, Amin al-Ḥāfiẓ and other members of the National Command of the



Ba`th Party arrived in Baghdad. On the next day a meeting of the regional and pan-Arab leadership was held, in which it was decided to eject both the al-Sa`dī/al-Fekakī/al-Raḍī group, i.e. the so-called left-wing, and the al-Jawād/Shabib/al-Mihdāwī group, i.e. the so-called right-wing group. This led to two dramatic results: one was the elevation of the al-Bakr/`Ammāsh/Saddam, so-called centrist group and the other the ruling of Iraq, for the first time since the British occupation, by non-Iraqis, i.e. `Aflaq. The results of the meetings were declared on 15 November 1963:

- (a) To consider the Regional Congress held in Baghdad on 11 November as illegal and to dissolve the Regional Command, that it had elected.
- (b) To dissolve the Regional Command, that was in power when the Congress was held.
- (c) To invest the National Command with all the prerogatives of the Regional Command in Iraq.
- (d) To investigate mistakes.
- (e) To restrict the power of passing sentence on Iraqi Party members to the National Command.
- (f) To hold Party elections in the Iraqi region and to hold a Regional Congress for the election of a new Regional Command within a period of four months. (119)

The presence of the National Command in Iraq and the results of its meeting, particularly when it was announced that the National Command would direct affairs in Iraq until the new Regional Command was elected, produced a very tense atmosphere and a feeling of dissatisfaction in Iraq. 'Ārif tried to exploit these developments in his favour. He moved quickly, with the help of some Ba`thist army officers, particularly the Tikrītīs, to overthrow the Ba`th Party and crush all resistance and to assume full control of Baghdad. (120)

As for the pan-Arab leadership which was ruling Iraq from the seat of government in Baghdad, it was arrested, as well as 'Aflaq and the Syrian Head of State, Amin al-Ḥāfiẓ. It is thought that Ṭāhir Yaḥyā, who was instrumental in the coup as Chief of Staff, personally arrested 'Aflaq and al-Ḥāfiẓ, after which they were deported back to Syria. The al-Jawād/al-Shabib/al-Mahdāwī group supported the coup while in exile in Beirut. Their support led to their dismissal from the Party during its Seventh pan-Arabist congress held in Syria in November 1964. (121)

This indicates that the Ba`thist leaders took part in the destruction for their own personal interest. Ba`thists always put their personal ambitions above ideology and, in this way, are no better than gangsters. Indeed the Ba`thists' alliance with 'Ārif put the Ba`th Party in an embarrassing situation and raised questions about their credibility; this led some Ba`thists to claim that those elements who co-



operated with `Ārif were non-Ba`thist.(122) It is possible, if the events preceding the 11 October 1963 Congress are analysed, to perceive that there was a plan by the Tikrītī elements, who were in league with `Aflaq. The truth is that the Tikrītīs, i.e. al-Bakr, Ṭāhir Yaḥyā, Ḥardān al-Tikrītī, Rashīd Muṣliḥ (a cousin of al-Bakr) and, of course, Saddam, were increased the dispute between the two wings of the Party, as they had absolutely no Tikrītīs among them and were almost entirely Shi`ah, with the exception of al-Sa`dī, though he was even more anti-Tikrītī than the Shi`ah. Surviving members of the two wings have been admitting publicly for decades that they were played upon by the Tikrītī clan, who encouraged each wing to cut the throat of the other.(123) The Tikrītī wing, which called itself the Central wing, was highly acrobatic in its dealings with the other two wings, who formed the mass of the Party, particularly in the famous defection of some other than Saddam from the al-Sa`dī wing to the al-Bakr/Tikrītī wing; many Tikrītī officers who were initially with al-Sa`dī then also changed over and joined their village wing.(124) The gangster method the Party employed was even more sinister in the way the Tikrītīs went about the business of removing their comrades from the other wings.(125) `Aflaq was so pleased with the Tikrītī wing that he rewarded them with the largest share of seats on the Party leadership.(126) The tragedy of Iraq was about to begin.

The central wing (the Tikrītīs) displayed their skilful manipulation of circumstances and turning each time to the side that had the upper hand, in order to seize power, even at the expense of their principles. In bringing down Qāsim,

the unit that took part with the Ba`thists was later accused of being with the CIA. They were the same forces who played a role in the struggle between the Party wings and so delivered a blow to the Party from behind. They later joined `Ārif in ousting the Ba`th Party from government, when they saw that the balance of power had gone in favour of `Ārif, and they were rewarded with key posts in `Ārif's first cabinet as follows:

- (1) Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr became `Ārif's Vice-President.
- (2) Ḥardān al-Tikrītī became Deputy Commander in Chief of the armed forces and Minister of Defence. He issued the orders for the disposition of the forces to suppress the National Guard. This event was exploited by his enemies in internal personal feuds, as we will see in the next chapter. Indeed, this kind of personal feud has characterised the Party's history from its first years until the present day.
- (3) Rashīd Muṣleḥ al-Tikrītī became the Minister of the Interior and Military Governor.
- (4) Ṭāhir Yaḥyā al-Tikrītī became the Prime Minister.
- (5) Aḥmad al-Juwārī and `Izzat Muṣṭafā became Ministers of Education and Health, respectively.

There were the same forces who began to conspire against `Ārif when he dismissed them from his government. This

supports the view that the reason why `Ārif appointed them to his first cabinet was to avoid their plotting against his regime.(127) As soon as they lost their posts, they began to conspire to overthrow the `Ārif regime, as was uncovered in September 1964. This will be discussed in the next section. They were the same faces who came to power again on 17 July 1968 and are still in power today through their successor, Saddam Husayn, who will be the subject of our attention in the next chapter.

## NOTES

- 1- The Treaty of Alliance between Iraq and Great Britain, signed on 30 June 1930, obliged Iraq to:
  - (a) Consult closely with Britain in all matters of foreign policy affecting its interests;
  - (b) Extend to Britain, in time of war, the use of its territory;
  - (c) Admit the importance of protecting, at all times, the essential communications of his Britannic Majesty throughout Iraq;
  - (d) Permit Britain to occupy two air bases, Shu'aybah, near Basrah and Habbaniyyah, to the west of the upper Euphrates;
  - (e) Turn the port of Basrah and the Iraqi railways into semi-autonomous bodies under the control of British officials. See Treaty of Alliance between Iraq and Great Britain, Government Press, Baghdad.
- 2- Batātū, H., The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movement of Iraq, Princeton, 1988, p. 550.



- 3- See Batātū, *ibid.*, Chapter 22 for more details on al-Wathbah.
- 4- See Chapter 1 of this thesis, Note 61.
- 5- Devlin, John F., The Ba`th Party, A History From Its Origins to 1966, Stanford, California, 1975, p. 106.
- 6- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 742.
- 7- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 106.
- 8- Conversation between the researcher, `Abd al-Ḥasan al-Zubaydi, with `Ali Ṣalih al-Sa'di on 15 September 1976; see Layth `Abd al-Ḥasan al-Zubaydī, Thawrat 14 Tammūz 1958 fi al-`Iraq (The 14 July 1958 Revolution in Iraq), Baghdad, Dar al-Ḥurriyah, 1979, p. 67.
- 9- Niḍal al-Ba'th (Ba'th's Struggle): 7, p. 9.
- 10- Khaddūri, M., al-`Irāq al-Mustaqil (Iraq Independent) Beirut, 1978. p. 21.
- 11- Devlin, *ibid.*, pp. 107-108.
- 12- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 742.
- 13- Niḍal al-Ba'th: 11, p. 34.

- 14- Ḥizb al-Ba`th al-`Arabī al-Ishtirākī (Arab Ba`th Socialist Party), Muqarrarāt al-Mu'tamar al-`Ādī al-Thānī li al-Outr al-Sūrī wa al-Mun`aqid bayn 18/3 wa 4/4/1965, al-Taqrīr al-Tanzīmī p. 17. (See translation of reference in the bibliography).
- 15- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 748; see also Table A. 50, quoted in Batātū, pp. 1224-1230.
- 16- Batātū, *ibid.*, Table 4.7.
- 17- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 106.
- 18- *Ibid.*
- 19- Ibrāhīm, Zahīda, Mukhtaṣar al-Jarā'id wa al-Ṣuḥuf al-Ṣadīrah bi Baḡhdād (A Digest of Baghdad Newspapers and Magazines), Baghdad, 1976, p. 64.
- 20- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 668.
- 21- Niḍal al-Ba`th, V, 1963, pp. 7-8.
- 22- Baqdash, Khālīd, To Struggle With Success In The Interest Of Peace, Damascus, Beirut, 1951.
- 23- *Pravda*, 15 October 1952, 1.
- 24- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 681.

- 25- The Communist Party of Iraq, The Uprising Of The Iraqi People And Its Effect On The Development Of The Arab Question, 1948, pp. 23-24.
- 26- Caractacus, Revolution in Iraq, Victor Gollancz, 1959, pp. 53-54.
- 27- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 751.
- 28- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 108.
- 29- Niḍal al-Ba`th, V, p. 7.
- 30- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 478.
- 31- *Radio Cairo*, 30 January 1955.
- 32- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 668.
- 33- Baqḍāsh in *al-Şarkhah*, February 1954.
- 34- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 106.
- 35- Galman, Waldemar J. Iraq Under General Nūri, Baltimore, 1964, pp. 6, 101.
- 36- *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 93.

- 37- The 15 January 1955 Statement of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in *al-Qā'idah*, No. 17, January 1955.
- 38- Nidal al Ba'th, V, p. 9.
- 39- For more details on the riots in Iraq triggered by events in Egypt, see Nidal al Ba'th, V, p. 17.
- 40- al-Hizb al-Shuyū'ī al-'Irāqī (The Iraqi Communist Party), Mashrū'unā al-Siyāsī li al-Taḥarrur al-Waṭanī wa al-Qawmī 'Alā Daw' al-Hizb al-Shuyū'ī fi al-Ittiḥād al-Sufyātī (Our Political Plan for Patriotic and National Liberation in the Light of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union), report of the Central Committee, as approved by the Second Party Conference, September 1956, 2, pp. 27-29. See also *Ittiḥād al Sha'b*, Year 14, No. 9, mid October, 1956, p. 8.
- 41- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 762; al-Zubaydī, *ibid.*, pp. 92-96.
- 42- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 763.
- 43- Sharīf, 'Azīz, Sh'ūb Āsyā wa Afrīqyā dīd Hilf Baghdād wa Mabda' Āyzinhāwir (The People of Asia and Africa Against the Baghdad Pact and the Eisenhower Principle), Cairo, 1958, p. 53; al-Chadirchī, Kāmil, Mudhakkirātī (My Memoirs), 1970, p. 537, a history of the Patriotic Democratic Party.



- 44- Sharīf, *ibid.*, p. 56.
- 45- Eveland, Wilbur Crane, Ropes of Sand, London, New York, 1985, translated by Ali Ḥaddād, pp. 88-103. Eveland, a former CIA consultant, praised Kermit Roosevelt, the coup CIA organiser, for his efforts to restore American influence in Nasir's Egypt.
- 46- See Chapter One.
- 47- al-Jidda, `Abd al-Karīm, p. 28; Khalīl Ibrāhīm Ḥusayn, `Abd al-Karīm Qāsim: al-Lughz al-Muḥayyir (`Abd al-Karīm Qasim, the Intriguing Puzzle), Vol. 6, Baghdad, 1989, p. 120.
- 48- An interview by the researcher, `Abd al-Ḥasan al-Zubaydī, with Ḥusayn Jamīl on 28 June 1977. See also Haykal, Muḥammad Ḥasanayn, `Abd al-Nāṣir wa al-`Ālam (`Abd al-Nāṣir and the World), Beirut, 1972, p. 188.
- 49- Ḥusayn, Khalīl Ibrāhīm, *ibid.*, p. 390.
- 50- Macintosh, Strategy and Tactics of Soviet Foreign Policy, London, 1963, p. 235; See also Swadran, Benjamin, The Power Struggle in Iraq, New York, 1960, p. 11. The writer confirmed in this book that Qāsim had no links with the Americans and that the revolution in Iraq was a total surprise to the American Secret Service.

- 51- See the interview with `Abd al-Karīm Qāsim's Foreign Minister, Hāshim Jawād, during his detention in the first days after the 8 February 1963 coup which was transmitted by such news agencies as Reuters. Quoted in Baḥrī, Yūnis, Thawrat 14 Ramaḍān al-Mubārakah (The 14th of Ramaḍān al-Mubārakah Revolution), Beirut, 1963, p. 145.
- 52- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 809.
- 53- Seale, P., The Struggle for Syria, p. 237. The Ba`thists political attitude towards the Communists was: "We may meet in the same trenches, but we cannot join up with them." See Arab Socialist Ba`th Party, Nashrah Dākhiliyah `An Mawqifinā al-Siyāsī min al-Shuyū`iyyah (Internal circular on the political attitude towards Communism), January 1956, 1-3, 24. The circular was written by Michel `Aflaq and Jamāl al-Aṭāsī.
- 54- FO 371/2362, The Revolution in Iraq, 19 July 1958.
- 55- Eveland, *ibid.*, p. 193. See also Khālīd Ibrāhīm Ḥusayn, *ibid.*, Vol. 6, Baghdad, 1989, p. 394. Benjamin Shwadrān, *ibid.*, p. 11.
- 56- Qāsim's government did not announce its countermeasures against the oil companies and the Baghdad Pact at once. It was aware of the danger of early and crucial confrontations, especially after the US invasion of Lebanon on 15 July 1958 and the British paratroops'

landing in Jordan on 17 July 1958, and wished to ensure the neutrality of the Baghdad pact countries in gaining international recognition.

57- During his early negotiations with the oil companies, Qāsim showed considerable leniency and flexibility. He asked for 60% of unexplored lands to be returned, but under pressure from such pro-Marxist Ministers as Ibrāhīm Kubbah and Muḥammad Ḥadīd, he changed the figure to 75% and later to 90%, causing the negotiations to fail and the oil companies to refuse the government's request. Qāsim, in response, was forced to issue Law No. 80. This episode reveals how the expansion of the Communist and Marxist ideology affected Qāsim's policies, causing such policies to take an extremist route and leading to imbalance of the system and loss of control. An interview with oil expert and Director of the National Oil Company during the regime of `Abd al-Salām `Ārif and `Abd al-Rahmān `Ārif in London, 18 January 1994.

58- The July Revolution in the reports of foreign diplomatic missions and the Western press, p. 122.

59- *New York Times*, 29 April 1959.

60- `Ārif was one of the leaders of the 1958 Revolution, but had subsequently been purged by Qāsim, tried and sentenced to death. However, the sentence was left unsigned by Qāsim. His sentence was later commuted to



life imprisonment, allowing `Ārif to live and join the Ba`thists' plot against Qasim.

- 61- *al-Bilād* (Baghdad), No 5275, 25 July 1958, p. 4.
- 62- Fawzī, Aḥmad, `Abd al-Salām `Ārif, Hayātuh, Muḥakamatuh wa Wafātuh (`Abd al-Salām `Ārif, His Life, Trial and Death), First Edition, Baghdad, 1989, p. 28.
- 63- The politbureau of the Central Committee of the Iraqi Communist Party, Statement of the Iraqi Communist Party concerning union with the UAR and the Yemen, Baghdad, 3 September 1958. See also the lecture by Amīr `Abd Allāh, The Historical Road to the Unity of the Arab Nation, delivered at the Hall of the People, Baghdad, on 13 February 1959, published in *Ittiḥāt al-Sha`b*, Nos. 19-21 and 23-26 of 16-18 and 22-25 February 1959.
- 64- Sluglett, Marion-Farouk and Sluglett, Peter, Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship, London and New York, 1987, p. 146.
- 65- Batātū, *ibid.*, Chapter 44 for details on the Mosul revolt and Chapter 46 for details on the Kirkūk events.
- 66- In Syria, the Communists also opened up a frontal war against the UAR. See *al-Akḥbār* (Beirut), 19 December 1958.
- 67- Batātū, *ibid.*, Chapter 44; Shwadran, *ibid.*, p. 48.



- 68- *Pravda*, 17 March 1959; *Ittiḥāt al-Sha`b*, 18 march 1959; *al-Ahrām*, 17 March 1959.
- 69- `Ārif, Ismā`il, Memoirs, Part 4; *al-Majallah*, 307, 25 December 1985.
- 70- al-`Alawī, Ḥasan, al-`Irāq Dawlat al-Munazzamah al-Sirriyah, (Iraq: State of the Secret Institution), London, 1990, pp. 26-27.
- 71- BBC, No 94/096.
- 72- Eveland, *ibid.*, p. 176.
- 73- `Ārif, Ismā`il, *ibid.* See also Shawdran, *ibid.*, p. 48.
- 74- E. and E.F. Penrose, Iraq, International Relations and National Development, London, 1978, p. 369.
- 75- The Ba`th Party often shifts its policies from one extreme to the other to serve its interests and depending on international circumstances. Interests of unity and the Arab nation are often given as justification for these changes and shifts in policy.
- 76- Fawzī, Aḥmad, `Abd al-Karīm Qāsim wa Sā`atuhu al-Akhīrah (Qāsim's Last Hours), Baghdad, 1988, p. 97.
- 77- al-`Alawī, Ḥasan, *ibid.*, p. 26.

- 78- M-F and P Sluglett, *ibid.*, pp. 92, 108-109.
- 79- In their first proclamation, the coup leaders declared on Baghdad radio that the rights of the oil companies in Iraq would be respected and that they would be permitted to continue their operations. See *Evening Standard*, 8 February 1963; see also the British secret document regarding the Ba'thist coup and released in January 1994, thirty years after the events that took place in February 1963, Public Record Office, FO371/170430 26811, 10 February 1963.
- 80- Iraqi File (a political and documentary review), No. 26, February 1994. See also Penrose, *ibid.*, p. 272, footnote 32.
- 81- Eveland, *ibid.*, pp. 200, 207, 212, 228, 238.
- 82- Batātū, *ibid.*, Chapter 18.
- 83- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 967.
- 84- The Ba'thists broadcast pictures of the dead bodies of Qāsim, Madawī, Head of the People's Court, and General al-`Abdī, Military Governor of Baghdad, in an attempt to convince Qāsim's supporters of his death; Qāsim's many supporters among the common people would simply not believe the events and that he was indeed dead. The broadcast was also meant to send to the Communists the

clear message that the head of their regime had gone and that no amount of rioting would alter the balance of power in their favour.

85- Batātū, *ibid.*, Chapter 18 for details of Communist resistance.

86- *Ibid.*, p. 985.

87- Penrose and Penrose, *ibid.*, p. 299.

88- *al-Waqā'i' al-'Irāqiyyah*, No. 771, 18 February, No. 797, 25 April 1963, publishes the National Council of the Revolutionary Command Law, No. 25 of 4 April 1963.

89- Devlin, *ibid.*, pp. 260 - 261.

90- Khaddūrī, Republican Iraq, p. 264 for the text of the initial proclamation. See also *al-Ba'th*, 19, 18 March 1963 for the text of the internal programme.

91- Devlin, *ibid.*, pp. 260 - 261. See also Batātū, *ibid.*, Chapter 55; Penrose and Penrose, *ibid.*, Chapter 1; Marr, Phebe, The Modern History of Iraq, San Francisco and Oxford, 1985, Chapter 7.

92- The state of the Ba'th Party was examined after the downfall of the Ba'th and the crisis of the Iraqi branch in a study entitled "An attempt to explain the present crisis and to assess the Party's experience in

Iraq", presented to the Extraordinary Syrian Regional Congress of the Ba`th Party, held in February 1964, Arab Political Documents, 1963, pp. 19 - 25. See *ibid.*, pp. 33 - 37, for al-Sa`dī's remarks at the same event.

- 93- al-Razzāz, Munīf, al-Tajribah al-Murrah (The Bitter Experience), Beirut, 1967, p. 78.
- 94- Arab Ba`th Socialist Party, Kalimat al-Rafīq `Ali Şālih al-Sa`dī (The Speech of Comrade `Ali Şālih al-Sa`dī) at the Extraordinary Syrian Regional Congress, February, 1964, p. 3.
- 95- Dandashlī, p. 254.
- 96- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1014.
- 97- Devlin, *ibid.*
- 98- See Note 54.
- 99- Chapter One.
- 100- *al-Waqā'i` al-`Irāqiyyah*, No. 771, 18 February 1963.
- 101- BBC EE/1199/A4/2-3, 14 March 1963. According to the public statement issued by the Communists on 3 January 1963, Muḥsin al-Shaykh Rādī, a member of the Ba`th regional command in 1963, informed Batātū in an interview in September 1964. The text of the statement



was republished in *al-Akhhbār*, organ of the Lebanese Communist Party, on 3 March 1963.

- 102- Ministry of the Interior, Iraq, *al-Munḥarifūn* (The Deviationists), Baghdad, 1964.
  
- 103- *Pravda*, 15 February 1963, quoted in *MEJ Chronology*, Vol. 17, Nos 1 and 2, p. 115. For details on the USSR's reaction to Ba`thist actions, see Smolansky, Oleg M., *The Soviet Union and the Arab East under Khrushchev*, Lewisbury, 1974, p. 227.
  
- 104- *MEJ Chronology*, Vol. 17, no. 4, Autumn, 1963, pp. 425-426.
  
- 105- Some British Government documents released by the Foreign Office revealed this information; see *al-Qabas*, 2 January 1994.
  
- 106- The bloody events between the Nationalists and the National Guard in Mosul and Baghdad were reported in *al-Ḥurriyyah* (Beirut), 19 April 1963. *al-Jamāhīr*, Baghdad, 26 May 1963, reports the Ba`thist accusation against the Nationalists. See also *al-Anwār*, Beirut, 26 May 1963 and *al-Waqā'i' al-`Irāqiyyah* (Arab Documents) at the American University of Beirut, 1963, p. 533.
  
- 107- Devlin, *ibid.*, pp. 264-265.

- 108- See Nidal al-Ba`th: VII, pp. 306-307, for the Ba`thist accusation of the Kurds.
- 109- See Chapter One.
- 110- One work which is informative about this aspect of inter-Arab politics is Kerr, Malcolm, The Arab Cold War, London, 1971, pp. 44-95. See also Abū Jābir, Kamāl, The Arab Ba`th Socialist Party, New York, 1966, pp. 75-95 and Devlin, *ibid.*, pp. 239-271.
- 111- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 259.
- 112- cf. Notes 91 and 92.
- 113- al-Munharifūn, *ibid.*
- 114- Chronology of Arab Politics, 1963, pp. 105-107.
- 115- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1022.
- 116- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 270.
- 117- Batātū, *ibid.*, Table A.49 reveals the name of the new Regional Command. See also Devlin, *ibid.*, pp. 270-271 and Azmat al-Ba`th al-`Arabī al-Ishtirākī min Khilāl Tajribatihi fi al-`Irāq (The Crisis of the Arab Socialist Ba`th Party in Light of its Experience in Iraq), Beirut, 1964, pp. 66-116.

- 118- *Baghdad Radio*, 14 November 1963.
- 119- *al-Ba`th*, 15 November 1963. See also Arab Political Documents, 1963, 471 - 472.
- 120- *New York Times*, 19 November 1963.
- 121- Khaddūrī, *ibid.*, p. 286.
- 122- See Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 272 for Amīn al-Hāfiẓ's statement.
- 123- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1022.
- 124- Ḥizb al-Ba`th al-`Arabī al-Ishtirākī (Arab Ba`th Socialist Party), Azmat al-Ba`th `Arabī al-Ishtirākī min khilāl Tajribatihi fi al-`Irāq (The Crisis of the Arab Socialist Resurrection Party in the Light of Its Experience in Iraq), Dār al-Sha`b, Beirut, 1964, p. 117.
- 125- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 270.
- 126- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1028.
- 127- Penrose and Penrose, *ibid.*, p. 317.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

**Saddam's early years and  
his role throughout `Arif regime**



## Saddam's early life

The subject of the activities of the Ba`th Party, during the period between their dismissal by Arif and their return to power, has not yet been fully investigated, because we have not yet spoken of character of Saddam Husayn, who had the leading role in the Ba`th region in Iraq at that time. This will be concerned in this chapter.

As we have noted before, the end of the 1940s and the 1950s saw important events in the Middle East, such as the creation of the Jewish state, and the rise of anti-Israeli sentiment, particularly after the humiliating Arab defeats at the hands of Israel, due to western support for the Israelis. Iraq joined Britain, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan in forming a regional defence organisation known as "the Baghdad Pact" (it was most unpopular with the Iraqi people), which was designed to protect the Middle East from Soviet expansionism. There was also the tripartite aggression by France, Britain and Israel against Egypt (the Suez Crisis). These developments created a rebellious feeling and anti-Imperialist movements throughout the Arab world. The nationalist movements were the most obvious of these political movements, and they promoted President Jamal `Abd al-Nasir of Egypt as the sole leader of the Arab world. These turbulent currents throughout the Arab world created in Iraq a mood of rebellion against the pro-western

governments and brought the monarchy to an end, in the revolution of 14 July 1958.

It was during this volatile period that Saddam grew up. The events of this time, coming on top of his deprived and violent childhood, appear to have affected his naturally unstable character considerably. It is this period of his life, before he assumed the leading role in the Ba`th Party during `Ārif's period, that we shall investigate in this section.

Different writers have produced often conflicting accounts of Saddam's life. The reference relied upon is that of Fu'ād Maṭar, who wrote the official Iraqi biography of Saddam, which was approved by Saddam. It even includes the crimes and adventures in which Saddam was involved in his youth, and which Maṭar and Saddam bragged about as a manifestation of his courage and heroism. Such misguided concepts of courage and heroism existed in pre-Islamic Arabia. Ba`thist literature admired pre-Islamic Arabia for its culture and way of life of raiding, plundering, robbery and conquest.

According to the official account, Saddam was born on 28 April 1937 in a small provincial village called al-`Awjāh near Tikrīt, a hundred miles north of Baghdad. Tikrīt had historically been a centre of defiance to external invaders, such as the Tatārs in 1258.

Saddam had always been proud of this and held his birthplace in great affection.(1) Yet, despite his fondness for Tikrīt, he had a troubled childhood. His family were of a lowly peasant background. His place of birth was a mud hut. The circumstances which surround Saddam's birth and his father are still shrouded in uncertainty. Contradictory assertions have been made about his father, Ḥusayn al-Majīd, (2) who was a poor landless peasant. One account has suggested that his father died either just before or just after Saddam's birth, while others say that his father deserted his family. His official biographies shed little light on this. An opposition account alleges that Saddam was illegitimate, and I concur with the latter as it ties in with his mother's bad reputation, (3) which damaged him psychologically and may account for his psychopathic behaviour.

Whatever the truth, all references agree that his mother, Ṣabḥah Ṭalfāḥ, married Ibrāhīm al-Ḥasan directly after Ḥusayn al-Majīd's disappearance, and lived with him in the village of al-Shawaysh, leaving her son entrusted to the care of his uncle, Khayr Allāh Ṭalfāḥ, an army officer and Nazi-sympathiser, discharged from the army and imprisoned for five years, for supporting the Rashīd `Āli movement, which the British suppressed in 1941.

Saddam's later recollection of this event was that it inspired him with nationalist feeling and made him resentful of foreign influence.(4) This recollection may be



true, because he inherited from his uncle an admiration for Nazi principles and grew up with Ba`thist ideas, whose philosophy was based on the ideology of German National Socialism and on Italian Fascism. But his allegation that he had a deep hatred for foreign influence(5) is far from the true; his political behaviour from his earliest days until the present has proved the opposite.

At any rate, the first ten years of Saddam's life were spent moving between Ṭalfāḥ's home and that of his mother and her husband. His mother's decision to remarry and relieve herself of responsibility for her son's upbringing allowed Saddam to lead an aimless life. Lonely, with no one having any interest in him, he had to look after himself from his very early years.(6) His stepfather, Ḥasan al-Majīd, was an uneducated and crude man. He used to enjoy himself by humiliating Saddam and beating him. He denied him any education and prevented him from attending school, forcing him, instead, to steal for him. As a result of this, Saddam was arrested and confined in a juvenile detention centre.(7)

It was in this atmosphere that Saddam spent his childhood. He grew up as an orphan and an outcast. He had to struggle to earn a living in an illegal way to survive in his very early years, without the support of his family or an uncaring society. He also had no friends among the village boys, who often mocked him for being fatherless. His only friend was his cousin `Adnān Khayr Allāh, three



years his junior, and his future Defence Minister. Most references agree that he used to carry an iron bar to protect himself against attacks, and that he often amused himself by killing animals.(8)

In this difficult existence, which was governed by hard, cruel tribal customs, corruption, lawlessness and murder, in addition to his miserable childhood, Saddam learnt to be ruthless and to love guns from the age of ten, as his official biography notes.(9) These factors probably account for his abnormal behaviour. He hated his family, who neglected him, when he needed them most. He also hated society, which humiliated him all the time.

It seems that Saddam's harsh and brutal childhood are things he is not proud of or wants known. In his own recollection, when he became President, he tried to play down the poverty and misery of his childhood and did not admit that it had any long-term effect on him.

**"....Life was difficult everywhere in Iraq....very few people wore shoes. And in many cases they only wore them on special occasions. Some peasants would not put their shoes on until they had reached their destination so they would look smart."(10)**

In his interview with his biographer, Fu'ād Maṭar, Saddam said that he never felt at a social disadvantage and

that he never lived a life of humiliation, even though he was a peasant's son, because the feudal authority, which had invaded many parts of Iraq at that time, never reached the central parts of Iraq where he came from.(11) Saddam's official biographies also confirm that the young Saddam, despite the abuse that he had experienced, never withdrew within himself, and faced his difficult life like a man.(12)

From these statements, can we deduce that Saddam's criminal mind is actually genetically inherited and has not been influenced by his upbringing? Saddam admitted that most Iraqis were poor. This did not lead them all to become psychopathic murderers, so his environment cannot be entirely blamed for his behaviour.

It was indeed unfortunate for Iraq that a person with these complexes and this hatred of society should become the head of state. All the destruction and ruin that Iraq has experienced reflects how much he hates society. The problems that he has caused Iraq were predictable, and it is likely that if he continues in power he will inflict more catastrophes, not only on Iraq, but on the whole region and the world.

However, in 1947, shortly after his uncle's release from prison, he left his mother and stepfather and returned to Khayr Allāh's home in Tikrīt, where he began attending school, with the help and encouragement of his cousin

`Adnān Khayr Allāh. Study was stressful to him, because he could not even spell his own name the age of ten. But the support and guiding hand of his uncle, Ṭalfāḥ, who became inspector of a local primary school following his release from prison, kept Saddam going through his difficult school years.(13) In Saddam's eyes, Khayr Allāh was an intellectual, who understood the value of education.(14)

Khayr Allāh's influence on Saddam's life seems critical. He probably had the most influence over Saddam in forming his character. He played the role of father to him, and it was with him that Saddam identified, as both model and mentor. It was he who introduced Saddam to people who were play a key role in his rise to power, including Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr, Khayr Allāh's relative and close friend throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Following in Ṭalfāḥ's footsteps, Saddam applied to the Baghdad Military Academy, but he failed the entrance examination due to his poor academic record. Even his uncle's mediation with Tikrītī officers, who had great influence in the Military Academy and the government at that time, was ineffective.(15)

His unfulfilled ambition to put on an officer's uniform was to haunt him for two decades until, in 1976, he had the rank of General conferred upon him by President al-Bakr, although he had never served in the Iraqi Military Forces. It would seem that Khayr Allāh's home provided Saddam with a useful classroom, in which he took his first



lessons in manipulation and intrigue and shaped his views for the future.

What kind of influence did the uncle have on his nephew? We can understand this from Khayr Allāh's public and political behaviour in future years, when Saddam began to rise in power, and Khayr Allāh obtained high office and a considerable fortune. A greedy and exploitative person, he used his position as Mayor of Baghdad to the full, in order to accumulate great wealth. His corruption reached such preposterous proportions that Saddam was eventually forced to remove him from office, shortly before the occupation of Kuwait. Seventeen Companies run by Khayr Allāh were closed and their executives arrested, but it seems that the real reason for Saddam's action against his uncle was not his corruption and exploitation of his position, since Saddam's greed and corruption are no less than his uncle's. After Saddam's occupation of Kuwait, many newspapers pointed out his fantastic wealth and his accounts in foreign banks. The real reason was a family rift, due to his affair with, and then marriage to, Samīrah al-Shāhbandar, ex-wife of the Chairman of Iraq Airways. The Ṭalfāḥ family sided with their daughter Sājidah (Saddam's wife and Khayr Allāh's daughter) over Saddam's involvement with Mrs Shāhbandar. The dispute ended only when 'Adnān Khayr Allāh was killed, (16) in a more than suspicious helicopter crash, soon afterwards. In this episode, Saddam made his attitude very clear, that even blood links were no guarantee of survival, if they stood against his ambitions.



His uncle Ṭalfāḥ, also provided Saddam with his first opportunity to kill at an early age. There is a widely circulated story that, at the age of twenty, he was implicated in the murder of his relative Sa`dūn al-Tikrītī, in his hometown, and that he was thrown in jail. He was freed six months later, owing to lack of evidence against him. The motive for this murder is still unclear. It may have been a political dispute or a family feud. According to Islamic opposition sources, Saddam killed a relative at the behest of Ḥasan Ibrāhīm. (17)

Another more reliable source (through personal relations with people close to Khayr Allāh Ṭalfāḥ) reveals that Sa`dūn al-Tikrītī, also known as Sa`dūn al-Nāṣirī, was one of Saddam's uncles and had informed on Khayr Allāh Ṭalfāḥ's suspicious activities during the old regime, because he was a Communist supporter of Qāsim. As a result, Khayr Allāh was demoted from his post in the directorate of education in Baghdad to a smaller post as inspector for primary schools. Thus, Khayr Allāh incited Saddam to murder Sa`dūn. (18)

Ba`thist sources confirm that Saddam killed his relative Sa`dūn al-Tikrītī after a family dispute about politics, because he was Communist. It was no crime to disregard Saddam's offence. Such claims were common. (19) Saddam's biography notes, concerning this event, that he was accused of having killed an official in Tikrīt soon

after the 1958 revolution, but was released as a result of national pressure.(20)

However, in 1955 at the age of 18, he graduated from primary school and followed his uncle to Baghdad where he attended the Karkh high school. The political mood in Iraq at that time, as we have noted above, was restless. Public dissatisfaction reached its peak in the autumn of 1956, when widespread riots overwhelmed Baghdad in reaction to the regime's inactivity during the Suez Crisis. Saddam rushed into anti-regime activities during these heated days, participating in demonstrations and riots.(21) He felt at home in this turbulent atmosphere and found political intrigue more attractive than schoolwork. His uncle's activities during the old regime had inspired him to political activism. The lack of close emotional ties in his early childhood had taught him to scheme and manipulate in order to survive, and he found anti-government activities far more gratifying than study, preferring to spend his time in the service of his new-found cause, the Ba`th Party.

## Saddam Husayn's membership of the Ba'th Party

Saddam joined the Ba'th Party in early 1957 at the age of twenty, (22) when he was probably recruited by `Abd al-Khāliq al-Samarrā'ī, a municipal clerk, who was to become one of the Party's chief ideologists. Samarrā'ī was to suffer a similar fate to that of many who were close to Saddam in the early years of his climbing to power. It seems that he was the one who brought Saddam into the Ba'th Party, and he probably knew of his skill with firearms and the way in which he had formerly acted as a hired killer with other local thugs in Ju'ayfir and Karkh. (23)

Saddam's later recollection of what drove him to join the Ba'th Party was its commitment to the idea of Arab Nationalism; this appealed to him before he became a member of the Party, because his uncle inspired him with a great nationalistic feeling. The nation's problems became part of his conscience, and this made the Party part of him. (24)

However, it is more likely that Saddam was attracted to Ba'thism because it proved opportune to his needs by enabling him to practice his ruthlessness, and his talent for underground activities, the use of weapons and conspiracy. These qualities also suited the needs of the Ba'th Party, particularly `Aflaq's, who promoted Saddam to be a key figure in the Iraq branch of the Ba'th Party.



Saddam's first function, during his earliest days in the Ba'th, was to incite his high-school mates into anti-government activities. He did this with great enthusiasm, rallying the students (as well as some local thugs) into an organised gang that struck fear into the heart of the inhabitants of the suburb of Karkh, (25) by beating innocent people and committing other ruthless acts with his lawless followers under the pretext of political activism.

While he was still a low-ranking new member of the Ba'th, he was given an obscure mission, to act in a supporting role, as bodyguard for the would-be assassins of `Abd al-Karīm Qāsim. However, later, when he obtained power, he was represented by his media as the hero of the operation, as we shall see in the next section.



## Saddam Husayn's involvement in the attempt to assassinate `Abd al-Karim Qasim

To unravel the reason behind the attempt by the Ba`th Party to assassinate `Abd al-Karīm Qāsim in 1959, it is necessary to take into consideration the complication of the regional and international political situation (mentioned before), that may have contributed to this attempt, which was regarded by the Ba`th as one of its most sophisticated operations to date.

One of the Ba`th Party's practices, as mentioned before, was to use people outside the law against their political opponents. When he found that Saddam had excelled in using weapons from a young age, and had just been released from prison, Fu'ād al-Rikābī, the leader of the Iraqi Ba`th Party since 1952, having decided that killing Qāsim was the only way to stem the tide of Communism, (26) saw Saddam as an asset to the Party, who could take part in the attempted assassination. His role in this operation was no more than that of a bodyguard, as has been said, because of his skill in using a gun and his talent and experience in killing.

The official accounts of the operation say that five men, including Saddam, were selected and trained to participate in the actual operation. Four were chosen to carry out the attack. (27) Two were to fire at the front

seat of Qāsim's car, and two at the back seat. Saddam's job was just to stand on the pavement and cover the escape of his fellow assassins. He was not supposed to fire.(28)

However, as the operation got under way he ignored the original plan, acted independently and opened fire on Qāsim. As Matar notes in his biography:

"....when he found himself face to face with the dictator, he was unable to restrain himself. He forgot all the instructions and immediately opened fire."(29)

He confused his partners, resulting in the failure of the mission. In fact, he enabled Qāsim's bodyguard to open fire himself, whereupon the assassins retreated. Saddam's abortive action thus produced the opposite result from that which the Ba`th hoped for.

In the process, the leader of the operation, `Abd al-Wahhāb al-Gharayrī was killed by Saddam's fire, and Samīr al-Najm was hit in the chest. Saddam himself was injured in the left leg, also by friendly fire.(30) Qāsim was also wounded in the hand, but within weeks had recovered. During this time, his chief of staff, Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ al `Abdī managed to control the country.(31)

Years after this incident, when Saddam had reached his goal and gained absolute power, his semi-official

biographer set his role in the most favourable light. He described the operation as 'legend'. It embodied Saddam's brave and heroic actions and made him into a great leader and a national hero. In fact, any attempt on Qāsim's life at that time should have been extremely easy, because he used to wander the streets of Baghdad alone, without protection.(32)

From Saddam's behaviour in the attempted assassination we may derive the following points:

**(1) Disobedience to Instructions:** This appears to be a dominant characteristic in Saddam; he takes pleasure in breaking laws and conventions, whether on a parochial or an international level.

**(2) Tyranny:** In times of crisis, Saddam tends to show his ferocious temper. He loses control of himself, and acts only tyrannically.(33)

**(3) Incorrect Decisions:** Saddam's tendency to make incorrect decisions appears to stem from his dislike of anyone else's sharing in the process. The results, so far, have been unfortunate.

**(4) Bloodthirstiness:** When he found that he had a weapon in his hand and a victim in front of him, he could not resist opening fire. This is backed up by the notes of his semi-official biographer,(34) who says that Saddam



Husayn made a confession in front of the General Director of Security, Rashīd Muḥsin, when he was held as a prisoner during the regime of `Abd al-Salām `Ārif. According to this biographer, Saddam said that he fired at `Abd al-Karīm, not because he hated him - he said that he had nothing against him - but because he could not resist firing when he had a target in front of him. He did, however, say something completely different when he came to power - that he attempted to assassinate `Abd al-Karīm because he had swerved from the original path of the 14 July revolution, and that that was why he had to be removed from power.

**(5) Betrayal:** He exiled, imprisoned, tortured or killed almost all his partners in the attempt, when he reached power:

(a) Fu'ād al-Rikābī: the brains behind the operation. Saddam accused him of being a spy for the CIA, and he was imprisoned, then executed in prison, by order of Saddam. (35)

(b) Salīm al Zaybaq: the first to be poisoned by Saddam with *Thalium*. Most people thought that he had died of cancer. (36)

(c) `Ayād Sa`īd Thābit: Saddam tried to assassinate him many times but failed. He fled the country and is still living in exile.



- (d) Sa`dūn al-Bayrmāwi: Saddam planned his and his wife's deaths in a car accident. (37)
- (e) Samīr al-Najm: Saddam planned for him to die in an air crash, together with another of his assassins, Ḥamūdī al-`Azāwī. However Samīr al-Najm survived the crash. He begged for his life and is still alive; he was given an inferior post in the Ministry of Irrigation. (38)
- (f) `Abd al-Karīm al-Shaykhī: He remained Saddam's partner for twenty years and carried out some dangerous missions for him. Saddam arranged for him to be assassinated on 8 April 1980, when he was about to retire from his duties as Foreign Minister.

After the failed attempt, the assassins managed to get away to one of the Party's hide-outs in the capital. One of the leading members of the Ba`th Party contacted a student doctor, Taḥsīn al-Mu`allā, who was a Ba`thist from the Baghdad College of Medicine. Mu`allā was driven to the safe-house and there treated two wounded men. Saddam denies any recollection of this. (39) After a while, Saddam decided to leave the safe-house, and, subsequently, the country, minutes before the intelligence service arrived. This, of course, aroused suspicion; all of Saddam's partners were arrested and tried in public by the People's Court, presided over by Colonel Fāḍil `Abbās al-Mahdāwī. Most of

the Ba`thists involved in the operation were sentenced to imprisonment; six were sentenced to death, but the sentences were never carried out.(40)

The sentence that al-Mahdāwī and his court pronounced on February 26 assigned guilt to the National Command of the Ba`th Party for having planned the assassination.(41)

The National Command's response to the court's accusation was conflicting. At one time it denied its involvement.(42) Then, at the Fourth National Congress of the Party, held in June 1960, it condemned the operation and reliance on political assassination in order to effect changes in reactionary conditions.(43) At another time, it alleged that Qāsim's own murder of the people's leaders, of army officers and intellectual youths, by means of dragging them through the streets without trial except by Mahdāwī 's false tribunal, had incited a number of patriotic youths, in a spirit of self-defence, to act in that manner.(44) When al-Rikābī and al-Rimāwī, the Jordanian Regional Secretary of the Ba`th Party combined, with Cairo's support, against the authority of the National Command and formed their own rival Ba`th organisation,(45) the Ba`th Party issued a statement blaming al-Rikābī and his associates on the Regional Command in Iraq for their unauthorised attempt to assassinate Qāsim, with the encouragement of the UAR Leaders in Syria.(46) Devlin sided with the position of the National Command and gave evidence to support this view.(47)

Although the evidence in the trial and in al-Rikābī's book al-Hal al-'Awhad (the only solution) supports the theory that the UAR was involved in inciting al-Rikābī to make the attempt, we may conclude from the Ba'th's public statement justifying its political position in trying to oust Qāsim, that he was under the influence of the Communists, who were working to push `Iraq into the Eastern camp and to introduce it into the cold war and into international conflict.(48) The USSR, on the other hand, thought that Qāsim had pushed the Iraq Communists aside and that they had no effect on the government's decisions, policies or the running of the country.(49)

Thus, it is more likely that the Iraqi Ba'thist leaders also had the National Command's approval to assassinate Qasim and that the attempt was carried out with its blessing, even though the evidence is not conclusive.



## Saddam Husayn in exile

Saddam fled to Tikrīt, before making his way to Syria, together with `Abd al-Karīm al-Shaykhī and Fu`ād al-Rikābī, where he was warmly received by the National Command in Damascus and the Ba`th leader, Michel `Aflaq, who promoted him later to the highest rank in the Party.(50) Other distinguished leaders who had taken part in the attempted assassination were unable to attain any comparable position. Saddam stayed in Syria for six months, before going to Cairo.

On 21 February 1960 he left Damascus for Cairo, ostensibly as a student. Cairo, at that time, had been the centre of pan-Arabism since the United Arab Republic had been formed in 1958. Like many other details in Saddam's life, his period in Cairo was questionable and it is still shrouded in uncertainty. His official biography gives contradictory stories about that period. It is said that he lived in Cairo in a flat in the Nīl quarter of Duqqī. He was given a monthly allowance by the Arab Interests Bureau of the Egyptian Mukhābarāt. He attended Cairo's Qaṣr al-Nīl private secondary school; in 1961, at the age of 24, he graduated from secondary school and entered the Law School at Cairo University.(51) He failed to qualify in law then, but he was awarded a degree at Baghdad University when he attained power some years later.



His main activity during his three and half years in Cairo, according to the official version, was that he was working hard on strengthening the Ba`th Party Command in Cairo. He joined `Abd al-Karīm al-Shaykhli in an Egyptian branch of the Ba`th Party, and within a short while he became a member of its Branch Command and then of the Regional Command.(52) This account gives the impression that Saddam lived in Cairo comfortably. However, at the same time, his biographer reveals that Saddam spent his time in Cairo as if in prison. He was harassed, kept under observation and had his rooms searched.(53)

According to Saddam's own account, his period in Cairo was like a prison sentence, but it was an opportunity for him to meet President Nasir, whom he admired for his political career and his strong presidency in standing against the west and becoming the sole leader of the Arab world.(54)

Many other sources, both Arabic and non-Arabic, also confirm that Saddam was harassed by the Egyptian intelligence service. From sources close to Saddam we learn that his maintenance allowance, which he received from the Egyptian government, was often delayed, and sometimes suspended. He often returned to his flat to discover that it had been searched.(55)

The explanations for his harassment by the Egyptian security service differ. His biography, as usual, sheds

little light on this, suggesting that he experienced the usual treatment from the Egyptian security service of all political exiles in Cairo. Opposition accounts suggest that he was chased by the security services because he used to take frequent trips to Syria and Beirut to meet `Aflaq and other members of the Ba`th Command.(56) These trips probably caused the Egyptian authorities to keep an eye on his activities, especially after the union between Syria and Egypt was abrogated in September 1961. Nasir, who had been the President of the Federation, started to worry about anything that smelt of Ba`thism. He had no interest in propping up Ba`thist expansionism which might threaten his own position.

Other references recount that Saddam was put under pressure, because of his suspicious political activities.(57) This view is more likely, because it is supported by other reports, which confirmed, Saddam's suspicious links with foreign powers, particularly the Americans, since he was seen visiting the American Embassy in Cairo frequently.(58)

There are also some accounts which claim that Saddam was arrested twice and threatened with deportation by the Egyptians. It is unclear whether this occurred because Saddam threatened to kill an Iraqi exile, or because he was involved with drugs. According to Batātū, Saddam was arrested by the security services for threatening to kill a fellow Iraqi, with Nasirite sympathies, over political

differences.(59) It is also claimed that he was arrested a second time after chasing a fellow Ba`thist student through the streets of Cairo with a knife.(60)

Whatever the truth, he was released at once on the personal intervention of President Nasir.(61) This intervention raises further questions:

- (1) Why did President Nasir order Saddam's release, while, at the same time, the security services were harassing him?
- (2) Why was President Nasir involved with an ordinary student exile, who had no position apart from being engaged in violence and suspicious affairs?

Thus, some influential body must have interceded on behalf of Saddam. It is, however, unlikely to have been the Ba`thists, because Nasir, at that time, regarded the Ba`th Party as his main enemy, following the break-up of the union, which he blamed on the Ba`thists.

It was in Cairo that Saddam decided to marry his cousin, Sājidah Ṭalfāḥ, and he had his engagement party there. They got married shortly after his return to Iraq, in early 1963. It was said that Sājidah had been brought to Cairo with the co-operation of the Egyptian Mukhābarāt in order to reduce Saddam's activities.(62)



Saddam must have had prior warning, while he was in Cairo, that the Ba`thists were going to attempt a coup in Iraq. According to one of his personal friends in Cairo, he told him that his stay in Cairo was ending because there would soon be change in Iraq. (63)

Shortly after this announcement, the Ba`th Party was able to overthrow Qāsim, with outside help and the blessing of `Aflaq (as revealed in previous chapters), and Saddam returned to Iraq within two weeks of the coup to take part in the new regime.

## Saddam Husayn's activities throughout the first Ba`th regime

Saddam returned to Iraq soon after the Ba`th came to power on 8 February 1963. Upon arriving in Baghdad, he found himself an outsider. His three and a half years in Egypt had kept him isolated from developments, which were extremely confused for a few months after the Ba`th coup. As mentioned before, there were conflicts between different groups, consisting of the left-wing, led by al-Sa`dī, the right-wing, led by Tālib Shabib, the Foreign Minister, and the centrist wing or moderates, led by the Tikrītī army officers, Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr, Ḥardān `Abd al-Ghaffār and Ṣāliḥ Maḥdī `Amāsh.

These factions were jockeying for power and personal interest only, as can be seen from the discussion of the events in chapter two. The centrist wing was behind the conflict between the left-wing and the right-wing in order to control the Party, on the one hand, and to seize power in Iraq, on the other hand. The first initiative of the centrist wing was to use al-Sa`dī as a bridge to reach its aim. It was represented in the Fifth Congress of the Regional Command, and al-Bakr was appointed a member of the National Command, on the recommendation of al-Sa`dī.(64)

The centrist wing strengthened its link with the hard-line Ḥāzīm Jawād and Tālib Shabib in order to wipe out the al-Sa`dī wing; it then employed special tactics to wipe out

both rival wings, not just outside the Party, but outside Iraq as well (as mentioned in chapter two), regarding them responsible for the organisation crisis of the Ba`th in Iraq, (65) despite the fact that the Tikrītī officers were just as responsible as they. `Aflaq also blamed the two rival factions for being involved with military officers, Tikrītīs, (66) while he rewarded this wing with the largest share of seats on the Party leadership, as we shall see later.

However, Saddam was given a minor position as a member of the Party's central bureau for peasants, (67) which was less than he felt he deserved. To achieve his ambition for rapid promotion, he followed the centrist faction. This move was reinforced by his blood relationship with the Tikrītī officers: Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr, the Prime Minister, Rashīd Muṣleḥ, the Military Governor, Ṭāhir Yaḥyā, Chief of the General Staff, Ḥardaān al-Tikrītī, Commander of the Air Force and Ṣāliḥ Maḥdī `Ammāsh, Minister of Defence, and was strengthened later through marriage, which helped to propel him to power. He was seen acting as a bodyguard for his close relative, Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr, after he had sensed that his faction was effectively supported by Michel `Aflaq. (68) It was an astute strategy, for the reward for Saddam's faithfulness to the al-Bakr wing followed soon after.

The Ba`th enjoyed nine bloody months of power, during which Saddam served as a torturer in Qaṣr al-Nihāyah,



together with a number of other Ba`thists, who seem to have taken a personal interest in his work there.

Saddam's practices in Qaşr al-Nihāyah struck terror even inside the Party, and, combined with other barbarous Ba`thist activities, (69) created scandal at both national and international level. These acts had the blessing of Michel `Aflaq, who viewed the Communist Party in `Iraq as a special target for the Ba`th's first countrywide barbarous crime, as he declared soon after the coup:

**"....Communist Parties will be banned and suppressed with the utmost severity in any country where the Ba`th comes to power." (70)**

It is also however, said, that `Aflaq criticised these ruthless practices. (71) He stated at the 1964 Extraordinary Congress of the Syrian Ba`th:

**"....I constantly warned against a policy of bloodshed and torture, whosoever might be its victims, for our differences with the communists cannot possibly justify such means....was it permissible to give the rein to non-party or poorly conscious elements....who had a basic interest in the killing of communists?" (72)**

We may infer that `Aflaq's announcement was disingenuous, designed to give his party a civilised image

that was completely at odds with its violent, bloody nature, of which he approved. If this had not been the case, the Ba`thists, such as Saddam, who carried out many ruthless activities, and was one of those responsible for the savagery of the nine months of the Party's first period of power, which led to its total rejection, would not have been reinstated in positions of even greater authority, when it gained power for a second time in 1968. It was probably due to this talent that he jumped in one year, from February 1963 to February 1964, to a high position in the Iraq Regional Command of the Ba`th Party, with `Aflaq's approval.

However, after these nine months, the Ba`th Party in Iraq was defeated by `Abd al-Salām `Ārif and the Tikrītī Ba`thist officers. The National Guard had been suppressed by the order of General Ḥardān al-Tikrītī, who had been commander of the air force, and who in that position had issued the order for the disposition of the forces to suppress the Ba`thist Guard.(73) The new Ba`th Regional leadership which was appointed only a week earlier, was arrested. Some of its members immediately collaborated with the `Ārif regime. Other Ba`th leaders were sent abroad into exile without offering any resistance. It was a severe blow to the Ba`th Party in Iraq and its regional leadership, which was torn apart and dissolved itself.

## Saddam's appontment to the Regional Command of the Iraq Ba`th Party

After the Ba`th's embarrassing failure in Iraq on 18 November 1963, some remaining elements from the dissolved Ba`th cadre formed a committee called *Lajnat tanzīm al-Iraq* (Committee for the organisation of Iraq). The National Command gave orders to abolish this Committee and formally asked the chairman and the members to co-operate with the new Iraq Regional Command for the discipline and unity of the Party.

At the same time, Radio Damascus announced the dismissal of the chairman and the members of the Committee by order of the National Command. Many Ba`thist members of this Committee were put in prison, while others escaped abroad, after they had been denounced by some Tikrītī officers who had been given high positions in `Ārif's regime. Saddam associated himself with these officers and joined in the denunciations.

Accounts of Saddam's role in these events also differ. According to former Ba`thist accounts, (74) Rashīd Muṣleḥ, the Military Governor for the new regime, informed Saddam of undercover Ba`thist organisations. Saddam was seen, with other Ba`thists, such as Mūḥsin Sha`lān, and `Ārif's security service, when attacking Ba`thist sites. For this, Saddam was expelled from the Ba`th and was penalised. Saddam showed that his loyalty to Tikrītī was always



stronger than his loyalty to the Party. It is said that once Saddam was in power, he almost certainly had Muṣleḥ and Sha`lān killed, in order to ensure their silence.(75)

Pro-Ba`thist accounts suggest that after the Ba`th defeat in November 1963, the members of the Ba`th Party, including Saddam, were forced to flee Baghdad and go into hiding. (76)

According to official sources,(77) Saddam travelled secretly to Syria and made arrangements with `Aflaq to work for a strong and integrated party in Iraq. As a result, he was put in charge of military affairs in the Party, in addition to security affairs. The responsibility helped him to control the whole party within a few years.

When the Seventh Congress of the Syrian National Command was convened in Damascus in February 1964, the Iraq Ba`th Party was reconstituted and, thanks to Michel `Aflaq's efforts and al-Bakr wing's support, Saddam was appointed secretary of this new organisation.(78) Al-Bakr was also elected a member of the National Command at the Congress. He subsequently became Secretary General of the Iraq Regional Command, and Saddam, sensing that this was where power resided, attached himself to him. Saddam was attached to this faction and promoted to high rank in the Party through the influence of `Aflaq, who supported this faction.

Devlin's comment on this promotion which is not far from the truth is that 'Aflaq chose elements for the new Regional Command from members who were known for their experience in conflict and their lack of involvement in the setback or in the personal enmities causing it.(79)

Saddam now controlled the highest decision-making body of the Iraq Branch of the Ba'th Party, at the behest of Michel 'Aflaq. This appointed position was a major turning point in Saddam's political career, which transformed him within a few years into the most powerful figure in the Party. It was a new beginning of horror for the Ba'th Party in Iraq.

From his first moment in the new organisation, he was determined to assume responsibility for military and security organisation. Saddam and 'Aflaq (both civilians) sensed that a powerful and independent military always posed a threat to civilian government. Saddam had already learned this from experience, especially when the Tikrītī military Officers in the Ba'th Party sided with fellow officers (despite the fact that he took the Tikrītī Officers' side) to oust the civilian Ba'thists and to eject the Ba'th from power. Something similar happened in Syria, which left deep divisions throughout the Ba'th organisation.(80)

In Saddam's view, there was no alternative to physical force and military might for taking power and staying

there. In order to counter the existing military power, Saddam took charge of the new security unit of the IRAQ branch of the Ba`th Party called *al-Jihāz al-Khāṣṣ* and code-named *Jihāz Ḥanīn*. (81)

It was a shadowy unit of armed men, modelled on the Nazi SS, selected from the most devoted Ba`thists, to be a party-based alternative power to that represented by the Ba`thist officers, who obtained their authority from their vital importance to the State. (82) It was the same as *al-Ḥaras al-Qawmī* (National Guard), who carried out so many crimes in the first Ba`th regime. But this time the unit was a tightly organised cell and had an important role in events during the 1968 Ba`thist coup. (83)

It seems that the Militia is an important component of Ba`th ideology, for the following reasons:

- (a) It was a counterbalance to the army, which Saddam and Aflaq always feared.
- (b) It was tool of confrontation for the Party, to carry out its violent operations.

This unit subsequently became a specialist unit for intelligence matters, the most powerful and feared organisation, called the *Mukhābārat*.



## Saddam Husayn's activities throughout `Ārif's Regime

In the light of the events of November 1963, and what the Ba`thists did when they gained power, it can hardly be denied that their ambition to gain power is an important part of their principles. They have always arranged coalitions with the elements who had the upper hand, as a key role in their attempt to overthrow regimes. This became the Ba`thist doctrine for reaching power. But the Ba`thists did not like to be part of any coalition, unless they were the dominant party. It was, therefore, impossible for the Ba`thists who shared power with `Ārif to stay with him. They could not accept any sharing of the responsibilities of the State. In addition, it seems there are other reasons which prevented them from staying with the regime, as Penrose notes: (84)

(a) The Arab nationalist officers who co-operated with the `Ārif regime and shared with the Ba`thists in their first cabinet were irreconcilably opposed to the Ba`th Party and its methods.

(b) The Iraq Ba`thists experienced a virulent attack from the radical members of the Syrian Ba`th Party and from al-Sa`dī and his group, who were sheltering in Damascus at that time.

(c) The public was not anxious to see the Ba`thists, who had committed crimes in 1963, return to power.

The events in Syria in July 1963, after the Syrian Nasirites had attempted a coup against the ruling Ba`th regime, which was severely suppressed by the Ba`th Party, led to bitter verbal attacks from each side, and the enmity between Nasir and the Ba`th was brought to a head.(85) This may be another reason behind the removal of most Iraqi Ba`thist ministers from their posts.

However, the Ba`thists' exclusion or resignation from the new government in early 1964, was inevitable. The Prime Minister, Ṭāhir Yaḥyā and the Minister of Interior, Rashīd Muṣleḥ, were the only Tikrītī officers who kept their posts, having bound themselves to the regime. Batatu suggests on this point(86) that the spirit of accommodation to existing circumstances for the latter proved stronger than ties of party or town. In fact this phenomenon characterised not only Yaḥyā and Muṣleḥ, but all the Tikrītī officers group and the Ba`thists themselves, who would have been prepared to continue to co-operate, had `Ārif permitted it.(87)

Soon after the Ba`thists' removal from the government, the Ba`th Party instructed Saddam to assassinate President `Abd al-Salām `Ārif. Saddam was then in charge of military and security affairs. His biographer describes how he reorganised his comrades, purchased

weapons, obtained explosives for bombing attacks, always travelled with a machine-gun and a revolver and rented a house as a hide-out for the Party, in order to plot the Coup against the `Ārif regime.(88)

The reasons behind the Ba`thist attempt, as some sources suggest, were `Ārifs economic and political policies, which were dominated by the philosophy and tactics of Nasir's Arab Socialism. These developments did not favour western interests.(89) It was said that the Ba`thists were acting on behalf of the CIA and MI6, who had contacts with Ba`thist officers, particularly the Tikrītīs and their narrow circle.(90)

According to the official account, two plans were made to assassinate President `Ārif, with Saddam having the leading role in the attempts.(91)

- (1) The first plan: Saddam arranged with an officer of the Republican Guard to help him to slip into the Presidential Palace during a cabinet meeting and exterminate the whole leadership. This plan was unsuccessful because the officer who was working with them was unexpectedly removed from his post.
- (2) The second plan: Saddam proposed to assassinate `Ārif by shooting down his plane on his way to attend an Arab summit meeting in Cairo. This plan failed as well



when it was discovered that one of the pilots was working for `Ārif's secret service.

Some sources say that `Abd al-Karīm Naṣrat played the crucial role in the Ba`th plan to unseat `Ārif. He was one of the Ba`thist officers who co-operated with the `Ārif regime and had the post of divisional commander in `Ārif's government but was fired shortly afterwards, together with the other Ba`thists, from his post.(92)

In any event, when these plans were uncovered by the police, there was a wave of arrests among Party members and the leadership. Saddam refused to flee to Syria and continued working for the overthrow of the `Ārif regime, until the National Command in Damascus ordered him to flee, after the arrests of the Ba`th leadership in Iraq.(93) He did this because he did not want to lose his position in the Party and damage his prospects for future glory after having had a stint of patient hard work, just because of his involvement in these operations; in fact the risk was far smaller than those he had already taken during the attempt on Qāsim's life. His decision this time seems reasonable. It was not like other risky decisions that he was to take in subsequent years.

He went underground, but in mid-October 1964 he was discovered and sent to the central prison in Baghdad.(94) According to some opponents, after he was arrested, he collapsed under the pressure, and gave all the details of

the Ba`thist structure to `Ārif's authorities, in order to avoid any torture that they might inflict upon him.(95) What makes this claim plausible is the fact that he had no commitment to any chauvinistic aims or humanitarian goals, as is evident from his alliances when he reached power. His abandoning of sovereignty over the whole of Iraq and its people, after the Second Gulf War, tends to confirm that he looks out only for his own selfish interests and his retention of power. In fact, however, he was not subjected to any kind of torture, because Ṭāhir Yaḥyā al-Tikrītī (the Prime Minister) gave orders that he was not to be harmed.(96) On the contrary, more or less absolute freedom appears to have been given to the prisoners,(97) and the authorities followed Ba`thist activities with little or no real interest. This is quite the opposite of what the Ba`thists claim, namely, that they were the victims of torture and oppression. In addition there were several invitations from `Abd al-Raḥmān `Ārif to the major leaders of the Ba`th Party, between 1966 and 1968, to take part in the cabinet.(98)

In Saddam's account of his prison term, he says that he spent his time reading about some of the greatest political characters, like Stalin. Saddam has admitted to admiring Stalin.(99) It seems that he has followed the Stalinist model of political control. He changed the Ba`th Party into a political military machine, the main function of which was to put terror into the hearts of the people and to use force and accusation of conspiracy to remain in



power. This was Stalin's strategy in his early years when he controlled the civilian Soviet Communist Party and rooted it deeply in power, from which it could not be removed even by the army. He also disposed of his political opponents in the Party, using accusations of conspiracy to achieve this aim.(100) A further important benefit to Saddam from his period in prison was that he made close contacts with Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr, who had already been released. They had both of them decided to work together to return the Ba`th Party to power by any means.

In October 1966, Saddam succeeded in escaping from prison with two other Ba`thists, for emergency reasons, according to his biographer.(101) Like many other stories about Saddam's heroic and impetuous deeds, his days in prison and his escape became part of his legend.

However, it seems that the main reason for his escape from prison was the serious development facing `Aflaq when a military coup brought the radical Marxist faction of the Ba`th to power in Damascus on 23 February 1966. `Aflaq, Ṣalāḥ al-Biṭār and their faction were ousted, and the National Command was dissolved. A new one was established under the wing of Damascus by the Ninth National Congress, which was held in September 1966.(102)

This development happened at a time when the Ba`th Party in Iraq was very weak, since most of its leadership and members were in prison after the abortive coup against



`Ārif's regime. Saddam had to deal with it quickly and carefully. He announced that there was a Regional Command, without reverting to a National Command, which no longer existed after the coup of February 1966. This Regional Command consisted of Saddam Husayn, `Abd al-Khāliq al-Samarrā'iī, `Abd al-Karīm al-Shaykhliī, and also Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr, who could not often attend its meetings for security reasons.(103)

Accordingly, a Regional Congress meeting was held and Saddam seized the post of Deputy Secretary General of the Party, and was then elected, at the meeting, to the new Regional Command, with Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr as Secretary General, `Abd al-Karīm al-Shaykhliī, Ṣāliḥ Maḥdī `Amāsh, Ṭahā al-Jazrāwī and `Abd Allah Salūm al-Samarrā'ī.(104) He started to build an inner circle of supporters, usually his relatives, on whom he could base his absolute rule.

Saddam and his close associates were greatly concerned with the developments in Syria for two important reasons:

- (1) The leadership of the coup in Syria was composed of military officers, which was something which Saddam always tried to avoid.
- (2) The radical faction in Syria was Marxist - as they pretended - which aroused fears of a possible reawakening of the leftist faction of the Iraqi Ba`th. The leftist faction was not completely under control;

it might be rejuvenated with the support of the Syrian faction.

For these two reasons, Saddam worked very hard between October 1966 and 1968 to establish the Party's underground machine, as follows:

- (a) He eliminated all the remaining leftists in the ranks of the Ba`th Party.
- (b) He reconstructed the Party's organisation, and extended the network of branches throughout the country.
- (c) He completed the formation of the Party's security network (al-Amn al-Khāss), which he had personally headed before he went to prison. This was extended later to include the Party's military militia; they played an important role in events during the 1968 Ba`thist coup. (105)

These underground activities enabled Saddam to sharpen his skills and affirm his leadership over his associates - he also had a native talent, as already mentioned, for organising conspiracy and deceit. The cautiousness and distrust which he had acquired during his early years of being hunted also helped him a lot. Together with a narrow circle of associates he worked with excellent effect to gain power and exploited the sentiment among the people,

after the disastrous effects of the 1967 War, and government tolerance towards Ba`thist activities. As usual, Saddam and his associates came to an arrangement with four senior military officers, who were supposed to protect `Ārif's regime but who made it easy for them to achieve their goal. In fact without them, the Ba`th Party could not have hoped to gain power, as will be seen in the next chapter.



## NOTES

- 1- Saddam Husayn's interview with the Independent Television Network (ITN), 11 October 1990 and his address to the Iraqi nation transmitted by Baghdad's Domestic Service, 17 July 1990.
- 2- Karsh, Efraim and Inari Rautsi, Saddam Husayn: A Political Biography, UK, 1991, p. 7; Bulloch, John and Harvey Morris Saddam's War, London, 1991, p. 31; Simons, Geoff, Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam, London, Second edition, 1996, p. 271; Henderson, Simon, Saddam Husayn's Ambition for Iraq, Mercury House, San Francisco, California, 1991, p. 52; Miller, Judith and L. Myllroie, Saddam Husayn and the Crisis in the Gulf, Time Books, Random House, New York, 1990, p. 26; Mājid Khaddūrī, Socialist Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics Since 1968, Washington, 1978, pp. 71-76; Marr, Phebe, The Modern History of Iraq, west-view press, Boulder, San Francisco, USA, 1985, p. 218; Darwish, Adel and Gregory Alexander, Unholy Babylon, London, 1991, p. 198; Iskandar, Amīr, Saddām Husayn: Munādīlan wa Mufakkiran wa Insānan (Saddam Husayn: The Fighter, the Thinker and the Man), N.P. Hachette, Paris, 1981, 1980; Fu'ād Maṭar, Saddam Husayn: The Man, the Cause and the Future, Third World Centre, London, 1981.

- 3- Miller, Judith and L Mylroie, *ibid.*, p. 37; Khālīdah `Abd al-Khūr, Sukratīrat Saddām Tatakallam (Saddam's Secretary Talking), Cairo, 1990, pp. 22ff.
- 4- Interview of Saddam Hussein in 1974 by Mājid Khaddūrī of Johns Hopkins University. See also Maṭar, *ibid.*, p. 228.
- 5- See, for example, one of his later pronouncements:  
".... our children should be taught to beware of everything foreign and not disclose any state or party secrets to foreigners ... for foreigners are eyes for their countries, and some of them are counter-revolutionary instruments in the hands of imperialism." See Saddam Husayn, al-Dimuqrāṭiyyah Maṣḍaru Ouwwah li al-Fard wa al-Mujtama` (Democracy, a source of power for the individual and the society), *al-Thawrah*, Baghdad, 1977, p. 20.
- 6- Iskandar, *ibid.*, p. 18.
- 7- *The Guardian*, 14 August 1990.
- 8- Bulloch & Morris, *ibid.*, p. 32; Karsh & Rautsi, *ibid.*, p.9.
- 9- Iskandar, *ibid.* p. 45; Maṭar, *ibid.*, p. 31.

- 10- Saddam's interview with ABC correspondent, Diane Sawyer, on 24 June 1990, as broadcast by the Iraqi news Agency (INA), 30 June 1990.
- 11- Maṭar, *ibid.*, pp. 227-228.
- 12- Quoted in Simon Henderson, *ibid.*, p. 52.
- 13- Karsh and Rautsi, *ibid.*, p. 10.
- 14- *al-Thawrah*, 2 February 1987.
- 15- Interview with Ṣaliḥ `Āmir al-`Alī al-Tikrītī in London, on 28 March 1994. He was a former member of the Ba`th Regional Command and a former chief of Jihāz Ḥanīn in the early days of the Ba`thist regime.
- 16- For the official account of the crash, see *al-Thawrah*, 2 February 1987.
- 17- Lawrence, Ken, Who is Saddam al-Tikrītī?, *The Islamic Union of Iraqi Studies*, nd, p. 5.
- 18- See the testimony of Faliyah al-Nāṣirī, Sa`dūn al-Tikrītī's brother, in front of the Sha`b (People's) Court in Mahādir Muḥākamat al-Mahkama al-`Askariyyah al-`Ulyā al-Khāṣṣah (Proceedings of the Special Supreme Military Tribunal), vol. 5, Baghdad, 1958-1962, p. 410.



- 19- Interview with Ṣaliḥ `Āmir al-`Ali al-Tikrītī in London.
- 20- Maṭar, *ibid.*, pp. 31-32.
- 21- Maṭar, *ibid.*, p. 31; Henderson, *ibid.*, p. 60; Karsh and Rautsi, *ibid.*, p. 12.
- 22- Maṭar, *ibid.*, p. 31.
- 23- See, for example, Karsh and Rautsi, *ibid.*, pp. 15-16, which is near to the fact, as it was common knowledge that Saddam was at the time one of the local thugs in Ju`āfir and Karkh before he joined the Ba`th Party.
- 24- Maṭar, *ibid.*, p. 228.
- 25- Karsh and Rautsi, *ibid.*, pp. 15-16.
- 26- al-Rikābī, Fu`ād, al-Hall al-Awḥad (the Sole Solution) Cairo, al-Sharikah al-`Arabiyyah li al-Ṭiba`ah wa al-Nashr, 1963.
- 27- Devlin noted that the assassination squad who were accused of carrying out the attempt numbered six: Thābit, Dulaymī, Ṭāha `Azzūz, Salīm `Isā Zaybaq, `Abd al-Hamīd May`ī and Samīr `Abd al-`Azīz Na`īm; see Devlin, John, The Ba`th Party, a History From Its

Origins to 1966, Hoover institution press, Stanford University, Stanford, California, 1975, p. 157.

- 28- Maṭar, *ibid.*, p. 32.
- 29- Iskandar, *ibid.*, p. 45.
- 30- Karsh and Rautsi, *ibid.*, p. 18.
- 31- Penrose, Edith and E.F. Penrose, Iraq: International Relations and National Development, London, 1978, 235.
- 32- *Ibid.*
- 33- Iskander, *ibid.*, p. 45.
- 34- *Ibid.*, p. 88.
- 35- al-`Alawī, Ḥasan, al-`Irāq Dawlat al-Munazzamah al-Sirriyah, (Iraq: State of the Secret Organisation), London, 1990, pp. 79 - 80.
- 36- *Ibid.*
- 37- *Ibid.*
- 38- *Ibid.*

- 39- Bulloch and Morris, *ibid.*, p. 35.
- 40- Iraq, Trials, Vols. 20-22.
- 41- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 157.
- 42- *al-Şahāfah* (Beirut), 15 January 1960.
- 43- Niḍal al-Ba`th (Struggle of Ba`th Party): IV, p. 189.
- 44- *Arab World*, 15 January 1960, p. 1.
- 45- *Arab World*, 2 January 1962, p. 1; Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 176.
- 46- See the National Command Statement in Niḍal al-Ba`th: IV, p. 101.
- 47- Devlin, *ibid.*, pp. 158-159.
- 48- Niḍal al-Ba`th: IV, p. 77.
- 49- Smolansky, Oleg M., The Soviet Union and the Arab East under Khrushchev, np, 1974, pp. 183 ff.
- 50- Penrose and Penrose, *ibid.*, pp. 362-363.
- 51- Iskandar, *ibid.*, pp. 66 - 67, 70 - 73.



- 52- Maṭar, *ibid.*, p. 44.
- 53- *Ibid.*
- 54- *Ibid.*, p. 237.
- 55- An interview with Shawqī Malāsī in London on 7 March 1994. Malāsī, a Sudanese Ba`thist, was a personal friend of Saddam during the latter's years in Egypt.
- 56- Zamzamī, `Abd al-Mājid, al-Ḥarb al-`Irāqiyyah al-Irāniyyah (al-Islām wa al-Qawmiyyah) (The Iraq-Iran War (Islam and Nationalism)), International Agency for Distribution, Beirut, nd, p. 74.
- 57- Bullock and Morris, *ibid.*, p. 37.
- 58- Karsh and Ratsi, *ibid.*, p. 21.
- 59- Batātū, Hana, The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movement of Iraq, Princeton University Press, 1978, p. 1084.
- 60- Miller and Myllroie, *ibid.*, p. 30.
- 61- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1084.
- 62- Darwish and Alexander, *ibid.*, p. 200.

- 63- An interview with Shawqī Malāsī, see note 55 above.
- 64- Nidal al-Ba`th: Vol.9, pp. 53-60.
- 65- See the document presented to the Extraordinary Syrian Regional Congress of the Party held in February 1964 and entitled Muhāwalah li Idāh al-Azmah wa Taqyīm Tajārib al-Hizb fi al-`Irāq (An Attempt to Explain the Crisis and to Assess the Party's Experiences in Iraq), document presented for discussion to the Extraordinary Syrian Regional Congress of the Party held in February 1964.
- 66- Arab Political Documents, 1964, pp. 21 - 22.
- 67- Iskandar, *ibid.*, pp. 76.
- 68- Bulloch and Morris, *ibid.*, p. 38.
- 69- The acts of savagery and brutality committed by Saddam and the Ba`thists in Qaṣr al-Nihāyah and throughout the ninth month of the Ba'th Regime in 1963 were, bizzarely to say the least, justified on grounds of social reform, as is evident from, for instance, a 1964 government publication entitled al-Munḥarifūn (The Deviationists), Ministry of Interior, Baghdad, 1964.
- 70- *al-Akbār* (Baghdad), 24 February 1963; `Aflaq's interview with the French daily *Le Monde*.

- 71- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 990.
- 72- The Arab Ba`th Socialist Party, Internal document, al-Kalimah al-Thānīyah li al-Rafīq Mīshīl `Aflaq (The Second Intervention of Comrade Michel `Aflaq) at the Extraordinary Syrian Regional Congress, 2 February 1964, 2.
- 73- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1027.
- 74- `Alawī, *ibid.*, p. 29.
- 75- *Ibid.*
- 76- Henderson, *ibid.* p. 70.
- 77- Maṭar, *ibid.*, p. 45.
- 78- Saddam's appointment is noted in Azmat al-Ba`th al-`Arabī al-Ishtirākī min Khilāl Tajribatihi fi al-`Irāq (The Crisis of the Arab Socialist Ba`th in Light of its experience in Iraq) Beirut, 1964, an apologia by the al-Sa`dī faction.
- 79- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 274.
- 80- Niḍal al-Ba`th, Vol.9, p. 202



- 81- David Hirst referred to *Ḥanīn* in *The Guardian*, 26 November 1971.
- 82- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1010.
- 83- An interview with former director of the *Jihāz Ḥanīn*, Salah `Umar al-`Ali, dated 28 March 1994, in London. According to him, the Jihaz was previously known as *Maktab al-`Alāqāt* (Bureau of Relations). It was evidently so called in an attempt to keep it top secret at the time. The highly confidential nature of this branch meant that the cadres who used to work there were never known.
- 84- Penrose, *ibid.*, p. 317.
- 85- A useful account of this issue can be found in Kerr, *ibid.*, chapter 4.
- 86- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1028.
- 87- For more information about the Bathists' sectarian and tribal loyalties covered by ideological differences in order to achieve personal interests, see Nikolas Van Dam, The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba`th Party, London, p. 17.
- 88- Maṭar, *ibid.*, p. 45.

- 89- Darwish and Alexander, *ibid.*, p. 203.
- 90- *Ibid.*
- 91- Maṭar, *ibid.*, p. 45.
- 92- Devlin, *ibid.*, p. 275.
- 93- Maṭar, *ibid.*, p. 45.
- 94- *Ibid.*
- 95- Bulloch and Morris, *ibid.*, p. 41.
- 96- *Ibid.*
- 97- Henderson, *ibid.*, p. 70.
- 98- Iskander, *ibid.*, p. 104. See also the *New York Times*, 22 April 1968.
- 99- Marr, *ibid.*, p. 220.
- 100- Trotsky, Leon, Stalin: An appraisal of the man and his influence, translated from Russian and edited by Charles Malamuth, London, 1968.
- 101- Maṭar, *ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

- 102- Fetish, Atamar Rapino, Syria Under Ba`th 1963-1966, Damascus, 1977, p. 15.
- 103- al-Bakr announced his renouncement of the Ba`th Party to `Abd al-Salām `Ārif, when he was in prison, but promised to return to the political field. al-Bakr's renouncement was quite similar to the statement of repentance submitted by `Aflaq to Husnī al-Za`īm in 1949.
- 104- Iskander, *ibid.*, pp. 96 ff.
- 105- al-Khalīl, Samīr, Republic of Fear, The politics of Modern Iraq, London, 1989, p. 30.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE RETURN OF THE BA`TH

## Circumstances that enabled the Ba`th Party to seize Power

Before discussing the course of events during and after the two Coups of 17 and 30 July 1968, it is important to examine the political climate in the region with respect to Iraqi internal conditions, and the regional and international situation.

**Iraqi Internal Conditions:** The conditions that pushed Iraq in direction of change during the `Ārif regime were particularly in its last months. These factors were related to the particular socio-political conditions of Iraq and were created by `Ārif's weakness and repeated mistakes, particularly in the field of foreign affairs. Thus the regime was approaching a state of collapse, brought about this state of affairs were:

**(1) Political instability:** The political situation during the regimes of the `Ārif brothers was characterised by the struggle between various political groups to control the regime. That struggle, particularly between the various wings of the regime, was nourished by the personal ambitions of the various military and civilian figures of that regime. This is clear from the successive cabinets that were formed under the two `Ārifs by various competing military or civilian groups. It is also clear from the continual flow of cabinet ministers in and out of their posts, and finally from several attempted military coups

and assassination attempts.(1) All this continued in a political environment rife with accusation and counter-accusation and a daily flow of rumours of impending doom. The regime even resorted to the deportation of four key military figures, even though they were out of active service at the time.(2) These factors, particularly during the regime of the second `Ārif, were due to his personal military and political ineptitude, with no justification for his presidential position other than the fact of being the brother of the previous deceased president, who ironically perhaps, was the younger of the two brothers. His naiveté and generally peaceful and trustworthy nature exposed him to the wickedness of the competing wings within his own regime,(3) as well as to those outside, namely the Ba`thists and Communists. His Prime Minister, Ṭāḥir Yaḥyā al-Tikrītī, on the other hand, was known for his ignorance, tribalism, sectarianism, widespread corruption, and alleged involvement in substantial deals between Iraq and French oil companies.(4)

**(2) The overwhelming domination of military officers in affairs of state and society:** The Iraqi army became involved in politics early in its establishment. The first military coup in the Middle East took place in Iraq in 1936, led by the then Chief of Staff, General Bakr Ṣidqī. After the 1958 Revolution, which brought down the monarchy and established a military republic, military officers were the most important actors on the Iraqi political stage until the time when Saddam



became the only actor. Even he felt that he had to grant himself the highest military rank appropriate to his political position. The two 'Ārif periods were particularly dominated by military officers who became actively involved in politics, instead of in their own chosen profession; they abandoned the latter and with it the command of Iraqi military units, to the more mediocre among them. Thus, both politics and soldiering in Iraq deteriorated further, even from the low level at which they already were. Since the Revolution of 1958, Iraqi military officers have become a class above all others in Iraqi society.

**(3) The individualistic nature of the regime:** During the 'Ārifs' regimes, sole authority was in the hands of the President. During the first Ba`thist regime, it was in the hands of the Ba`thist council, called the Revolutionary Command Council. The first 'Ārif had no more than a symbolic office, similar, in fact, to the three man council of sovereignty during Qāsim's regime, which, in turn, was no more than a rubber stamp for Qāsim's unilateral decisions. Iraqi republican regimes had no genuine interest whatsoever in establishing legitimate governments through due process of constitution and law. Instead authority was highly personalised, in Qasim's hands, and then, in turn, in 'Abd al-Salām 'Ārif 's hands, followed by his bother, 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Ārif, until the return to power of the Ba`th, when it was to rest in the hands of Saddam.

**(4) Corruption:** The two `Ārif regimes were known for widespread corruption, although it did not reach the level it attained later, when the Ba`th returned to power. Many key military and civilian figures in the two `Ārif regimes were accused of corruption, particularly related to the deal with the French oil company, Erap, (5) and to payments that were made by Anglo-American oil companies, working in Iraq under the name of the Iraq Oil Company. (6) Leading army officers were also corrupt in stealing government funds which were allocated for fighting or bribing the Kurdish tribes. (7) In fact, it was in the financial interests of the top commanders in the war against the Kurds for the war to continue, albeit only in name, so that they could continue to receive their war-related extra payments.

**(5) Absence of parliamentary life:** The Revolution of 1958 abolished parliamentary life while it was still in its infancy. The permanent constitution of 1925 was also abolished, and in its place what was called a temporary constitution was proclaimed by `Abd al-Karīm Qāsim. After the dismissal of the Ba`th Party from power by `Ārif on 18 November 1963, `Ārif issued an order banning all political parties, just as Nasir had done before him. He then set out to form a single party called the Arab Socialist Union, again as Nasir had before him. He failed on both counts. Political parties remained active, albeit underground, and the Arab Socialist Union was a miserable failure. Successive temporary constitutions were proclaimed by



successive regimes, until 1971, when a Soviet-style single-party constitution was proclaimed by al-Bakr. Later on, Saddam even personalised the constitution, when he drafted one that stipulated conditions for candidates for the post of President that could fit none else but himself. Thus, conditions in Iraq prevented any attempt at a return to a semblance of parliamentary rule. One account suggested that there were some indications, that a permanent constitution might be proclaimed under Qāsim's regime, but the political instability owing to the struggle between the Ba`thists/Nationalists and the Communists in that period prevented this.(8)

Also, during the al-Bazzāz civilian cabinet, which covered the last months of the first `Ārif regime and the first months of the second `Ārif regime, which was appointed to defuse the political and economic crisis, there were suggestions by al-Bazzāz himself in a number of public statements, that he wanted a return to parliamentary rule; he adopted a new economic policy in order to improve the bad economic conditions that had prevailed since the previous years nationalisation, in imitation of Nasir's socialist measures.(9) In addition, al-Bazzāz tried to solve the Kurdish problem; he conducted negotiations with the Kurds and reached an agreement known as the 29 June 1966 Agreement.(10) This agreement was an important step towards solving one of the most serious threats facing Iraq's national security. However, he could not stay in power to implement it, since he was deposed by `Abd al-



Rahmān `Ārif. The Kurds and the communists, who were in fact mainly Kurds, did not intend to implement it, since their real demand was for autonomy, which the `Ārif regimes could not grant. Al-Bazzāz also wanted the army officers to refrain from deep involvement in politics, since their repeated coups had destabilised the country.(11) Thus, al-Bazzāz immediately, had been denounced by the military officers and the other elements oppositions of whose interests his Policy threatened, for his close association with the west and reactionary circles.(12)

**(6) Failure of socialist policies:** Abd al-Salām `Ārif was initially pro-Nasir, so, with pressure from the Nasirist elements in his regime, he was pushed into adopting a Nasirite-type economic system that was termed "Arab Socialism". He ordered the formation of an economic committee headed by the statistician, Dr Khayr al-Dīn Ḥasīb, who was pro-Nasir, to study the feasibility of copying the Egyptian economic system in Iraq. The committee subsequently recommended the adoption of an Egyptian-type socialism,(13) despite the fundamental differences between the two economies.

During the celebration of the 14 July Revolution, the regime issued many decrees nationalising foreign trade and all the then small-scale industries. The regime tried to demonstrate that such an expropriation of private property

was a crucial step towards speedy economic and social development in Iraq. However the socialism of Dr Ḥasīb was received with widespread opposition from the right, on the grounds that it would destroy the Iraqi economy, and from the left, who considered it half-hearted. The real consequences of Arab socialism in Iraq were severe and inauspicious.(14) `Ārif, realising the failure of Arab socialism, dismissed Dr Ḥasīb and began distancing himself from Nasir and all those pro-Nasir Iraqis who wanted nothing less than the conversion of Iraq into an Egyptian province.

Besides the problems that the `Ārif regime created for itself, there were other problems before his coming to power which the regime failed to solve.

**- The Kurdish problem:** The Kurdish problem is more acute in Iraq than either in Turkey, which has within its borders three times as many Kurds as Iraq, or in Iran, which has twice as many. In fact, Iraq was the first country to acknowledge the existence of the Kurds as a separate ethnic group, with several Prime Ministers and Chiefs of Staff during the monarchy being Kurds. Qāsim, in his temporary constitution, declared that Iraq was jointly owned by Arabs and Kurds, and he was more in sympathy with the Kurds than with the Arabs. However this did not spare either Iraq or Qāsim. On the contrary, Kurdish nationalism and calls to arms were concentrated in Iraq, because Iraq was seen by the Kurds a weaker link in comparison with



Turkey and Iran. The Kurds in Iraq, led by Barzānī, were also able more easily to launch their insurgency against Qāsim's regime because of the terrain. The fact that it was Qāsim who had gone to Baghdad airport to welcome Barzānī three years earlier on his return from exile in the Soviet Union, counted for little. Turkey did not acknowledge the existence of the Kurds as an entity and called them, instead, "mountain Turks", while Iran crushed the Kurdish "Mahabād state", established by Stalin, after Soviet withdrawal from Iran. So in 1961, Mullah Muṣṭafā al-Barzānī told his sons that they should never take up arms against Turkey or ally themselves with Iran to fight Iraq, even though it was led by Qāsim. Neither the first Ba'thist regime, nor the successive regimes of the `Ārif brothers, were able to do much to solve the Kurdish problem peacefully. By then it had become entangled in a complex web of deceit which included several regional powers, including Iran and Israel, and two world powers, namely the USA and the UK. The four were on the side of the Kurds against Iraq. Kurdish demands were always shifting upwards. They began demanding what they termed "cultural rights" which were fully acknowledged by the al-Bazzāz government, who signed an agreement with them. However, by then their demand had risen to one for autonomy, which the `Arif regimes could not grant. In 1970, Saddam granted the Kurds in Iraq autonomy, but by then their demands had again shifted and they wanted a federal state. The final object of the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq was a separate state for the Kurds. The effect of the Kurdish insurgency



on `Abd al-Raḥmān `Ārif 's regime was disastrous since the regime failed to control large areas of northern Iraq, which Barzānī turned, with the help of Iraqi communists, into a strong-hold of anti-government activists.

**- Iraq's claim to Kuwait:** Following Britain's granting the shaykhdom of Kuwait its independence in 1961, Qāsim's regime decided not to recognise the independence of Kuwait, but to press Iraq's historical claim, that Kuwait was part of Iraq, according to Ottoman documents kept in the Iraqi Foreign Ministry. These Ottoman documents indicate that Kuwait was a *qā'imaqāmiyyah* (part of a vilayat) of Basrah vilayat. The Ottoman vali of Basrah was the one to appoint the shaykh of Kuwait as a *qā'imaqām*. This was in effect even after the British had occupied Kuwait in 1899, and even after the establishment of the Iraqi state. In spite of British anti-Iraqi propaganda, that Qāsim was about to annex Kuwait by force, he did not do so. His generals wanted him to annex Kuwait and he could have crushed the British force. Instead he wanted a peaceful solution whereby the Kuwaitis themselves would choose to be united with Iraq.

Through secret negotiations in Switzerland between Iraq and the al-Ṣabāḥ family, the latter agreed in mid-1962 to relinquish the independence of Kuwait and settle, instead, for federal status within the State of Iraq. However, Nasir was furious with the al-Ṣabāḥ family, as

were his enemies, the British, for surrendering to Qāsim. Nasir was a strong opponent of the State of Iraq and the enlarging of its power, whether it was a monarchy or a republic, Iraqi nationalist or pan-Arabist. British propaganda, as well as Egyptian propaganda, was then in full swing against Qāsim's regime, painting a picture of him as an adventurer and isolationist. At the same time Qāsim began to cultivate good relations with Syria, after its separation from Egypt, and was very popular with the newly independent Algeria, owing to his support for the Algerian war of independence. Qāsim thought that a federal state, comprising Iraq, Kuwait and Syria, was feasible and could serve as a nucleus for further Arab unity. In contrast to the UAR, where Syria was economically weakened, Syria would benefit from Iraq's and Kuwait's oil. This last proposal is thought to have whipped Egyptian and British intelligence into a frenzy of eagerness to bring down Qāsim's regime and the Syrian regime through the two Ba`thist coups of 8 February 1963 in Baghdad and 8 March 1963 in Damascus.(15) The Ba`th regime, after Qāsim, recognised the independence and Sovereignty of Kuwait in a communique issued in Baghdad on 4 October 1963. In return they received an interest-free loan of £100 million from Kuwait.(16)

Border problems were raised again in October 1964, when the Kuwaitis pushed their unmarked border further north. `Ārif 's regime responded with military manoeuvres which failed to impress. The Kuwaitis had Nasir and the



British on their side, while `Ārif had no-one. Even the Soviets began to cultivate closer relations with Kuwait, while relations with Iraq were strained because of the suppression of the Iraqi Communist Party since February 1963. British documents released by the British Foreign Office indicated that the British government took precautionary measures against a possible Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.(17) On 19 April 1967, Iraqi forces bulldozed buildings erected by Kuwait on disputed land and then withdrew into Iraqi territory. Although the `Ārif regime tended to be fairly docile, Britain still felt worried about its interests in Kuwait at a time when the whole Middle East was in turmoil.(18)

In addition to the above, the `Ārif regimes' foreign and oil policies were generally out of line with British and American interests; this definitely shortened the lifetime of these regimes.

**(1) Competition between foreign oil companies:** During the second `Ārif regime, Iraq became a battleground for competing Anglo-American oil companies, on the one hand, and French and Soviet oil companies, on the other, and thus provided an arena for the four major powers to gain influence in Iraq. While Britain was trying to maintain its oil and strategic interests in Iraq, the US was trying to replace Britain as the main western power. The Soviet Union came into the picture after 1958, and by the late sixties was strengthening its position in Iraq, in spite of the



conflict between the two `Arif regimes and the Iraqi Communist Party. To complicate the picture further, France began to court Iraq and began to reap commercial benefits, owing to its neutral diplomatic position on the 1967 war, even though it was French-built jets of the Israeli air force which defeated the Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian air forces. Thus France was able to win an oil agreement for the French oil company, Erap.(19) The British were rather unhappy about the French success in Iraq. This was expressed by the British journalist, Richard Jones, who wrote in the London Financial Times:

**"....if a new-found Iraqi-French relationship is allowed to develop that will strengthen Iraqi power as an alternative to the defeated Egypt and Syria, it will strike at the heart of Anglo-Saxon oil interests in Iraq and the Gulf at large."(20)**

Apart from oil, Iraq also has large deposits of sulphur, and if they were developed, Iraq might be able to influence its price; these were at that time entirely in the hands of the US. The Soviet Union was eager to develop stronger Iraqi dependence on it, not only in arms supplies, but also in oil, even though there was the problem of the Iraqi Communist Party's clandestine anti-government activities.(21) On 24 December 1967 Iraq and the Soviet Union reached an agreement on the development by the Soviet Union of the North Rumaila oil fields and the marketing of

oil produced by the Iraqi National Oil Company.(22) Even more symbolically, on 11 May 1968, a Soviet fleet sailed into Iraq's naval port of Umm Qaşr. This was the first such visit since a Russian ship had ventured into the Gulf in 1903. The British and Americans were enraged and threatened `Ārif with severe consequences.(23)

This came on top of the already existing struggle between American and French companies concerning the exploitation of these sulphur deposits in Iraq.(24) The British and American governments employed various measures and even open warfare to dissuade `Ārif from granting more influence to the Soviets and French. Open warfare included the blowing up of the Iraqi government oil installations by Kurdish agents working for the Anglo-American oil companies,(25) in an effort by Britain and the USA to prevent Soviet and French companies gaining a greater foothold in Iraq. `Ārif himself accused the Anglo-British oil companies of instigating terrorist activities against Iraq.(26) Although he tried to put a brave face on it, Anglo-American pressures, combined with domestic pressures by the Kurds and their communist allies, forced `Ārif to freeze his agreements with Soviet and French companies and even to put the much publicised purchase by his air force of 54 Mirage 5 French-built jet fighters on hold.(27)

**(2) Arms supplies:** During the monarchy weapons that were used by the Iraqi army were almost entirely British, except for a few supplied by America. After the 1958



revolution, the republican regimes' arms supplies flowed from one source and one source only, the Soviet Union. However, the latter used arms supplies as a political lever and blackmailed Iraq several times, when they felt the need to do so. The situation was very unsatisfactory. Iraq was not a communist country, and being blackmailed by a super-power was very dangerous, in view of the growing power of Iran and Syria. The 1967 war proved conclusively that Soviet weapons supplied to Iraq, Egypt and Syria were inferior. `Ārif tried to diversify arms supplies by acquiring the very jet fighters that had defeated the Egyptian and Syrian air forces, namely the Mirage and a new version of it, the Mirage 5. The British, Americans and Israelis were predictably angered and threatened France with the consequence of going ahead with the deal. Moscow was equally enraged and threatened to cut off all ammunition and spare parts for Soviet weapons already delivered. According to Le Monde, there was a tacit agreement between Moscow and Washington, to prevent Iraq from acquiring advanced weapons.(28) The Israeli Foreign Ministry's comment about this deal was that Israel condemned the French deal to supply the Arab States with advanced weapons, as long as they were still in a state of war with Israel.(29)

**(3) The regime's foreign policy:** The defeat of Egypt, Syria and Jordan at the hands of Israel, which was called *naksah* or *azmah*, caused deep shock, despair and utter resentment among the Iraqi people towards the US and



Britain, because Israel was allowed to occupy Arab lands and desecrate Muslim holy places. Owing to this widespread feeling, `Ārif 's regime resorted to certain measures, that included the following symbolic acts:

- (a) Severing of diplomatic relations with Britain and the US.
- (b) Condemnation of the recognition of Israel.
- (c) Fiery statements by `Arif himself during his visit to France in 1968, when he described the creation of Israel as the crime of the twentieth century.(30,31) He also declared that Israel was created by the British to fight the Arabs indirectly, and that such a situation couldnot continue.(32) `Arif further stated that he would allocate all Iraq's resources to co-operation with other Arab states.(33) The Iraqi Minister of Defence, Shākir Mahmūd Shukrī, called on the Arab states to combine their military efforts and suggested a plan for doing so,(34) while the Foreign Minister, Ismā'īl Khayr Allāh, called for the punishment of Britain and the US through the destruction of their oil interests in the Arab world.

**(4) Deployment of Iraqi forces in Jordan:** Following the collapse of the Jordanian army, `Ārif's regime sent an

Iraqi armoured division and several brigades to Jordan. They were attacked on their way by several Israeli air force jets, (35) two of which were shot down by Iraqi jets; their pilots were captured and displayed on Baghdad television. The Iraqi Foreign Minister declared that Iraq wanted to send forces to Syria and Lebanon. (36) Although Iraq's participation in the actual fighting was limited, because its forces did not reach the battle-front in time, the subsequent Iraqi military build-up in Jordan and the light casualties suffered by Iraq, which numbered only a few jets, convinced Israel, as well as the US and the UK, that Iraq was about to pick up the mantle that Nasir had allowed to slip from his hand. Thus, 'Ārif's regime put itself in direct confrontation with Israel, who, backed by the US and Britain, demanded that its victory over Egypt, Syria and Jordan be formally acknowledged by the vanquished. Iraq, however, through its supply of arms, was keeping Jordan in confrontation with Israel. Thus, it was necessary for Iraq's enemies to instal a new regime that would pull Iraqi forces out of Jordan and enable Israel to advance further into it. (37)

In addition to its dangerous involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict, 'Ārif's regime was facing several political trends that were working to overthrow it, in particular the radical movements (the Communist and the Islamic), on the grounds that it was not revolutionary and progressive enough, and was not serious in combating Israel, the US and Britain. Thus, there was a danger that

one of these trends might take Iraq completely into the Soviet camp, and the other bring it under Iranian influence. The main Political movements in Iraq at that time were:

- **The pan-Arab movement:** By the mid-sixties, the pan-Arab movement was extremely fragmented, with two Ba`th parties, one pro-Syria and the other pro-`Aflaq and al-Bakr, while the Nasirists had rather small parties or groups, (38) all claiming that they were loyal to Nasir and aiming to hand the country over to him. Out of this topsy-turvy deranged world of pro-Nasir Iraqis gradually emerged a third group who stood back from Nasirism. It also began to question the wisdom of merging Iraq with Egypt and also began to campaign against socialism, on the grounds that it had destroyed the Iraqi economy. This latter group was described by its former pan-Arabist colleagues as *iqlīmiyyūn* or *quṭriyyūn* (provincials), a rather derogatory term in the dictionary of pan-Arab political culture in Iraq. These provincials also called for a return to parliamentary rule and the freeing of Iraqi foreign policy from a blind adherence to Egyptian foreign policy. (39) The pan-Arabists, by 1967, were very weak, following the division of the Ba`th Party, the failure of two attempted coups and the defeat of June 1967.

- **The Marxists:** The Marxists were then by far the largest single political movement, particularly among the so-called educated Iraqis. This is despite the fact that



the Iraqi Marxist movement was dominated in its leadership from the beginning by such minorities as the Christians, Jews and, of course, the Kurds. They were open supporters of the creation of the state of Israel, to the extent that they organised demonstrations in Baghdad in celebration of it, no doubt working under strict instructions from Stalin. However, as Soviet foreign policy towards Iraq changed, following the 1958 revolution, the Iraqi Communist Party did likewise, faithfully following Soviet foreign policy.(40) However, the Communist Party continued to give its unquestioning support to the Kurdish insurgency, even after Iran, the US, Britain and Israel became the chief supporters of the Kurds; it also continued to spread hostile rumours against the Iraqi armed forces, even when those were equipped and trained by the Soviets. It had difficulty in explaining away the fact that its leader, `Azīz Muḥammad, was a Kurd, as was `Azīz al-Ḥājī the second man in the party. The communists later became very hostile to `Ārif's regime, even though `Ārif had just crushed their chief rivals, the Ba`thists, and despite `Ārif's lenient attitude to them. Their excuse was that the `Ārif regime was a military dictatorship which did not serve the interests of the people.(41) However, owing to heavy Soviet pressure, particularly following the meeting between `Ārif and Krushchev in Cairo and the resumption of Soviet arms supplies to Iraq, severed since February 1963, the central committee of the Iraqi Communist Party relented in its hostility to the `Ārif regime. It issued a communiqué in which it changed its position of total hostility to the

regime and adopted a rather conciliatory attitude, which was described as the August 1964 line. The architect of this line was Amīr `Abd Allāh, who was the only Arab in the politburo of the Iraqi Communist Party. The main justification of the August 1964 line was that the `Ārif regime was copying Nasir's socialist transformation in the direction of what the Marxists termed "the non-capitalist road to development".(42) Moscow publicly welcomed the socialist measures taken by `Ārif's regime and the peaceful Settlement with the Kurds. It affirmed its wishes to establish long lasting relations with Iraq.(43) `Ārif's regime began a wholesale release of communist detainees and, following the failed Ba`thist plot of September 1964, the regime's security apparatus concentrated on the real danger of the Ba`thists. However, the rank and file of the Iraqi Communist Party were against the August 1964 line and wanted an open confrontation with the regime, particularly its Kurdish rank and file. This led, within eighteen months, to an open rebellion(44) within the Iraqi Communist Party, since `Azīz al-Ḥājj, known for his highly extremist Marxist views, jumped on the band-wagon of "Mao Tse Tung" and his Cultural Revolution in China, arrested his fellow members of the politburo and declared a guerrilla war in the Marshes. This eventually pressurised the pro-Moscow wing to change its attitude yet again and in the reverse direction. Once the war against the Kurds was resumed, owing to the rejection by Mullah Muṣṭafā al-Barzānī of government peace terms, the Iraqi Communist Party declared that the `Ārif regime must be destroyed and that the



communist party should seize power forthwith. Ironically Amīr `Abd Allāh himself was again the architect of the new attitude towards the regime, which was exactly the opposite of the previous attitude, also devised by him only a few months earlier.(45) One will never know in reality the full extent of Soviet interference in the new Iraqi Communist Party's attitude towards `Ārif's regime, but the Soviets probably wanted to intimidate it by threatening it with the local communists.

However, shifting grounds and changing attitudes affected the party seriously.(46) It eventually split up into groups, a pro-Moscow group known as 'the central committee' and a pro-China group of `Azīz al-Ḥājj, known as 'the central command' or 'the central leadership'.(47) `Azīz al-Ḥājj's wing was uncompromising on every issue, calling for the destruction of the `Ārif regime through an all-out civil war, starting from the marshes.(48) It is supprising that in view of the fact that `Azīz al-Ḥājj had been until then a member of a party which recognised the existence of Israel, he now called for its destruction, again through popular war. He parroted the Chinese line, which had nothing to do with the rights of the Palestinian people. Al-Ḥājj began his Chinese- inspired crusade in the Marshes against the Iraqi army, just at the time when the army was bracing itself for the task of combating Israel. The final attitude of the communists, whether al-Hajj's version or Amīr `Abd Allāh's, led to the weakening of the `Ārif regime. It was clear to the western powers that



Moscow, through its Iraqi Communist puppets, was playing a game of cat and mouse with `Ārif, aiming at his surrender to Moscow, whereas the Chinese, through the al-Ḥājj wing, might introduce upheaval and instability at the heart of western interests. Consequently the writing was on the wall for the `Ārif regime.

- **The Islamists:** There were two main parties, the Muslim Brotherhood, led by Shaykh `Abd al-`Azīz al-Badrī, whom the Ba`th regime tortured and then murdered in early 1970, and the al-Da`wah party, led by Shaykh Bāqir al-Ṣadr, whom the Ba`th regime also tortured and then murdered in 1980. These two parties began to win widespread support, particularly after the 1967 defeat and the occupation of Jerusalem by Israel, which revealed the bankruptcy of the pan-Arab movement, headed by the Nasir regime, which was hostile to the Pan-Islamic movement. The growth of the Islamic movement was rather a strange phenomenon, in the case of Iraq, since Iraq was traditionally more secular than Egypt, and the two main parties in Iraq, the communists and the Ba`thists, were founded by non-Muslims. Even one of the leaders of the Nasirists in Iraq was a Palestinian Christian, George Habash. The Islamists were enraged by the loss of the al-Aqṣā mosque and by Iraq's youth being led astray by non-Muslims, looking towards Moscow or Beijing rather than Baghdad. The rapid growth of the Islamic movement, especially after the defeat of 1967, convinced western powers and their chief puppet in the area, Saudi Arabia, to act speedily to replace the `Ārif

regime before it could be replaced by a dangerous political rival. These factors combined to weaken the regime, which began to decay to the core in its final few weeks, with near anarchy in government departments. The symptoms of that decay and anarchy were as follows: (49)

- (a) The repeated resignation of Ministers from the Ṭāhir Yaḥyā cabinet.
- (b) The continuous Kurdish uprising in the north, coupled with the pro-Chinese uprising in the Marshes.
- (c) Several attempts on the lives of leading members of the regime.
- (d) Attempts at disabling Iraqi oil exports by Kurdish and Communist insurgents.
- (e) The discovery of a major espionage ring in Basra working for the Israeli intelligence agency, Mossad, which had been active since 1965.

Several weeks before the July 1968 Coup actually took place, many Arab newspapers published in Beirut and Cairo, stated that the `Ārif regime had uncovered several plots and coup attempts, financed by Saudi Arabia, on behalf of the US and British government, apparently leaked by `Ārif

himself.(50) `Ārif 's purposes in leaking the news of the plot to the newspaper were:

- (a) To prevent the plotters from carrying on with their plot.
- (b) To spread the word wider within Iraq that a plot was being hatched to return Iraq to the violence of earlier times.

`Ārif knew of the coup from an officer named Muṣ`ab al-Ḥardān, who confessed to him that he had received 150,000 Dinars from the plotters in return for his participation with them in the coup. Al-Ḥardān informed `Ārif of the names of the plotters and regional and great powers that supported them.(51) `Ārif called the plotters who were his palace officers, and confronted them with the confessions of al-Ḥardān. They denied it and took an oath on the Qur'ān that they had not betrayed him; `Ārif believed them.(52)

The `Ārif regime discovered a pro-Syrian Ba`th cell, working on behalf of Syrian intelligence.(53) Some reports suggested that the other Ba`th wing, i.e. `Aflaq-al-Bakr, was behind that discovery, so as to divert `Ārif away from their own clandestine activities.(54)

On 16 April 1968, thirteen senior Iraqi former generals (five of whom were Ba`thists) who had become



embroiled in politics, submitted a memorandum to `Ārif. These ex-Generals included Nājī Tālib and `Ārif `Abd al-Razzāq, both former Prime Ministers, Şubḥī `Abd al-Hamīd, Ḥardān al-Tikrītī, al-Bakr, another former Prime Minister, Rashīd Muşlīḥ, `Abd al-Ghanī al-Rāwī, `Abd al-`Azīz al-`Uqaylī and Muḥammad Shayt Khaṭṭāb. They demanded the removal of the Prime Minister, Tāhīr Yaḥyā, and the establishment of a national council and, under it, a coalition government. The sole purpose of the latter would be to prepare for handing over power to the people after electing a constituent assembly within two years, thus ending the emergency rule which had been going on for nearly sixteen years.(55) And they made other demands including that of cancelling the Mirage deal, on the grounds that the Iraqi Air Force was Soviet-equipped and that it was unwise to replace this source of supply, particularly since the French Mirages were more expensive than the Soviet Migs.

### Regional Conditions:

In addition to the internal conditions that were pushing the regime towards collapse, regional conditions were doing likewise. Following the 1967 defeat, as pointed out above, a perilous state of affairs developed in the Middle East. Pan-Arabism, at least pre-1967, was proved to be a myth. According to a defender of pan-Arabism

**"... every time pan-Arabism faced defeat, the masses retreated to the frontiers of their religious beliefs to protect it within the security of absolute faith".(56)**

It seems that Iraq was the first candidate for such a convulsion, owing to its internal conditions, which pushed in the direction of changing the regime by introducing into power one regime which would grant companies favourable concessions (57) and be more able to deal with the new regional conditions.

## International Conditions

The Gulf area, including Iraq and Iran, contains the greatest percentage of world reserves of crude oil. The Oil industry, after the second world war, did not remain just a business of buying, selling and refining oil, but became strategic. Western imperialist powers became totally dependent on Gulf oil, as did Japan. This contrasted with the Soviet Union, which had its own domestic supplies. Western imperialist powers were determined to safeguard their oil interests, particularly as the Cold War reached its climax during the late 1960s. Following the destabilising events of the sixties, which culminated in the June 1967 defeat, Western imperialist power strategies were:

- (1) The creation of local regimes in the area that combated western imperialism and Zionism in name, while the real effect of their policies was in accordance with western Zionist interests. This was, and still is, very clear in the two Ba`thist regimes in Iraq and Syria.
- (2) The reformation of Anglo-American relations with Gulf Shaykhdoms on new bases of mutual defence between the Shaykhdoms themselves, under US supervision.



- (3) The strengthening of the Israeli presence in the area, bolstering its military capabilities, on the grounds that it was a front-line post in the defence of Anglo-American interests in the area, namely oil.
- (4) Encouragement of inter-Arab rivalries and conflicts, so as to siphon off the economic and social energies of the Arab states and thus divert them from confronting Anglo-American domination and Israeli expansionism. (58)

Anglo-American strategic planning considered that the above was a better alternative to direct military presence, which had become very difficult, given the high tide of anti-British and anti-American feeling that followed the 1967 Arab defeat. The Soviets were gaining ground, through their arms sales to the Arabs and their ideological infiltration of Arab regimes by local Marxists.

One of the first manifestations of the new Western strategy was the decision by Britain, at the beginning of 1968, to withdraw its forces from the Gulf Shaykhdoms before 1970 as a part of British withdrawals from east of Suez, a sphere of influence in which Britain had been active for a hundred and fifty years. Harold Wilson's Labour Government justified this decision on the grounds that Britain could not bear the economic cost, and that it could not maintain a military presence in an area boiling with anti-British, anti-American and anti-Israeli

feeling.(59) However, although the decision was welcomed by most Arab states, the Gulf Shaykhdoms themselves were terrified and begged the British to remain as their masters.(60) The US was also worried about the British decision, at a time when the US was deep in the Vietnam quagmire; they accordingly began to look for ways to protect their own interests in the shaykhdoms, which were greater than those of Britain.(61) Israel, on the other hand, while announcing that British withdrawals would not affect her security, declared that there would be instability, and that the US should step in to fill the vacuum.(62)

This the US did, though not in the style of the landing in Lebanon in 1958, following the collapse of the monarchy in Iraq.(63) However, British withdrawal from Aden left its government in the hands of a Marxist group, which displayed its hostility to North Yemen and the Shaykhdoms of the Gulf, pushing them further into the arms of the US and providing the Soviet Union with an ideological and military base in Aden.(64)

Anglo-American co-ordination concerning the post-British withdrawal was as follows:

- (1) Dean Rusk, for the USA and George Brown for Britain met and, after frank discussions, reached an understanding.(65)

(2) Britain sent its Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Gulf to instruct the Saudis and Kuwaitis that they should form a military alliance with Iran, to be in place by the time British forces were withdrawn from the Gulf.(66) The British Government then discovered, through its discussions with the shaykhs, that there was a difficulty in substituting Iran for Britain; some suggested that a role should be given to Iraq, since it was also a Gulf state.(67) On 20 January 1968 the US Assistant Secretary of State, Eugene Rostow, declared that the vacuum created by Britain should be filled by a defence pact between Britain, the US and some of the states in the area.(68)

(3) Gulf rulers echoed US and British announcements faithfully. The first was King Fayṣal of Saudi Arabia, who agreed, as usual, with the US view that there should be defensive arrangements between the states in the area.(69)

(4) The Shah of Iran also supported the US view, since he was going to be the main beneficiary of such an arrangement. He declared that coverage of the British withdrawal and the filling of the vacuum created by the British could be met by the states in the area, no doubt meaning Iran.(70)

(5) The Iranian Prime Minister, Amīn `Abbās Howaydā, declared that the British forces should not be



replaced by American forces, or forces from any other country outside the area; he would not even contemplate the reappearance of the British in a different guise.(71) Iranian expansionist aims were behind Howaydā's announcements.

- (6) After the initial terrified reaction of the Gulf shaykhs, when Britain announced its intention to pull out from the Gulf, the assurances of the US and Iran went some way to calm down such rulers as the Shaykh of Bahrain.(72) The Soviet Union, in a commentary by the Government-controlled Novosti News Agency on 4 June 1968, declared that the US was replacing Britain in the Gulf, and that the creation of the United Arab Emirates, through British-American efforts, by combining the various trucial states, was a step in that direction.

However, one may conclude that the threat to the western interests in the region was unlikely to come from the Gulf States, which were already under the influence of the Western Powers. But it was Iraq that, in view of its internal condition, that might be the source of trouble, as one of the British papers hinted.(73) The following facts supported this view:

- (1) The three main countries in the Gulf area were Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia. The latter two were then puppets in the hands of the Anglo-American alliance

and were intended to be the main local elements of the new western security arrangements for the area.

- (2) Political conditions in Iran and Saudi Arabia were relatively stable, in comparison with Iraq, which was on the verge of a massive political convulsion.
- (3) Iraq had an historical claim to Kuwait, which was a source of deep concern for Anglo-American interests. Since Iraq was highly unstable politically, and there was every chance of a regime coming to power that would re-activate this claim.(74) Consequently, there was a clear urgency to introduce a regime that would be more favourable to Western interests. More than two decades later the Gulf War suggested that Kuwait was used as a tool for the benefit of the US, Britain and Israel, for the destruction of Iraq.
- (4) A wave of anti-American and anti-British feeling swept Iraq following the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war; this added to the traditional anti-Western sentiment of most Iraqis, whether communist, pan-Arabist or Islamist. Consequently, there was a desire in the West to prevent a regime coming to power hostile to western interests.(75)
- (5) There were Soviet attempts to exploit the situation in Iraq to their own advantage, which were demonstrated

by the visit of Soviet ships to Umm Qaşr. Israeli newspapers, particularly *Ha'aretz*, commented:

"....Iraq has designs on Kuwaiti oil, while Nasir has similar designs on the oil of the other Gulf states. So if the USA does not want an enemy power, in name Iraq or Egypt, but in reality the Soviet Union, then the US must replace Britain." (76)

After Israel defeated Nasir and brought down Egyptian pride into the gutter (with some clandestine help from the Alawite regime in Syria), there was no one left, apart from Iraq, to face Israel. It was imperative to reassure Israel and the Gulf shaykhdoms before British withdrawal. According to the Times:

".... even when our influence will be marginal, it must still be used to contain troubles that are likely to be unleashed." (77)

Thus, and based on the above, the plan to re-order the area by the western powers, following the June War of 1967, in order to avoid serious consequences, came to light by a series of coups. This was in spite of the fact that the re-ordering of the area had been planned earlier, as was said in the preceding chapters. One took place, immediately after the June defeat, in Yemen against `Abd



`Allāh al-Salāl, led by `Abd al-Raḥmān al-Iryānī. Another coup followed in Sudan, in May 1969, led by al-Numayrī, which brought down al-Azharī. This then was followed by the Somali coup led by Siyyād-Barrī. Also Sultan Qābūs bin Sa`īd took over in Oman in July 1970. These developments may, or may not, have had any bearing on developments in Iraq. More notable than these changes, however, were the two coups of 17 and 30 July 1968 in Iraq, which were intended to bring the Ba`th Party in Iraq to power.

## The Role of the Ba`th

In the light of the above, what was the role of the Arab Socialist Ba`th Party in the emerging regional and international situation, given the fact that it was the same Party that had done such great service to the Anglo-American-Israeli alliance, by severing the Egyptian-Syrian union, destroying the Qāsim regime and dragging Nasir into the 1967 disaster? (78) The Anglo-American Israeli moves were directed against Iraq in an attempt to secure their interests in the oil shaykhdoms. Ba`th Party literature itself states:

"... When the Revolution of July 1968 occurred, the imperialist plans for the Arabian Gulf, in particular, were already in train. A major advance had been made before the Revolutionary Council undertook its pan-Arab responsibilities in this area." (79)

Was the Ba`th party so strong and united that it was able to seize control, while other forces, which it called reactionary and were more trusted by the imperialist powers, held the leading positions of authority? It acknowledged in its political report that:

"....Reactionary forces in foreign pay advanced daily to occupy crucial positions in the

government and in the institutions of society and state. American, British, Iranian and Israeli espionage networks functioned openly in the country and penetrated most political groups. ... The situation was explosive and risked bringing to power either an even more reactionary government of hirelings or a military dictatorship, with the probable destruction of the Party and the entire national movement, throwing Iraq back into a situation like that prevailing before the 1958 revolution, and shifting the balance of power in the Arab world in favour of imperialism and reaction." (80)

If the Ba`th and pan-Arabist movement was really a danger that threatened imperialist interests, why did the latter allow it to attain power instead of other forces which the Ba`th described as reactionary, who, by implication would fulfil imperialist designs? More importantly, was the Ba`th really united and strong enough to decisively alter the situation in its favour? To answer these questions we must study the Ba`th Party, particularly in Iraq, just before it regained power.



The political status of the Ba`th Party  
before regaining power:

When the political status of the Ba`th Party is investigated during the period from 23 February 1966, which witnessed its tearing apart, until 18 February 1968, which saw the convening of the Ninth pan-Arab Congress of the Party, one must conclude that it was all but disbanded. It disintegrated into pockets, owing to the absence of the `Aflaq, al-Biṭār, and al-Razzāz influence, (81) some of which were no more than politico-criminals, such as those in Iraq, headed by Saddam and `Abd al Karīm al-Shaykhly. What is clear is that the prophecies of the founder of the Ba`th seemed to be beginning to materialise.

It was `Aflaq, before he was expelled from Syria, who said:

"....We must rescue this Party before it is too late and before the Party is lost, because the problem within it is old and dangerous." (82)

Ṣalāḥ al-Biṭār, in his letter of resignation from the Party on 10 October 1967, said:

"...I was the first to stress the inevitability of the Party's collapse." (83)

For his part, `Ali Şāleḥ al Sa`dī declared that the Party was finished historically and objectively.(84) The Party acknowledges this fully in its literature:

"....during this period the Arab Ba`th Socialist Party faced the most dangerous challenge in its history. Its future, its relations with the people, its pioneering role in their revolutionary movement and even its existence were at stake."(85)

The Party's position in Iraq was even worse than its totally discredited position in the Arab world generally:

"....on both regional and pan-Arab levels the Party suffered severely from internal dissension and from the consequences of the failure of its experiments in political administration in Iraq and Syria." The report adds: "... the spread of dissidence and its effect on structure and morale cost the Party a considerable number of former leaders, senior cadres, members, organised supporters and adherents. Some fell under the weight of despair or of terrorism. Some withdrew from the struggle while some joined one or another of the schismatic groups."(86)

The Party decided that it could not even muster the power to confront the weak and collapsing `Ārif regime, and so the revolution must be delayed indefinitely:

"....to rely on the forces of the Party and masses to overthrow the apostate November regime (i.e. `Ārif's regime) would inevitably have meant postponing the Revolution for a very long time." (87)

However, `Aflaq did not leave it at that; he soon left Brazil, where he had fled after being expelled from Syria and was back in the Middle East, in Lebanon, in February 1968, where he began gathering together the remnants of the Party, (88) He was able, despite its desperate state, to convene a congress in Beirut in February 1968, which was called the Ninth Pan-Arab Congress of the Ba`th Party. (89)

The political report of the Eighth Congress of the Arab Ba`th Party in Iraq declares, concerning the Party's condition, that:

"...the Party organisation at home and abroad was in no position to give to the Pan-Arab Command enough material or organisational" coherence to unite and guide the party "organs, followers and allies, particularly in the years immediately preceding the revolution in Iraq.



Frequent attempts were made to convene the Ninth Pan-Arab Congress of the Ba`th Party, but it did not take place until February 1968." (90)

The political report went on to state how, despite all difficulties and obstacles, `Aflaq managed to gather around himself the remnants of his Party. It is noteworthy that the Ninth Party Congress was held during the period 18-25 February 1968, a time which witnessed feverish Anglo-American attempts to rearrange the political situation in the area, and in Iraq, in particular, in the form of the meeting concerning the Middle East between George Brown and Dean Rusk. Was `Aflaq's Ninth Party Congress merely a coincidence, given the fact that the Alawite wing of the Party ruling Syria could have blown up the Congress on `Aflaq's head, unless there were powers that were protecting `Aflaq? While he was in Lebanon they were much bigger and more powerful than the Alawite wing of the Ba`th Party that ruled. However it is useful to remember the following:

- (1) Given the degree of weakness of the Party that the political report asserts, is it not logical to ask why it was a danger to Anglo-American interests in Iraq and the area at large?
- (2) The political groups that had the upper hand in the state and its apparatus and, as the political report claims, were supported by an Anglo-American-Zionist

spy ring, would have been more likely to seize power from `Ārif.

- (3) The forces that were real threats to Anglo-American-Zionist interests in the area were not the Ba`th Party nor, for that matter, the pan-Arab movement in general, which was dying out, following the defeat of Egypt and Syria in June 1967 and the subsequent demise of Nasirism. The real forces were the rising tide of militant Islam and the communists. Neither of these forces was in a position to compromise with the West, particularly the latter, since they were tied up totally either to the Soviet Union or China and, thus, ideologically hostile to the West. The Ba`th Party acknowledged this much in its political report when it declared that the Ninth Congress was:

**"...to resolve a matter of urgency." (91)**

In fact, the matter of urgency that `Aflaq and his Ba`th Party wanted to resolve in Iraq was the fear of the possibility of other forces seizing power from `Ārif, forces that might constitute a danger to Israeli and Anglo-American interests in Iraq and the area at large. (92) `Aflaq's moves in 1968 were similar to his moves in 1962, which resulted in the two Ba`thist coups, in Iraq in February 1963 and in Syria in March 1963.

One might have thought that the Ba`thists were anti-Western, because of their slogans; in reality, they were pro-west, particularly with respect to oil.(93) The Ba`th regime was less extreme on oil issues, not giving full support to the Arab oil embargo during the 1973 war, than would be expected from their slogans.(94) In fact, later on, as oil prices began to rise, Saddam began to call publicly for lower oil prices, particularly in 1979-80, as the new situation in the region, following the revolution in Iran and the coming to power of Khomeini, promised to open an easier road to regional influence.

One may conclude that, without giving clear and unambiguous guarantees to regional, as well as to international, powers, the Ba`th would never have returned to power, certainly not so easily. As the sixties drew to a close, it became quite clear to US strategic planners that the US's real interests lay in the Middle East much more than in south-east Asia, primarily because of the necessity to safeguard Israel's superiority over the Arabs, and to safeguard cheap supplies of oil to the US market and its allies. Both factors were detrimental to the Soviet Union, which failed to support the Arabs after their defeat in 1967, as the US and, to a lesser extent, Britain, supported Israel.



## THE PREPARATION OF THE COUP:

As noted before, there were a number of groups and individuals who had been jockeying for position on the political scene throughout the 'Abd al-Raḥmān period. In addition, there were army political groups, all seeking to reach power, namely:

- (1) 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Nā'if (Deputy Director of Military intelligence), Ibrāhīm al-Dāwūd (Head of the Republican Guard), Sa'dūn Ghaydān (Commander of a key tank brigade in the Republican Guard) who are known as the 'Palace Officers'. They were the key pillars of 'Ārif's regime, being of his clan and so having his confidence.
- (2) The old 'Free Officers' of 1958, led by General Nājī Tālib and General Rijāb 'Abd al-Majīd. They were Nasirists.
- (3) General 'Abd al-'Azīz al-'Uqaylī's group, which opposed Kurdish claims to national rights.
- (4) General Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr's group, which included Ḥardān al-Tikrītī, Šālih Maḥdī 'Ammāsh and other Ba'thist officers.

In the last months of the 'Ārif regime, which had reached a state of collapse, there were rumours of contacts

between these groups to plan a coup and overthrow the `Ārif government. It was said that a US delegation, headed by Former Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Robert Anderson, who visited Iraq at that time to negotiate the issue of joint investment in Sulphur with the Iraqi government by US Companies, (95) met secretly with all military-political groups, with the exception of the Nasirist group. (96) The reason for this was probably that the Nasirists were more anti-British and anti-American, and that they tended to favour France as the western country sympathetic to their interests. (97)

The Americans probably made this move after they knew that there was a coup in the making. The organiser was al-Nā'if and his group, who occupied sensitive posts in the `Ārif regime. (98) They had become discontented with `Ārif, owing to his refusal to dismiss Ṭāhir Yaḥyā from office. It seems that Ṭāhir Yaḥyā had quarreled with al-Nāif and his group for several reasons, principally concerning influence. (99) In `Ārif's view, as he acknowledged later to Batatu, (100) al-Nā'if was a tool whetted with money by the Principal Forging companies in Iraq and the Powers behind them, after his government had given the oil contract to ERAP and denied a sulphur concession to the Pan-American Company, and had reached an understanding concerning technical assistance with the Soviet Union for the development of the North Rūmailah field. There is an authoritative American source that supports this view, (101) suggesting that pro-western elements that criticised the

`Ārif government for offering Iraq's resources to the French and damaging British and American interests in Iraq might have taken action against `Ārif in the coup of 17 July 1968. Immediately after the coup, rumours began to anticipate the cancellation of the ERAP contract and the return of the North Rumailah field to the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC), and the giving of the Sulphur concession to the Pan-American Company.(102)

Concerning al-Dāwūd's and Ghaydān's withdrawal from `Ārif's regime, the first was dissatisfied with `Ārif's toleration of the Nasirites, who made frequent plots against the regime. When, after the June War, `Ārif released and returned many of them to their old positions, al-Dāwūd feared Nasirite revenge because of his role in suppressing their plots.(103) The second was linked with the Ba`th through General Ḥardān al-Tikrītī, who sought supporters from the Republican Guard to smooth the way for the Ba`th coup.(104)

One source claims that al-Ḥānnī, the Iraqi ambassador in Beirut, had been informed by the Americans about al-Bakr group's proposed coup. He warned al-Nā'if not to include the Ba`thist officers in his plans.(105) But how the two conspiring groups agreed later on to co-operate, and who made the first contacts with each other, it is difficult to say. It is evident that the American mediation drew their mutual interests together to stage the coup; if they had acted separately, they might have failed.(106)



At all events, we may conclude, as most sources, including authoritative Ba`thist sources, make clear, that there was a foreign power involvement in the coup. The report of the Eighth Regional Congress of the Iraqi Ba`th Party, which was published in January 1974, contains the official Party account of the coup and of al-Nā'if's involvement with foreign powers. However, the Party justified its agreement to co-operate with al-Nā'if's group, on the grounds that it was not strong enough to do without its help; it then proposed to jettison it at the earliest possible moment. (107)

On the Ba`th side, the question of the the extent of involvement with foreign powers, either of the Party or of individuals, is not clear, since its arrangements are cloaked in secrecy. All the witnesses of the coup affair, who knew about it or took part in it, were brutally assassinated. It may be the reason behind the assassination of Nāṣir al-Ḥāni's, the Former Iraqi Ambassador in Lebanon. The Foreign Minister in the first government formed after the coup destroyed any incriminating evidence concerning the Ba`th's secret involvement with foreign Powers, in which al-Ḥāni had played a key role. (108) The Ba`th Party has never given a satisfactory explanation of how it managed to seize power, while its organisation at home and abroad was in no position to do so, particularly in the years immediately preceding the coup. (109)

The issues that were discussed between the US team and the representatives of the various Iraqi groups that were important to the west were the following:

- (1) The possibility of cancelling the Mirage deal, in which the 'Ārif government had arranged to buy the aircraft from France in 1967, particularly since some of the jets were going to Egypt to train Egyptian pilots. Mirage jets played a decisive role during the June War of 1967.
- (2) The issue of the Rumailah oil field and the concession given by 'Ārif to the French Company, ERAP, which was due to the 'Ārif government's pro-French and anti-US and anti-UK stance.
- (3) The issue of the left wing threat which frightened the US, owing to the spreading of the armed activities of the Iraqi Communist Party's pro-China Wing, which was called the Central Leadership and led by 'Azīz al-Ḥājj. al-Ḥājj called for revolutionary violence, the arming of the people and the waging of the armed struggle in the towns and in the countryside. The Central Leadership's main base was in the marshes. It called for the downfall of the dictatorship and the setting up of a popular regime, and for the destruction of the Zionist State in Palestine and its replacement by an Arab-Jewish one; it maintained that

the Palestinian armed struggle was the only way of securing Arab rights in Palestine.

- (4) The issue of Kurdish activities in the north, which were pressuring the `Ārif Government, on the grounds that it had not implemented the 1966 12-point agreement reached between the Kurds and the Prime Minister of the day, `Abd al-Raḥmān al-Bazzāz.
- (5) The issue of the eastern front, which was led by Iraq and included Syria and Jordan. Iraq sent an armoured division to Jordan in an attempt to reduce the pressure on the Egyptian army which was facing the Israeli Army across the Suez Canal. The US did not like this, since it wanted to discipline Nasir, not to help him.
- (6) The issue of Palestinian resistance, which had had a strong focus in Iraq since General Qāsim. It was supported by both the people and government of Iraq. Later, the Ba`th regime's in Iraq joining Jordan in suppressing the Palestinians (110) is an indication of the Ba`th's adherence to its agreement with the great powers, which helped it to stage the 17 July Coup.

These were the issues that were discussed by the US representatives with the above groups. They were important to the west, being the result of internal Iraqi conditions during the `Ārif government and of regional issues due to



the June 1976 defeat. They pushed the west into taking immediate steps with the effective groups to implement their plans, particularly with regard to the leftist and Islamic threat to topple the government.

At any rate, from all the various groups that met the US team, the al-Bakr's and al-Nā'if's groups were chosen to co-operate in mounting the coup. The reasons for this were the following:

- (a) The execution of the coup had to be by al-Nā'if group (Palace Officers), because they had the keys to the Presidential Palace.
- (b) The Ba`th Party, represented by al-Bakr's group, was unpopular because of people's experience of its ruthlessness in 1963. It was a weak group, working secretly and fairly unsuccessfully underground against the `Ārif regime. When it took over, it claimed that its Party membership was around 5000 full members. This number was most likely exaggerated by the Ba`th, as some sources indicate. (111)

Thus, reliance had to be put on a strong and effective group to stage the coup. After the coup the Palace Officers could not hold on to power and steer Iraq to stability, because of its difficult internal political

and economic condition, and their lack of public credibility and of a political party.(112) Hence, there was a need, just, for the al-Bakr group, which was favoured and trusted by the US and differed from the other groups in the following ways:

- (1) It had a party organisation with an internal security apparatus, Jihāz Ḥanīn, which had been established by Saddam on the orders of `Aflaq, to curb all popular opposition movements which had influence at that period, particularly the left-wing ones. Some sources have described how Saddam and the members of his Jihāz Ḥanīn caused fear and horror in student organisations, and throughout the colleges in Baghdad, particularly among left-wing students.(113) Another source indicates that Jihāz Ḥanīn instigated several political assassinations of left-wing activists during the `Ārif government, with the help of the CIA, through links with the US and British Embassies.(114) It was said that President Nasir sent a warning to the Iraqi government that he was informed by his intelligence service of a Ba`thist link with the CIA.(115) This was done with the knowledge of the Iraqi Ambassador in Lebanon, Nāṣiral-Ḥānī, which was the reason for his assassination after Saddam reached power.

- (2) It was extremely anti-left, despite its claim that it was socialist; this was only for the sake of appearances. This group would, then, guarantee US and

western interests, which had been harmed by the economic and a political measures of the previous government's policies. (116)

(3) There were bad relations between the Ba`th leadership and Nasir; it consistently wrecked any attempts to unify them, despite their both subscribing to similar ideologies

(4) It was close to the `Aflaq group in Lebanon with Jean Obaid, chief editor of the Lebanese newspaper al-Şayyād, as one of the links between it and `Aflaq. (117)

These features of the al-Bakr group persuaded the US that it was the best ally possible for the al- Nā'if group, for the staging of the coup, in order to secure the US and the west's interests not only in Iraq, but in the whole Arab world.



## The 17 July 1968 coup

The Ba`thists named 17 July 'the white revolution', not because they did not want to shed blood, as they acknowledged in the Political Report which states:

"....in the revolution of 8 February 1963 blood was shed freely....therefore the leadership of the Party determined that this time power must be taken without such bloodletting as would spoil the image and divert the course of the revolution," (118)

But because they did not meet any resistance from President `Ārif, since he had been betrayed by the guardians of his regimes, al-Dāwūd, al-Nā'if, Ghaydān and Shihāb. It was assumed to be no more than the handing over of power from one group to another.

Early in the morning of 17 July, al-Nāif occupied the Ministry of Defence. Al-Dāwūd occupied the broadcasting station, which was controlled by the Republican Guard that he commanded, while Sa'dūn Ghaydān opened the gate of the Presidential Palace to the Ba`thists, who called out their militia, including Saddam Hussein, together with members of Jihāz Ḥanīn dressed in army uniform, who rode in a truck in the direction of the Palace.(119) They arrived when the coup had already been ensured by the Palace Officers. The President, Ṭāhir Yaḥyā and many other figures of the regime

had been arrested, and power had effectively passed into other hands. Later, however, Saddam's biographies minimise the role of the Palace Officers, and give the credit for the coup's success to Saddam. (120)

The new government that was established on the day of the coup was a kind of coalition in which the Ba'thists were the weaker partner, since the leading Posts had been given to the Palace Officers in return for their participation in the coup, according to their advance agreement with the Ba'thist Officers. Al-Nā'if became the new Prime Minister, al-Dāwūd the Minister of Defence, and Ghaydān the Commander of the Republican Guard.

The clash between the al-Bakr group and the al-Nāif group began early; it was about seats in the cabinet and influence. Publicly, Saddam claimed that he did not want the al-Nā'if group to take part because they were involved with foreign intelligence networks. He claimed that the whole operation depended on the role of the Republican Guard and its Commanders, and so it was imperative that he took part in it. (121) But, in reality, as always, the Ba'th intended to exercise total control without unwanted partners in power, in order to prevent the great powers from plotting against them through such partners; they were determined to abandon them, particularly when they felt that events were beginning to go against them and in favour of the al-Nā'if and al-Dāwūd groups. They felt that unless they moved immediately and finished off the Palace

Officers, they would find themselves again without power. (122)

This belief, held particularly by the civilian Ba`thists, concerning their allies was a reason to get rid of them quickly, particularly for Saddam, whose role in the coup was conspicuously lacking, (123) and his name had not been put forward for a leading post in the new regime. All posts in the first cabinet had been allocated either to Tikrītī officers or to Palace Officers.

The Ba`thists took immediate steps to alter the military balance in their favour, by pensioning off or transferring the hostile officers, and replacing them with relatively sympathetic officers, capitalising on the delay by the al-Dāwūd to take up the post of Defence Minister within three days. (124) This operation was undertaken by the Chief of Staff, Ḥardān al-Tikrītī, one of al-Bakr's followers. Hence, within two weeks the power position within the army had switched to the advantage of the Ba`thists. Over 2,000 Ba`thist Officers and non-commissioned officers replaced those who had been transferred in key units during this period. (125) The Ba`thists also sent the Defence Minister, al-Dāwūd, on 29 July on an inspection of the Iraqi Army units based in Jordan, leaving behind him the Chief of Staff, Ḥardān al-Tikrītī, with full control of the army. The real purpose of the trip was to get rid of both al-Dāwūd and al-Nā'if. The latter was arrested by Saddam personally, with a gun in his



hand. All his followers and supporters were arrested or dismissed from their posts. Saddam was very proud of having taken part in the arrest of al-Nā'if and regarded it as his most successful operation.(126)

By 30 July, after only thirteen days, the Ba'th had taken complete power, after betraying their allies. The special features of this second coup were:

- (1) It was planned and executed by Saddam himself, who had not played any visible role in the 17 July Coup.
- (2) The composition of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) became completely Ba'thist. Ghaydān and Shihāb, who had never had any previous connection with the Ba'th Party, were declared to be Ba'thist.(127)
- (3) The RCC was dominated by army officers. This continued until November 1969. Later, their proportion was gradually reduced, owing to Saddam's frequent purges of the armed forces.(128)
- (4) The representation and the domination of Tikrītīs became significant, both in the RCC and in the Party,(129) until Saddam took over power and gradually instituted family rule.
- (5) The weight of the Sunnis' influence in the regime had risen, while that of the Shiis had declined. This may

be partly, as Batātū suggests, (130) owing to the challenge to Michel 'Aflaq's authority by al-Rikābī and 'Ali Šālih al-Sa'dī, both of whom were Shiī.

(6) The weight of influence of the civilian Ba`thists was less than that of their officer colleagues, except for Saddam who depended firstly on his family connection with the Tikrītīs, particularly al-Bakr, and secondly on his security and intelligence apparatus. Until Saddam became Vice-Chairman of the RCC, in November 1969, he preferred to pull strings behind the scenes. This was for the following reasons:

- (a) To prove to al-Bakr that he was not interested in any post; he was responsible only for protecting al-Bakr and the Party.
- (b) To prove that he was a capable man, who deserved office. Saddam did not have any particular qualities which qualified him for a leading post, apart from being a relative of al-Bakr's and being handy with a gun. So, if he pushed himself forward prematurely, he would have trouble with the main personalities in the government and the Party.
- (c) To give a chance to the military and political personalities among the members to make mistakes while in power; this would enable him to identify

those who might oppose him in the future and thus make organised plans to liquidate them.

- (d) To give himself the chance to concentrate on the security and intelligence organs of the Party and the State, in addition to Jihāz Hānīn.

Saddam was extremely successful in his plan. Soon he became the second man in the State, after liquidating all his opponents, either openly, by accusing them of plotting against the State and the Party, or secretly, by assassination. This policy of 'terror and repression' became more effective when it was backed by propaganda, to which he had allocated a large amount of the Iraqi budget, benefiting, no doubt, from Nasir's propaganda. Not only had Saddam's efforts in uniting the Party, the State and Iraqi society (which was notoriously difficult to unite in any sustained common endeavour) during eleven years of power-sharing with al-Bakr, had succeeded, but he managed to stay (politically) afloat.



## NOTES

- 1- See Khaddūrī, Mājid, Republican Iraq, pp.325, 368, for details of the various coup attempts against the two `Ārif regimes. *al-Ahrām* of 24 September 1965 details the first coup attempt by `Ārif `Abd al-Razzāq on 15 September 1965. *al-Nahār* of 9 March 1967 details al-Razzāq's second attempt on 30 June 1966. *al-Muḥarrir* of 22 September 1964 refers to the third coup attempt against the `Ārif regime by the Ba`th Party on 4 September 1964.
- 2- Kessing's Contemporary Archives, Political Development in Iraq, 1967-1968.
- 3- on `Abd al-Raḥmān `Ārif, see *al-Mawsu`ah al-Siyāsiyyah*, 3: 828.
- 4- Penrose, Edith and E.F. Penrose, Iraq: International Relations and National Development, London, 1978, p. 350.
- 5- `Abd al-Sattār `Ali al-Ḥusayn, Minister of Oil during the `Ārif regime, Adīb al-Jadr and Khayr al-Dīn Hasīb, kingmaker during Ṭāhir Yahyā's Prime Ministership and a cousin of al-Jadr, were accused by the Ba`th regime of corruption and acceptance of a bribe from the French oil company ERAP. They were jailed and their

property was confiscated. However, they were never tried or found guilty.

- 6- The Eighth Regional Congress of the Ba'th Party mentioned this; see the Political Report of the Eighth Congress, p. 31.
- 7- Kessing's Contemporary Archives.
- 8- al-Alawī, Ḥasan, `Abd al-Karīm Qāsim, Dār al-Zawrā', London, 1983, p. 146.
- 9- Press conference of 23 September 1965, *al-Jumhūriyyah*, 24 September 1965. See also Penrose, *ibid.*, pp. 334-35.
- 10- The agreement was broadcast by al-Bazzāz on 29 June 1966 over Baghdad Radio. For text of the agreement see BBC, Summary of World Broadcasts, 2nd Series, Middle East, 1 July 1966.
- 11- al-Bazzāz, `Abd al-Raḥmān, al-Qawmiyyah al-`Arabiyyah (On Arab Nationalism), London, 1965.
- 12- See Penrose, *ibid.*, chapter 14.
- 13- Penrose, *ibid.*, p. 461.

- 14- Hasīb, Khayr al-Dīn, "Plan Implementation in Iraq, 1951-1967," in Studies on Selected Development Problems in Various Countries in the Middle East, United Nations, 1969. See also Penrose, *ibid.*, p. 467.
- 15- About this information, see Ḥasan Rif`at, "Memoirs", *Beirut Times*. Rif`at was Minister of Housing and Construction during Qasim's regime.
- 16- Relation between Iraq and Kuwait, Ishow, Habib, Iraq: Power and Society, Ithaca Press, London, 1993, p. 314.
- 17- *al-Qabas*, 2 January 1995.
- 18- *Sunday Telegraph*, 14 January 1968; *New York Times*, 12 July 1970.
- 19- See MEES, 22 March 1968 for the text of the ERAP agreement, which was signed and ratified on 3 February 1968, the eve of President `Ārif's visit to France.
- 20- *Financial Times*, 1 February 1968.
- 21- MEES, 29 September 1967.
- 22- BBC ME, 2655/A5 - 6, 29 December 1967.



- 23- *al-Ḥayāt*, No 6788, 25 May 1968.
- 24- *Financial Times*, 22 January 1968.
- 25- *al-Nahār*, No. 9945, 10 April 1968. General Ṭāhir Yaḥyā, `Ārif's Prime Minister, said in an interview that the British Government threatened to send British paratroops to the oil areas if Iraq went ahead and signed an oil agreement with the French oil company, ERAP. Yaḥyā said that he was informed of this by one of his ministers a week earlier. It was probably a case of British Government intimidation at a time of Arab defeat and Soviet preoccupation with the Czech crisis. About this point see Rouleau, Eric, "Iraq After the Double White Revolutions," in *Le Monde*, 9-10 October 1968, which refers to the 17 July 1968 palace coup and the 30 July 1968 dismissal of the Prime Minister, `Abd al-Razzāq al-Nā'if, who held office for thirteen days only.
- 26- *al-Nahār*, 27 December 1967; *al-Ḥayāt*, No. 9811, 15 January 1968.
- 27- Rouleau, *ibid.*
- 28- Rouleau, *ibid.*
- 29- *al-Amal*, No. 6722, 9 February 1968.

- 30- *La Nouvelle Observateur*, 14 February, 1968.
- 31- *al-Dustūr*, No 370, 21 April 1968.
- 32- For `Ārif's announcement, see *Deutsche Nationale Zeitung*, reprinted in *al-Anwār*, No 2609, 21 February 1968.
- 33- `Ārif's speech was broadcast on Baghdad Radio on 8 February 1968, in commemoration of the fifth anniversary of the coup against Qasim.
- 34- *al-Ḥayāt*, No. 6743, 29 March 1968.
- 35- Batātū, H., The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movement in Iraq, Princeton University Press, UK, 1978, p. 1065.
- 36- *al-Nahār*, No. 9931, 27 March 1968.
- 37- *Rawz al-Yūsuf (Cairo)*, No. 2068, 29 January 1968.
- 38- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1098, note (36).
- 39- Khaddūrī, *ibid.*, p. 375.
- 40- See Batātū, *ibid.*, pp. 1035-1061 and 1067-1072 for a detailed account of the Iraqi Communist Party,

including internal disagreements and divisions within it.

- 41- Report of the Central Committee of the Iraqi Communist Party in early May 1964, which was broadcast by *Voice of the Iraqi People* from Prague during 14-17 July 1964.
- 42- *al-Nidā'*, the mouthpiece of the Lebanese Communist Party, 15 October, 1964.
- 43- *al-Nidā'*, 16 February 1964.
- 44- `Abd Al-Karim, Samir, Adwā' `Alā al-Ḥarakah al-Shuyū`iyyah fi al-`Irāq (Lights on the Communist Movement in Iraq), Part Four, p. 117, refers to a communist wing which called itself 'the Revolutionary Wing' and which maintained its hostility to `Ārif's regime, despite Soviet pressure.
- 45- Batātū, *ibid.*, refers to Amīr `Abd Allāh's report, p. 1045.
- 46- *Ibid.*
- 47- For this movement see `Abbās Kelidār, "`Azīz al-Ḥajj, A Communist Radical", in `Abbās Kelidār, (ed.), The Integration of Modern Iraq, New York, St. Martin's



- Press, 1979, pp. 183-192. al-Ḥajj later recanted, and in 1981 was an Iraqi representative in Europe.
- 48- See `Azīz al-Ḥajj's Statement to al-Sayyid on 1 8 May 1969. See also Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1098.
- 49- Quoted in al-Sa`d, H., Ḥurrās al-Gharb (The West's Guards), Beirut, 1992, p.267.
- 50- Conversation with the `Iraqi Journalist Sāmī Faraj in London on 28th June 1994. Farj met President `Ārif in the Presidential Palace in May 1968 and the President asked him to print the news in the newspaper. See *al-Anwār*, No. 2748, 22 June 1968. See also *Rawz al-Yūsuf* (Cairo), No. 8622, 5 July 1968.
- 51- *Ibid.*
- 52- See E.F. Penrose, *ibid.*, p.376, Note 2.
- 53- *al-Ḥayāt*, No. 8622, 5 July 1968.
- 54- See Chapter One.
- 55- *al-Anwār*, No. 2774, 18 July 1968.

- 56- Ajami, F., The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967. Cambridge and New York, 1981, pp. 12-13, 50-75, 126.
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- 58- Şabrī, Ismā`īl, "al-Istrātījiyyah wa al-Siyāsah al-Duwaliyyah" (Strategy and International Politics), in Mawsū`at al-Ba`th al-`Arabiyyah, 1979, np, p. 613.
- 59- *The Times*, 18 January 1968; *The Financial Times*, 17 January 1968.
- 60- *The Sunday Times*, 14 January 1968.
- 61- Ibid.
- 62- *al-Jarīdah*, No. 4636, 18 January 1968.
- 63- al-Miṣrī, Aḥmad, "al-Istrātījiyyah al-Amrīkiyyah fi al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ; al-Madkhal al-Nazarī wa al-Taṭbīq al-`Amalī" (American Strategy and the Middle East, the Theoretical Approach and the Practical Application), in al-Fikr al-Istrātījī al-`Arabī, No. 3, January, 1962.
- 64- *al-Ḥayāt*, No. 6671, 10 January 1968.

- 65-     *The Times*, 12 January 1968.
- 66-     *al-Ḥayāt*, No. 6671, 10 January 1968.
- 67-     *The Observer*, 14 February 1968.
- 68-     Ḥusayn, Muṣṭafā, "al-Farāgh al-Amnī fi al-Khalīj, Man sa Yamla'uhu?" (Security Vacuum in the Gulf: Who Is Going to Fill It?), in *Rawz al-Yūsuf*, No. 2072, 26 February 1968.
- 69-     *al-Anwār*, No 2601, 24 January 1968.
- 70-     *al-Nahār*, 10 May 1968.
- 71-     *al-Jarīdah* (a Beirut paper), No 4645, 29 January 1968.
- 72-     *al-Ṣafā'*, No. 1812, 2 March 1968, a Beirut publication of Reuter Reports of 1 March 1968.
- 73-     *The Times*, 18 January 1968.
- 74-     *The Sunday Telegraph*, 14 January 1968; *New York Times*, 12 July 1970.
- 75-     *Le Monde*, 9 October 1968.



- 76- See *al-Jarīdah* of 18 January 1968 on the Israeli paper *Ha'aretz*.
- 77- *The Times*, 18 January 1968.
- 78- See Kerr, M.H., The Arab Cold War: Gamal `Abd al-Nāṣir and his Rivals 1958-1970, London and Oxford, 1971, pp. 120-21.
- 79- al-Taqrīr al-Siyāsī li al-Mu'tamar al-Outrī al-Thāmin li Hizb al-Ba'th al-`Arabī al-Ishtirākī (Political Report of the Eighth Congress), *ibid*, p. 132.
- 80- *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.
- 81- *al-Jadīd Magazine*, No. 85, 1 March 1968.
- 82- `Aflaq, Michel, Nuqtat al-Bidāyah (The starting point), p. 245.
- 83- *al-Nahār Yearly Book*, 1967, p. 312.
- 84- *Rawz al-Yūsuf*, 11 April 1966.
- 85- The Political Report, *ibid*, p. 20.
- 86- *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 16, 17.
- 87- *Ibid.*, p. 23.

- 88- 'Aflaq, *ibid.*, pp. 41-43.
- 89- Though the communiqué issued after the congress did not specify where the congress was held, merely pointing out that it was 'somewhere in the Arab homeland', there was clearly no other place that would play host to Michel 'Aflaq apart from the pro-West, Christian-dominated Lebanon of the late 1960s. Of course, 'Aflaq was not in the business of turning the rest of the Arab world into a kind of Lebanon, but rather destroying the fabric of Iraq by his henchmen in Baghdad. *al-Anwār*, No. 2631, 23 February 1968.
- 90- The Political Report, p. 19.
- 91- *Ibid.*
- 92- Amīr, Muṣṭafā, "Ba'th Congress from Baghdad to Damascus through Beirut," *al-Jadīd*, No 85, 1 March 1968.
- 93- MEES, 9 November 1973.
- 94- See MEES, 31 May 1967 for Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi's criticism of Iraq's oil policy. See T. Niblock, Iraq, the Contemporary State, Croom Helm for

the Centre for Arab Gulf Studies, London, 1982, p. 182.

- 95- Marr, Phebe, The Modern History of Iraq, p. 204.
- 96- See note 50 above.
- 97- Marr, *ibid.*, p. 204.
- 98- Adel Darwish and Gregory Alexander, Unholy Babylon, pp. 203-204.
- 99- Marr, *ibid.*, p. 205. See also Middle East Record (MER), 1968, pp. 515-17.
- 100- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1074, based on an interview with `Abd al-Raḥmān `Ārif after the coup.
- 101- Marr, *ibid.*, p. 204.
- 102- See *al-Nahār*, 20 and 21 July 1968.
- 103- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1074.
- 104- *Ibid.*
- 105- Darwish and Alekander, *ibid.*, p. 204.
- 106- Batātū, *ibid.*, p.1074.



- 107- The 1974 Political Report, *ibid.*, pp. 39-40.
- 108- Marr, p.206, based on an interview with a prominent Iraqi figure. See also Darwish and Alekander, *ibid.*, pp. 203-204.
- 109- See note 90 above.
- 110- See President Nasir's letter to President al-Bakr in connection with the Ba`th artificial attitude toward the Palestine question and, in particular, its negative stance on the September events - known as "Black September" - involving the Palestinian guerillas and the Jordanian army. See also BBC, SWB, 2 August, 4 August 1970.
- 111- The *Economist* pointed out that the Ba`th Party was around half of the figure given by the Ba`thists. See the *Economist*, London, 24-30 June 1978, p. 78.
- 112- Marr, *ibid.*, p. 206.
- 113- Darwish and Alexander, *ibid.*, p. 202.
- 114- Conversation in London on 12 October 1994 with an authoritative source, an army retired officer who did not wish to reveal his name; he was a member of the

al-Bakr/Saddam circle and held a key post after the July coup of 1968.

- 115- Bulloch and Morries, Saddam's War, Faber & Faber, London, 1991, p. 56.
- 116- Darwish and Alexander, *ibid.*, p. 203.
- 117- Conversation with the Iraqi Journalist Sāmī Faraj in London on 28th June 1994.
- 118- The 1974 Political Report, *ibid.*, p. 30.
- 119- *Le Monde*, 9th October 1968.
- 120- Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi, Saddam Hussein: A political Biography, BPC Wheaton Press, UK, 1991, p. 32.
- 121- See Iskandar, *ibid.*, p.110.
- 122- Karsh & Rautsi, *ibid.*, pp. 32-33.
- 123- Khaddūrī, *ibid.*, pp. 21-24.
- 124- See Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1077.
- 125- Middle East Record, 4, 1969, p. 520. See also Ṭāha Ramaḍān al-Jazrāwī, "Shay' min Aṣrār al-Ḥizb, Shay'

min Aṣrār al-Thawrah" (Some Secrets of the Party, Some Secrets of the Revolution), *Alif Bā'*, Baghdad, 513 , July 1978, pp. 20-23.

126- The Political report, *ibid*, pp. 19-27. See also F. Maṭar, Saddam Hussein: The Man, the Cause, the Future, Third World Centre, London, 1981, p. 55; A. Iskandar, Saddam Hussein: The Fighter, the Thinker and the Man, Hachette, Paris, 1980, p. 110; M. Khaddūrī, Socialist Iraq: a study in Iraqi Politics since 1986, Washington, 1978, pp. 28-29.

127- Middle East Record, 1968, p. 523.

128- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1085.

129- *Ibid.*, p. 1088.

130- *Ibid.*, p. 1078.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **PARTNERSHIP OF AL-BAKR AND SADDAM IN POWER**



1975  
1975

## The search for Legitimacy

With the exclusion of al-Nāif/al-Dāwūd, power passed to the Ba`thists who gained exclusive control over the country. According to his biographer, it was thanks to Saddam that the Ba`th Party had risen to power without unwanted partners, within two weeks.(1) However, the Ba`th faced an apathetic and demoralised atmosphere, not greeted with mass acclaim, owing to its narrow popular base. It met suspicion, as the general feeling was that the Ba`th was about to implement new western designs on Iraq, following the Arab defeat of 1967. In particular, the Ba`thists rulers were the same elements as in the previous Ba`th regime, who were remembered with fear and resentment. The Ba`th had to find remedy for this lack of approval. The main objective was to defend their legitimacy in the eyes of the Iraqis. They tried to hide their true nature and their future schemes, and they gave no discernible indication of a consistent political line.

The regime began to represent itself as a new regime that had nothing to do with the previous bloody experience of 1963. It justified its seizure of power on the grounds that the `Ārif regime had decayed and had played no serious part in the 1967 war, despite Iraq's military power, which was not much less than that of Egypt. The Ba`thist felt the need to present some kind of policy relevant to the new developments. So, they adopted a plausible line on the question of Palestine and the conflict in the Middle East.

Indeed, they transformed the Palestinian issue into a matter of life and death for ordinary Iraqis, and made assertions that they would liberate Palestine. while, at the same time, being at odds with the three countries most concerned with the conflict with Israel, namely Egypt, Syria and Jordan, despite their having left the Eastern Command, which greatly compromised the credibility of their radical stance toward Israel.(3)

Apart from denunciations of Zionism and imperialism, the Ba`thist rulers made some other pronouncements, in order to retain the sympathies of the Iraqis, and to give themselves a confident cover. For example, they promised to follow the Principles of the 14 July revolution, and claimed that their revolution was a natural extension of it.(4) They promised a solution to the Kurdish problem, although, by the Autumn of 1968, clashes were taking place between the Iraqi army and the Kurds. They also guaranteed equal opportunities and a democratic life for all the Iraqi people. They began to act as if they were going to prepare the stage for legitimate constitutional and parliamentary politics, by giving some Seats in the cabinet to the parties of the left, in August 1968.(5) They released all political prisoners on 5 September 1968,(6) and called on other political groups to co-operate with the regime.

There was, however, in practice, a wide gap between the words and the actions of the Ba`thist rulers. In one of Saddam's public statements he said:



"....the ideal revolutionary command should effectively direct all planning and implementation. It must not allow the growth of any other rival centre of Power. There must be one command pooling and directing the subsequent government departments, including the armed forces.(7)

This authoritarian vision of the Ba`thists for their political system, indicated that they had no intention of establishing a liberal democracy in Iraq. On the contrary, they soon set up a one-party rule, with organs of suppression under strict Party directives.

In their pursuit of popularity, the Ba`thist rulers also declared their intention to pursue an independent oil policy and decrease the international oil monopolies, blaming al-Nāif and al-Dāwūd for favouring the abolition of the State oil company (INOC).(8)

In their pursuit of legitimacy among the Arab and in their need to portray the image that they were present the Arab interests, Ba`thist rulers gave their regime a pan-Arabs character.(9) While according to some observers, the Ba`thists' strategy of conferring on their regime image was part of a determined ploy to outmanoeuvre their Syrian rival counterparts in the fight for the much coveted accolade of pan-Arabism leaders.(10) According to others,

there was nothing pan-Arabist about the Ba`thist regime and such a regime had in practice largely relied on the regional and tribalist loyalties which it had so vehemently in the past condemned as part of Qāsim's and `Ārif's regimes. (11)

The Ba`thists also, invited `Aflaq to become Secretary General of the sole legitimate Ba`th Party. `Aflaq's presence in Iraq as a front for the Iraqi regime, greatly enhanced Baghdad's Ba`thi legitimacy. Most importantly, `Aflaq's opposition to military domination within the Ba`th Party was very useful for Saddam in asserting the Party's control over the armed forces, and in transforming them into an instrument of Party leadership, or in other words, an instrument for himself.

By such measures as these and by an anti-semitic policy towards the Palestinian issue, which made a profound impression on the public, the new Ba`thist leaders' purpose was intend merely to gain popularity. Behind the scenes they were trying hard to consolidate their position, and to guarantee the regimes survival, in order to avoid repetition of the Ba`th fate in 1963. While, at the same time, the process for legitimacy was under way, the Ba`thist rulers, in particular Saddam, spread an atmosphere of total indiscriminate terror, which eliminated all actual or potential opposition. It gave a direct message to political opponents and the public at large that the Ba`th this time had come to stay, and that any attempt to

overthrow it would be severely crushed. In this process of terror, the regime began to execute people who it claimed were involved in plots against it.



## Consolidation of Power

The Ba`th combined the process of enhancing its popularity, with a process of consolidating its authority and strengthening its hold on Power. The first step in this direction was, a communiqué issued on the first day of the July 30 coup, that Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr, the Secretary of the Regional Command, was to be Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, in addition to his post as President of the Republic, which he had held since 18 July. (12)

Saddam Husayn became vice-president of the Revolutionary Command Council(RCC), but this was not officially announced, on the grounds that he had no personal ambition for any official post, preferring instead to concentrate on Party affairs, in order to prevent any possible fall from Power again. (13) His undeclared objective was to remain in the background until he felt secure enough to set about disposing of his rivals, as we will see later.

The urgent task of the Ba`thist leader's was to strengthen their newly gained hold on Power. Accordingly, the RCC, was expanded to fifteen, to include the entire Regional Command of the Ba`th Party. (14) The RCC was formed on 17 July. It was, until the expansion of 30 July, composed of five people, i.e. General Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr,

Lieutenant General Ṣāliḥ Maḥdī `Ammāsh, air Major General Ḥardān Abd al-Ghaffār al-Tikrītī, Major General Ḥammād Sheḥāb and Major General Sa`dūn Ghadān. The new composition was not officially made public until November 1969. It was at this time that Saddam's position as Deputy Chairman of the RCC was also officially announced.(15)

Another step in the Ba`thist leaders' process of consolidation was to constitutionalise their power within the state. This step was put into effect on September 21 1968, when the regime issued its first provisional constitution, which was characterised as "democratic and popular", although it was not agreed on by any representative group of the people. It was signed by the five people who designated themselves the Revolutionary Command Council.

This constitution gave the RCC or more accurately its chairman dominant power, as legislative, judicial and executive authority. The cabinet and the "projected" National Assembly, which eventually came into being in 1980, were to be subordinate to the RCC.(16) The constitution also provided that the newly elected members of the RCC should become members of the regional command of the Ba`th party,(17) thus eliminating the RCC as a separate body.

Thus, being completely controlled by the party (or more accurately by its two leaders, al-Bakr and Saddam), the RCC and the cabinet became no more than symbolic,

transformed into instruments of the party leadership. This step was combined with a purge of all non-Ba`thists and those who were not subservient to the Ba`th leadership from the RCC and the Cabinet, who were replaced by Ba`thists and sympathisers. The Tikrītī representation among them was the highest.

Within this framework, Power was increasingly concentrated in the hands of the Ba`thist leadership, especially in those of Saddam. Gradually, the influence of the RCC, the state institutions, including the armed forces, and the Ba`th Party itself, substantially declined; the members of these institutions became virtual ciphers, carrying out the leadership's orders only.

All these legitimising and consolidating measures were prerequisites for the terror that followed. This was planned and carried out by Saddam himself and his instrument of terror, the security apparatus. It involved the destruction of Iraq's civilian society and the establishment of a Soviet-style totalitarian system, within the framework of Ba`thist doctrine. Saddam's policy carried both the semblance of a progressive and non-aggressive regime, on the one hand, and a threat of punishment for those who publicly opposed the Ba`th regime, on the other, i.e. it was "a carrot and stick policy". At any rate, the ostensible progressive and non-aggressive policy was only a temporary one, designed to enable the regime to strengthen its grip on power, by deluding the people that its



intentions were good and not like those of 1963, until it had established absolute authority.

## The framework of Saddam's Policy

Alongside these Legitimising and Consolidating measures, Saddam was quietly manoeuvring himself into a position where he could take supremacy over the Party and the RCC as well as the machinery of State, including the armed forces. To achieve this, his first step was to develop the machinery of the party and the security services. By these instruments of control, he would be able to check all potential threats to the Ba`th regime, or to be specific, his own power base. Within a few years, he became the second most important figure in the country after al Bakr.

How did Saddam gain this high degree of domination? For one thing, he had the absolute trust and complete support of al-Bakr, in his capacity as secretary general of the Ba`th party and President of the state. He had had a good relationship with al-Bakr since 1964, when they were both in prison during the `Arif period. This relation was sealed and cemented by ties of kinship.(18) Thus, by following al-Bakr's steps, Saddam gained superiority over all other important elements in the party and the state.

- (1) Al-Bakr gave up to Saddam most of his authority to issue important political resolutions. One may deduce from this, either that al-Bakr was a weak and indecisive Person or that he could exercise no control

over instructions that Saddam received from out side Iraq.(19)) In any case, it was al-Bakr, who was ultimately responsible for Saddam's gradual rise to power.

(2) Al- Bakr gave Saddam a free hand over the Ba`th Party, after he handed over to him all his responsibilities. Saddam worked first to build up his base in the Party. He reorganised the party apparatus, of which had been in charge since 1966. It now contained more trusted personnel, who were there merely to carry out his orders. He himself assumed complete authority in all matters. The aim of this measure was fundamentally to avoid the emergence of any individual identity within the Party, capable of rivalling and threatening his hegemony of the Party and to avoid any setback like that of February 1963.(20) This meant that Saddam had transformed the Ba`th Party into an instrument for securing his Power base.

3- Al- Bakr authorised Saddam to develop his own security apparatus *Jihāz Ḥānīn*, of which he had been in charge since his years in the political wilderness.(21) At the beginning, it was known as the *Dā'irat al-'Alāqāt* (Relations Bureau). In 1972, it developed into the *Dā'irat al-Mukhābarāt al-'Āmah* (General Intelligence Bureau), headed by Sa`dūn Shākr, a member of the RCC and Saddam's close friend. Its duty, according to the 1974 Political Report, was to



watch over the Security and Police services, repressing and liquidating espionage networks. A section of the *Mukhābarāt* created in 1982, called *al-'Amn al-Khāss* (special security section) was headed by Saddam's son Quṣay. Its main duty was, to ensure the President's security.(22)

These agencies were ostensibly professional organs responsible for the safeguarding of national security, but they were in fact political and intelligence bodies, equipped with the most up-to-date instruments of surveillance and coercion. Its members combined professional experience with political knowledge and loyalty to Saddam only. He choose the members of these agencies exclusively from his family and close relative, e.g. his half-brothers Barazān, Sab`āwī, Waṭbān, his cousin Ali Ḥasan al-Majid, his son, Quṣay, his two-sons in-law Ḥusayn Kāmel and Saddām Kāmel al-Majid, his brother in law 'Arshad Yāsīn and his close friend Sa`dūn Shākr. The main reason for this was to make any hostile action against him impossible. This indicates also that Saddam was afraid even of the Tikrītīs themselves.

Saddam choose many bosses instead of one big chief, controlling those below, and keeping an ever watchful eye on those above. At the same time, he directed these agencies to watch the other police networks, and to control the state's activities. It is a complex system to arrange

for them to spy on one another, and on the other apparatus of the party and the state.

This powerful method maintained a permanent condition of fear and insecurity at every level, among those who worked in these agencies. Saddam introduced this system also into the Ba`th Party apparatus. It was then extended to all the apparatus of the state and to the whole of Iraqi society, by the infiltration of members of these agencies. According to diplomats and other foreigners working in Iraq:

**"....There is a feeling that at least three million are watching the eleven million others",**

and an Arab specialist in a western embassy said:

**"....The security service permeate society to a degree that, no one ever knows who's who".(23)**

- (4) Al-Bakr enabled Saddam also to control the State Security apparatus, after he handed him the responsibility for the National Security Bureau of the RCC *Maktab al-'Amn al-Qawī* (the President's personal security apparatus).(24) From this bureau, Saddam controlled the *al-Istikhbārāt al-'Askariyyah* (Military Intelligence), and *al-'Amn al-'Āmm* (the department of internal Security) which came to function under his

direct control. This department was headed by Nāẓim Kizār, a Ba`thist who had earned a notorious reputation as a torturer in *Qaṣr al-Nihāyah* during the first Ba`th regime in 1963.

- (5) Al-Bakr enabled Saddam to subordinate the army to the Party, after he had convinced him that no co-operation between civilians and the military was possible, because Power would automatically be turned to the advantage of the military. This was true of the Party's setbacks of 1963 in Iraq and 1966 in Syria, when the Ba`thist officers in both countries had driven the civilian faction from Power; the Monarchy had also experienced this, with the first "aborted" military Coup in 1936. Since then, regular intervention in political life had made the military into a powerful and autonomous actor and a destabilizing element. Thus, Saddam knew that if he relied on the army, he would certainly fail to impose his personal power. (25)

Accordingly, backed by al-Bakr, he turned his attention to the army, with process of replacing, retiring and dismissing all Ba`thist dissidents. The process has been systematically continued ever since. (26) Al-Bakr and Saddam determined that the only means of guaranteeing the new regime's stability was to transform the role of the armed forces, and to prevent the emergence of any "military



identity", which might produce a figure capable of threatening the hegemony of the their regime.(27)

As a result, they managed together to achieve a degree of domination of both the Party and the government that neither could have achieved on his own. Al-Bakr, as a senior officer and one of the Free Officers, provided the party some legitimacy. Also, he brought support from the army which Saddam lacked, owing to his influence with army officers, with whom he had working ties for years. Saddam on the other hand, with his operational and organisational skills as well as his pragmatic ruthlessness, provided al-Bakr with the qualities that he desperately required to strengthen his regime. It is doubtful whether without Saddam's dogged determination and his paranoiac wariness, al-Bakr would have been able so successfully to overwhelm the military faction or to spread the Party's tentacles throughout the Iraqi nation. Saddam was also convinced that, without al-Bakr's relentless support, his ability to achieve his ultimate goal would have been seriously impaired.(28) Thus, although Saddam from the beginning began to gather power into his hands, he was very careful not to challenge al Bakr's leadership, in order to gain his trust.(29)

Another important factor that contributed to Saddam's rise to power was the relationship which bound him to 'Aflaq and the Ba`th Party doctrine. He remained faithful to the central tenets of the Ba`th Party thinking. This was

clear from the ruthless tactics with which he practised from his earliest days, his use of violence and fear to establish and maintain his political influence, and his disdain for Parliamentary democracy regime. His policy, of using sectarianism and tribal loyalty to strengthen and keep his power, was entirely consonant with the spirit of the Ba`th thinking, despite the fact that the Ba`th claims to reject sectarian, regional and tribal loyalties, in accordance with its secular Arab-nationalist ideology.(30)

A further factor which helped Saddam in no small degree was the ease with which Iraqis themselves submitted to the regime, after Saddam had made them accomplices in his violence. By this Stalinist-style policy he instilled fear into the mass of the people. By the end of the 1970s, when Saddam had absolute power, public political dialogue had vanished; once politics was the main subject of all Iraqi conversation.

Yet another important reason for Saddam's emergence and the stabilising of rule was the miscalculation of policy by the previously most important political power in the country, the Communists, in accepting Moscow's order to associate with the Ba`th. Despite the fact that the Communists faced increasing attacks, harassment and assassination attempts from the Ba`th, at the same time the Ba`th made efforts to improve its relations with them and with the Socialist Countries.

While the process of consolidation was taking place, Saddam with the total support of al-Bakr launched a campaign of terror, in which he stamped out all his potential rivals, inside and outside the party and the state.(31)



## The elimination of opponents

Within a few months, the Ba`thist leaders displayed their real intentions, and the Ba`th's policy of terror had officially begun. This time, however, the terror took a different that in 1963, which was confined to one wing only led by al-Sa`dī. It now became an official organised program, followed by the government and the party alike, and used a particular technique, "the uncovering of fabricated plots". This became the "habitual" over the next decade.(32)

During the initial months, until 1973, the Ba`th regime claimed to have uncovered several plots against it, all of which were crushed ruthlessly. A series of purges took place, throughout this period, in the name of purifying the country of spies, conspirators and plotters, who prevented the leadership and the party doing their duty properly.(33) They hit out indiscriminately, at any kind of opposition which might threaten them: right or left, Communists, Nasirists, pro-Syrian Ba`thists, Former Ministers, ex-officials, business men, former civil servants from the previous regime, who were hostile to prominent Ba`thists and openly criticised al-Bakr/Saddam's policies. Eventually, a purges of the Military Ba`thists by the Civilian wing represented by took place. One account suggests that the reason for this was that, since the Ba`thists had failed to gain popularity, they found

necessary to cow their enemies.(34) In fact, the main aims of these purges were:

- (1) To prove to the Iraqis that the Ba`th regime intend to eradicate the espionage networks, which no previous regime had had the intention or the capability to do.(35)
- (2) To give a direct message to his opponents to think twice before organising any attempt against the regime, as Saddam latter commented:

**"....the men were hanged to teach the people a lesson...anyone thinking of organising a coup should think again.... this time the Ba`thists were here to stay."(36)**

- (3) To create a kind of general fear, which would have a powerful political effect on the Iraqis in the future years of the Ba`th rule.

Below are examples of such purges:

- (a) The purge of unwanted non-Ba`th from all government institutions of the former regime, beginning with prominent civilian officials who had been most involved in the Erap negotiations, like `Abd al-Sattār `Ali al-Ḥusayn the minister for oil, Adīb al-Jādir and Khayr al-Dīn Hasīb, from

(INOC). They were arrested, some of them were tortured, and their properties were impounded. (37)

(b) The purges of unwanted non-Ba`thist high-ranking officers from the old regime, who were replaced by Ba`thists or Ba`thist sympathisers. (38) In December 1968, Fayṣal al-Anṣārī, the chief of staff, was retired and replaced by Ḥammād Shihāb, the most sympathetic person to Saddam within the military faction. The commander of the air force, Lieutenant General, Jāsim Muḥammed al-Shāhir, was retired and replaced by the Tikrītī Ba`thist Ḥusayn Hayāwī. (39) Lieutenant General Maḥmūd `Araym, the commander of Iraq forces in Jordan, was replaced by Lieutenant General Ḥasan al-Naqīb, sympathetic and loyal to the Ba`th. (40)

(c) The purge of al-Nāif's supporters. All of these were liquidated, e.g. Nāṣir al-Ḥānī, foreign minister after the coup and former Iraqi ambassador in Washington and Beirut during the `Ārif period. It appears that he knew too many secrets about the al-Bakr/Saddam connection; (41) he was kidnapped by a Ba`thist agent, and never seen alive again. (42)

(d) The purges of the Iraqi Jewish Community, which took place in Baghdad and the South of Iraq. The



declared objective of these purges was to cleanse the government and society from spies, plotters and conspirators. The undeclared objective was to suppress the real targets, political rivals. There are in the list of these alleged spy network many names of political dissidents, with whom al-Bakr and Saddam had a disagreements; they accused them of being Israeli and CIA agents.(43) One of these opponents was Rashīd Muṣliḥ, the former Minister of the interior, who left the Ba`th and joined `Ārif in November 1963. He confessed under torture to having spied for the CIA and was executed. The underlying reason for killing Rashid Muslih was the fear that he would reveal some secrets about the al-Bakr/Saddam group.(44) Another rival, was Fu'ād al-Rikībī, the first secretary of the Ba`th Party in Iraq. Soon after the coup, he was put under house arrest, his properties were impounded, and he was prohibited from any political activity; he was later arrested and put in prison for one and half years for being a spy for the CIA. Two days before he was due to be released, he was stabbed in the chest, by order of Saddam, and left unattended in the hospital until he was dead.(45) Ṭāhir Yaḥyā, the former Prime Minister, was imprisoned on accusation of corruption; he died in prison under torture.(46) `Abd al-`Aziz al-`Aqulī, the former Minister of Defence, was on

trial with Muşlih but did not confess; he was given a lengthy period of imprisonment and died in prison.(47) `Abd al-Reḥmān al-Bazzāz, the former Prime Minister, was accused of spying for Israel; he died just shortly after his release, because of his torture in prison.(48)

- (e) The purge of pro-Syria Ba`thists. The regime attempted to contain or neutralise Ba`thists who sympathised with Syria. It tried to win over some of these, but because of their unwillingness to participate or co-operate with it, it carried out a wave of arrests of them. Colonel `Abd al-Karīm Muşṭafā Naşrat, the former Minister, in charge of the Army Faction of the Ba`th Syrian wing, was arrested and died in prison under torture. A public confession was produced from some criminal who admitted to having had an affair with him, and to having stabbed him to death, in order to keep this secret.(49)

The second part of this series of purges consisted of the suppression of certain of their followers in the armed forces. It was centred on two prominent Ba`thist officers, Lieutenant General Şālih Maḥdi `Ammāsh, and air Major General Ḥardān `Abd al-Ghaffār al-Tikrītī. Both had followers and supporters in the armed forces and in the party.

Al-Bakr and Saddam, who were experienced in political manipulation, employed a ruse to oust the two of them from their sensitive posts in the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior. This was to encourage the rivalry between the two of them, in order to weaken them, al-Bakr then ordered both of them to be removed from their posts and to be appointed-vice presidents, in April 1970. Eventually, General Ḥardān was dismissed from this post while he was abroad; he was assassinated by a Mukhābarāt agent in Kuwait.(50) To justify his murder, he was accused of not helping the Palestinians in Jordan in the bloody events of September 1970 "Black September"; these accusations were in truth baseless, because General Ḥardān had already lost his job as minister of defence in April 1970 and played no part in the affair.(51) The regime laid the blame for its shameful action at Ḥardān's own door after he had been liquidated. The ones to blame for Iraqi inaction in the war was General Ḥammād Shihāb, the Defence Minister, his chief of staff 'Abd al-Jabbār Shanshal and above all the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, al-Bakr himself.

As for General 'Ammāsh, shortly after his appointment as vice-president, he was sent as ambassador to Moscow. In the-mid 1970s he was allowed to return, and was then accused of being involved with 'Abd al-Karīm al-shekhli in a plot against the regime; eventually he was reported to have died in complete obscurity.(52) The undeclared reason for General 'Ammāsh's dismissal and subsequent possible



elimination was that he apparently had been the chairman of a special ministerial committee which was given the task of dealing with the IPC, (53) which Saddam wanted to be under his direct control.

In a press interview with the Kuwait newspaper al-Siyāsah, Saddam denied rumours that the dismissal of `Ammāsh and Ḥardān was the result of a struggle for power in which he had emerged as the victor. He argued that it was a matter of party democracy, and they had gone in accordance with the principle of self-criticism practised by the party. (54) Commenting on Saddam's speech we may say :

- (1) What Saddam was talking about was Stalinism , in which the Marxist concept of central democracy was exploited by him for his own ends.
- (2) It resembled Stalin's double speak, in which a word means the exact opposite.

Another purge was instituted in the army after a plot was uncovered, led by a retired officer, `Abd al-Ghanī al-Rāwī, to over-throw the regime. It was assumed that the plot was supported by Iran, the CIA, and Israel. (55) Several dozen officers were executed. The death penalty was passed on the exiled Prime Minister, al-Nāif, for his involvement in the plot; he was later assassinated in London. (56) There is a suggestion that the reason for this plot was the

regime's negotiation with the Kurds; the army was afraid that, after resolving the Kurdish problem peacefully, al-Bakr and Saddam would become more influential. (57)

It seems clear from the frequently renewed purges of the commanders and officers of the armed forces, who were in any case subject to constant surveillance by the security service and infiltrated by those loyal to Bakr and Saddam, that the latter was determined to gain full control over these services, in order to prevent them again taking over the government and the party. Al-Bakr's and Saddam's objectives were openly declared when Saddam broadcast proudly:

**".....With our party methods, there is no chance for anyone who disagrees with us to jump on a couple of tanks and overthrow the government." (58)**

The 1974 Political Report, which was adopted by the Eighth Congress of the Ba'th Party, acknowledges the policy of purging the armed forces from the earliest days:

**"....the party had urgently to consolidate its leadership of the armed forces, to purge them of suspect elements, conspirators and adventurers, to cultivate Pan-Arab and socialist principles army, the soldiers to establish the ideological and military criteria**

which would enable the armed forces to do their duty as well as possible and would immunise them against the deviations which the Qāsim and `Ārif regimes and their military aristocrats had committed in the army's name and thus to integrate the armed forces with the people's movement, directed by their party.(59)

The next stage of Saddams system of purges was his purge of the civilian faction of the Ba`th party. The first victim was `Abd Allāh Sallūm al-Sāmarra'ī, a member of the RCC and Minister of Culture and Information. He was removed from his post, to become ambassador in India, in March 1970.(60) Ṣalāḥ `Umar al-`Ali lost his membership of the RCC and his post as Minister, in Summer 1970.(61) `Abd al-Karīm al-Shaykhli, one of the abduction and execution team of the Ba`th Party and a member of Jihāz Ḥanīen, who had been Foreign Minister since 30 July Coup 1968, was removed from all his duties in September 1971, and was sent abroad as the Ambassador of Iraq to the United Nations.(62) His popularity inside the Ba`th Party, at the top of the organisation, gave him a possible future as a leader of the party leadership;(63) the same was true of `Abd al-Khāliq al-Sāmarra'ī a "left-wing party theoretician". Thus, they would be likely to pose a serious threat to Saddam's ambitions.(64) Accordingly, al-Shaykhli was recalled to Baghdad and put in prison for his alleged involvement in a plot with General `Ammāsh against Saddam. Shortly after his release, he was assassinated, in 1980.(65)



Saddam's special technique for eliminating al-Sāmarra'ī, "the most dangerous opponent of Saddam's within the civilian faction", was as follows: In 1973, Nāẓim Kizār, the head of the security service and Saddam's right-hand men led a plot against the regime, allegedly because of the Sunni, in particular the Tikrītīs domination in the Ba`th Party and the Government, as was reported in many references.(66) The plot was uncovered. Kizār and his supporters were executed. `Abd al-Khāliq al-Sāmarra'ī was alleged to have been involved in the plot; his death penalty was commuted to one of life imprisonment, after the intervention of the National Command.(67)

Only a few facts were released by the regime about Kizār's coup, and it seems that there is more behind the whole affair than was reported. One account alleges that Saddam was behind Kizār's plot.(68) Although this cannot be proved, there is weighty evidence for Saddam's complicity:

- (1) Saddam was Kizār's direct party superior, and it was he who was appointed him to leading post in the security forces, in 1969;(69) he then promoted him to high rank in the police, four years before he had any rank himself. This was due to Kizār's great skill in torture and murder, which the two of them had practised together in "Qaşr al- Nihyah", during the first Ba`th rule, in 1963.

- (2) Undoubtedly, Saddam was unfaithful to al-Bakr. He used al-Bakr to achieve his goal, that of becoming the first man in the state. Given that Kizār was his right hand man, it is not improbable that he should have conspired with him to remove al-Bakr. This is lent credibility by the fact that Saddam had already distanced al-Bakr from his official functions. Eventually, in 1982, he killed him. If he was able to remove him in 1979, likely that he already had such intention in 1973.
- (3) According to one source associated with the event, it was said that by the Presidential order, no one at all was allowed to concern himself with the al-Kizār affair.(70) That meant that, the affair became a matter between al-Bakr and Saddam alone. Since Saddam was most experienced in fabrication, he easily convinced al-Bakr to believe any story he told.
- (4) From the course of the events, it seems that Kizār did not know Saddam's real aim, or that he would betray him if the plot failed. Evidence for this is provided by the fact that Kizār shot the two hostages, who were to be accused of instigating the plot against al-Bakr, if it succeeded.(71) There is a likelihood that Kizār was in contact with Saddam (over the radio) and that he gave him the order to kill the hostages as a condition being given safe conduct out of the country.

He hoped thereby to conceal the agreement between them, and also to get rid of the two hostages, the ministers, who were in charge of the armed forces and the police. Kizār would then get the blame for their liquidation, not Saddam. Thus, the claim which was made by the regime that Kizār abducted the two Ministers as hostages in order to negotiate with the government, is far from the truth. This is further supported by the fact that, one of the two Ministers, Sa'dūn Ghidān, survived to shooting; he was dismissed in 1982, and died suddenly in 1985, most likely by poison, when he began to reveal secrets, which aroused Saddam's anger, he decided to keep him silence for ever.

(5) In fact, Saddam would be the winner. whether the plot succeeded or failed. If it succeeded, Saddam would gain the following advantages:

(a) He would get rid of al-Bakr and became President, because he was his Deputy.

(b) He would get rid of al-Sāmarra'ī, having arranged with Kizār to mention his name in the plot. Otherwise, there would be no evidence linking Kizār with al-Sāmarra'ī, who unlike Kizār was of good standing in the Party and was an important rival to the al-Bakr/Saddam group. (72)



(c) He would get rid of the Defence and Interior Ministers.

(d) He would get rid of Kizār's power-base within the security system, which would then be unlikely to challenge him in the future.

If the operation failed, Saddam would still gain the following advantages:

- (1) He would get rid of his dangerous rival al-Sāmarra'ī.
- (2) Saddam would be able freely to increase his security measures, with out criticism, in the name of saving the party and the Government from plotters.(73)
- (3) He would be able to administrate the secret police himself. At the Eighth Regional Congress of the Ba`th Party, which was held in Baghdad in January 1974, the leadership admitted that they had made a big mistake in allowing this sensitive organisation to operate without careful control.(74)
- (4) He would be able to put the blame for many of his ruthless activities at the door of Kizār and his agencies,(75) despite the fact that Kizār's close connection with him meant that he could not possibly have been unaware of the activities of his subordinate.(76)

- (5) The estrangement between Saddam and Kizār on ideological grounds, especially concerning Saddam's new enthusiasm for the Communists, prevented Saddam from proceeding with his new scheme, while Kizār was still in his post. In fact, the alliance between the Ba`th and the Communists was announced directly after Kizār's attempted coup. It was afterwards believed in some Communist wings that leftist elements within the Ba`th Party leadership had got the upper hand.
- (6) Saddam presents himself as a patriotic leader, who is besieged by imperialism and reaction. In fact, in his speech on 24 September 1973, Saddam linked the Kizār affair with imperialism, especially since it was preceded by his oil nationalisation in March 1973. He said:

".....we know that imperialism realised finally and particularly in 1972 that the Revolution in Iraq had gone past the state of "permitted revolution" which it is accustomed to see in the countries of the Third World....However hard imperialism may now look for its concealed reserves (in Iraq) it will never be able to compel our Revolution to retreat and collapse....Those who have sold themselves to the foreigner will not escape punishment....those who are committing these

deeds are individuals who have been hired and exploited in certain ways in the midst of the difficult phase through which we are passing....we know on this basis that when imperialism was surprised by the revolutionary moves and measures of 1972, it re-examined the situation in order to launch a counter attack. (77)

However, Saddam's image was affected very much by the Kizār affair, and his position was weakened. Hence he was in need of desperate measures to recover his position in the eyes of his superior, al-Bakr, and of the Party and the public in general. Accordingly, he immediately took a number of administrative and constitutional measures to safeguard his position:

- (1) The provisional constitution was amended, to redefine the power of the president (78) as follows:
  - (a) Under Article 57, the President became Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces as well as head of State, and could exercise his power either directly or through the Council of Ministers.
  - (b) Article 58 conferred a further wide range of powers on the President, since he was charged with the preservation of the independence of the country and the integrity of the land,



supervising the application of the constitution, the law, resolutions, judicial decisions and development projects in all parts of Iraq.

(c) The President took responsibility for appointing and dismissing Ministers, Judges, Civil Servants and Officers, and for directing and controlling the work of Ministers and institutions.

(2) The RCC was reduced to seven members. Many of its powers were transferred into the hands of al-Bakr as President of the Republic and Chairman of the Council of Ministers.(79)

(3) Al-Bakr took over the Defence Ministry after the death of General Ḥammād Shihāb, and the army was excluded from involvement in any operation concerning the Kizār affair, in order to avoid any further disturbance.

(4) Saddam acted personally to resolve the confusion that had spread through the ranks of the Party Militia of whom the loyalties of many local Commanders were divided between to Kizār and the state.

(5) Saddam took over the administration of the secret police and restructured it, by himself. This force now became three agencies, independently responsible to the RCC, and Sa'dūn Shākir, Barazān al-Tikrītī, his

half brother, and Quşay his son, were put in charge of these new agencies.

(6) The Party leadership called a regional Congress, which was the 8th Party Congress. It took place from 8 to 12 January 1974. It elected eight new members, in addition to the previous five.

(7) In November 1974, a cabinet reshuffle was announced. Eight new ministers were appointed, five of whom were the newly elected members of the Party Regional Command. This means that the key posts were occupied by Ba`th Party Members.

By means of their achievements and the support given him by al-Bakr, which, at the same time enabled Saddam to control al-Bakr himself, Saddam had complete control of the security services, the RCC, the army and the Ba`th party, all of which had been cleansed of all unreliable elements.

Saddam was now in a position to take his next step towards complete power, that of containing the other two strong political rivals in the country, the Communists and the Kurds, who were now ready to accept an alliance with the regime, after Saddam had given them the impression that he was the principal pro-Communist within the Ba`th Party and the RCC. In particular, Saddam adopted some progressive policies in order to persuade them to co-operate with him

and to join the National Patriotic Front. This was the beginning of their end.



### Saddam's reconciliation's

Although the Ba`th process of consolidation was taking place, the situation continued to be unstable. The reason for this was principally the regime's failure to obtain left-wing support, represented by the Communists, who could muster potential opposition to it, owing to their exclusive influence among the popular organisations, and by the "Ba`th-Syria wing", who accused the al Bakr/Saddam group of having links with the west. (80)

Saddam, backed by al-Bakr, took tactical steps, to overcome these and other obstacles. He introduced a series of radical and progressive measures, in an attempt to restrain the rival political forces, without giving them any actual share of power. These measures consisted partly of an economic and social program, including modification of the labour and Pension and Social Security laws, (81) and of the Agrarian Reform law (promulgated May 1970). (82) Education and Health Service were expanded. Internal and External trade were fully controled by the State. The public sector was rename of the "Socialist Sector". This legislation, to some extent, benefited the population, but their avowed purpose was to reduce the private sector and bring all economic and social affairs into government hands, in accordance with the ostensible Ba`th policy of Socialisation.

Saddam's apparently decisive turn towards the left was symbolised by his move to forge close links with the Soviet Union and other Socialist countries, which began at the beginning of 1969. In March and June 1969, the regime signed agreements with the Soviet Union, to develop the North Rumaila oil field.(83) It later awarded a major concession for sulphur extraction to a Polish Company.(84)

The most extreme turn in the regime's foreign policy was its recognition of the German Democratic Republic, in July 1969. The aim of the Ba'th departure to the left was to give the impression that it was more progressive and more to the left than the Communists. This given the Communists no choice but to co-operate with it; they had refused its initial offer of participation in the cabinet within a framework of Ba'thist hegemony.(85)

As for the Kurds, they interpreted the Ba'ths immediate announcement of a peaceful settlement based on the June 1966 Declaration and an amnesty which was now proclaimed by the regime for all Kurds who had taken part in the fighting, as a sign of weakness. They took this view, presumably, because of the regime's obvious unsettled domestic and regional situation at that time. Hence, they made several attacks, in March 1969, on the oil installations at Kirkuk, with Iranian military aid, causing serious damage to the regime. The escalation of the conflict became more serious and imposed a major threat to the Ba'th when it combined with an Iranian hard-line policy

towards the Ba`th, whereby Iran increased its financial and military assistance to the Kurds. This policy was partly due to Saddam's strong-line stance, in conjunction with Libya, on the question of the occupation of the islands of Abū Mūsā and the tow Ṭunbs by the Shah of Iran, which caused the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Iran, in November 1971. The Shah used the Kurds as an instrument to impose his will on the Ba`th's Regime.

It was therefore urgent to take step toward reconciliation with the Kurds who had become a real threat to the Ba`th, while the Ba`th's authority was still shaky. There were still potential sources of opposition to al-Bakr and Saddam within the armed forces, which conflict with the Kurds would undoubtedly strengthen. The regime's relation with the IPC were strained. On the regional level, the regime had a crisis in its relations with Iran, which had started to supply the Kurds with extensive quantities of money and sophisticated weapons, as mentioned above. Syrian Ba`thists criticised the Iraqi Ba`thists' stance in Arab affairs, and their propaganda machine regularly condemned the Iraqi Ba`thists as reactionary and rightist.(86) The Ba`th's moderate neighbours, i.e. Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf States, were suspicious and fearful of its radical foreign policy and its growing ambitions in the region.(87) However, the Ba`th's radical left policies, to a certain extent, reduced its credibility, because they were contrary to its ideological principles, and caused confrontation inside the Ba`th Party itself.



Accordingly, the regime decided not to deal with the Kurdish problem by military means, and stressed the need for a peaceful settlement. This was the reason for Saddam's initiative in going to Mullah Muṣṭafā al-Barazānī and speaking of his wish for the autonomy of Kurdistan. The regime started its negotiation with the Kurds, which ended with the publication of the Manifesto of 11 March 1970. The Manifesto contained far-reaching concessions to the Kurds.(88) Therefore, it was attacked by many elements in the armed forces and even within the Ba'th Party itself, which regarded the agreement as a "sell-out" to the kurds. However, Saddam, for his part gained the following from this move *demarche*:

- (1) To acquire a progressive image and exaggerate his ability of being capable of devising a solution to the complex Kurdish problem.(89)
- (2) To gain time, in order to establish himself sufficiently to be able to recast the Kurdish agreement more to his own advantage.
- (3) To give him the opportunity to deal with his enemies on the other fronts within the Party and the government.
- (4) To free his hands to face Iranian pressure, once he had al-Barazānī on his side.

Al-Barazānī distrusted Saddam, but it seems that he accepted Saddam's reconciliation in order to obtain some National Rights for the Kurdish people by exploiting Saddam's concessions. However, according to the Manifesto, al-Barazānī cut off his relations with Iran and disbanded his Guerrilla Force "*the Peshmerga*". Five of this supporters were taken into the Cabinet, and support for the Kurdish faction that opposed al-Barazānī was withdrawn. Saddam, however, was not seriously concerned to implement Kurdish autonomy and had no intention of continuing the agreement when circumstances had altered to his favour. A few month after the announcement of the March Manifesto, the cracks appeared in the facade, particularly after the failure of an attempt to assassinate al-Barazānī, in September. It was claimed that this was executed by Kizār, but more likely it was planned by Saddam, who gave Kizār full support and protection at that time. In addition, the deportation of Shi'ite Kurds *Faylīs* to Iran, in late 1971 and early 1972, was regarded by al-Barazānī as an attempt to reduce the number of the Kurds in Iraq. Al-Barazānī also asked for prohibitive conditions, e.g. he demanded that Kirkuk should be the capital of the autonomous area, instead of Irbil, which was the regime's choice.

This unsettled situation continued throughout 1971, despite the regime's ostensible attempt to promote friendly relationship with the Kurds. By spring of 1972, al-Barazānī had resumed contact with Iran, and had had

sufficient guarantees from the United States, which appeared to him better ally than his former host, the Soviet Union, in its capacity as Iran's foremost ally.(90)

This circumstance made al-Barazānī more challenging than ever. In his statement to the Washington Post in the Summer of 1973, he gave Saddam an indication that his aim was more than autonomy:

'....we are ready to do what goes with American policy in this area if America will protect us from the wolves...if support were enough, we could control the Kirkuk field and give it to an American company to operate."(91)

There was thus little prospect of Kurdish participation in a Front with the Ba'th regime. This deterioration of relations with the Kurds led Saddam to pursue a clearer Policy of co-operation with the Communists, he invited them to join the regime in a National Front, and he also drew closer to the Soviet Union. It seems clear that relations between the regime and the Communists were conditioned by relations between the regime and the Kurds. Any rapprochement with the Kurds lessened the urgency for an alliance with the Communists, and any deterioration of relations with the Kurds made the regime more reliant on the Communists.



Accordingly, in mid-November 1971, the Ba`th regime announced the National Action Charter, which stressed its intention of seeking a broad coalition of all the national, patriotic and progressive elements in a democratic popular and unitary system.(92)

This appeal was an attempt to gather support for the regime as many quarters of the country as possible. It showed the regime's insecurity, particularly over its oil policy. This had caused the deterioration of relations with the IPC, after the signing of the agreement with the Soviet Union for developing the North Rumaila oil field, in 1969. These relations became even more strained, after the proclamation of the National Action Charter, which suggested that the regime was thinking of taking a stronger line with the IPC. Thus, before taking the step of nationalising the IPC, Saddam took the initiative, in February 1972, and went to Moscow, to apply for a solid strategic alliance with the USSR.(93) In April 1972, the Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation in military, political and economic matters with the USSR was signed.(94) There were many urgent reasons for Saddam to make this move:

- (1) To provide a powerful ally, for his regime, in order to improve its international standing.
- (2) To supply his regime massively with arms, which it urgently needed in order to increase its prestige in

the eyes of its strongest neighbour, Iran, and in order to continue its conflict with the Kurds, who were pressing it to implement the March Manifesto, and who had resumed fighting in Kurdistan, with the aid of receiving money and weapons from Iran.

- (3) To pave the way for the nationalisation of oil. The Soviet Union agreed to supply the regime with support for the oil industry, in both production and training at a high level after nationalisation.(95) Thus it allowed the regime to assume a militant position regarding oil. In June 1972, the regime nationalised the IPC. The move was widely welcomed and praised by the Iraqis. It made Saddam extremely popular, especially as his wide-spread propaganda presented him as the "hero of nationalisation".

In view of the subsequent record of Saddam's oil policy, and in view of the following evidence, it may be suggested that the nationalisation of the IPC, in fact, served the West Interest and did not strike a blow against imperialism.

- (a) Any radical move by any regime in the area that affected oil companies' interests led to undermining that regime by the west. The collapse of the Iranian Government, headed by premier Moḥammed Mossadeq, and the collapse of the Iraqi Government headed by `Abd al-Karīm

Qāsim, were examples of this. Hence, the tolerance of the foreign oil companies extended toward an Iraqi Government could not possibly have continued without huge concessions from him in return.

- (b) Iraq broke ranks with other Arab oil producers by refusing to reduce output and sales after the October War and criticised the embargo policy.(96) In fact, this policy itself was used more for its propaganda value more than for its political or economic effect. Deliveries of oil from the Arab States to the United States were only 7,4 per cent below pre-October levels.(97)
- (c) Saddam executed most of those who had been involved with the negotiations with the IPC and who had administrated the production and marketing processes, in order to conceal his real oil policy. Among those executed were:
  - Murtaḍā Sa`īd `Abd al-Bāqī, the foreign Minister and the chief of the team negotiating with the IPC;
  - Ghānim `Abd al- Jalīl, a member of the RCC, who took over the production process from the IPC and was probably privy to some secrets concerning the negotiation;



- `Adnān al-Ḥamdānī, the Planning Minister, the Secretary General of the Committee for Oil agreements, in charge of oil contracts and marketing;
- Nūrī Ḥammādi, an oil expert on the committee for Oil Agreements.

(d) Crude-oil and natural-gas pipelines to Turkish terminals were constructed, to be used instead of the Syrian terminals. This violated one of the Arab National Principles which formed part of the Ba`th doctrine. This stratagem was justified on the ground of the regimes need to diversify its outlets for crude oil.(98)

(e) At a time when political and economic relations with Socialist Countries were very strong, Saddam was always careful to maintain solid links with the west.(99)

From these points, we may conclude that there is evidence to indicate that the nationalisation of the IPC was planned for Saddam in order to allow him to resolve his internal problems. To do this, he required the millions of dollars of oil revenue that were placed at his disposal by the nationalisation.(100)

(4) To gain the support of the left, the means of the Soviet's great influence over the Iraqi Communist Party. It was the Soviet Union's new doctrine of the "non-capitalist road to Socialism" and its acceptance of the progressive role of the national bourgeoisie in this doctrine that persuaded the Communists to ally with the Ba`th Regime, which they regarded as essentially bourgeois.(101)

The proclamation of the National Action Charter, which was considered by the Communists as a political concession, allowed them to resume their dialogue with the Ba`thists.(102) The Communists criticised the absence of democratic liberty and the suppression of the struggle of the masses for freedom; They also regarded Ba`th policy as contradictory, because, while the Ba`thists were trying to cement their relations with the socialist countries, they were simultaneously harassing the Communists,(103) which means that the Ba`th policy was not out of good-will. The Communists, nevertheless, praised the Ba`thists' positive achievements in the social and economic field and their anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist stance.(104) They also regarded this policy of friendship with the Soviet Union, their determination to arrive at an appropriate settlement of the Kurdish problem and their taking of a stronger line with the IPC, ending in its nationalisation as representing proof that the regime was moving to a left-leaning political line. They, therefore, found it hard to continue to reject Ba`thist solicitation.

Soon after the conclusion of the treaty with Soviet Union, the ICP "central committee", after a prolonged dialogue with the Ba`th especially relating to the disputed issues, i.e. the leading role of the Ba`th Party and the need for democratic institutions, took a decision to enter into an alliance with the Ba`th. In May 1972, the Communists had two posts in the Cabinet. A year later, following Kizār's plot, the DNPF came into being, in July 1973, (105) after the regime laid the blame for the harassment of the Communists at Kizār's door. (106) The Communists were divided over the alliance with the Ba`th, but a majority accepted Moscow's decision. This was the same party whose Central Committee had earlier described the Ba`th Regime of 1963 as "fascist rule".

The Communists' efforts to bring the Kurdish Democratic Party to join the Front failed, because the Kurds pointed out the undemocratic nature of the regime. (107) Only in 1974, did a group of Kurdish parties opposed to al-Barazānī agreed to participate in the Front.

Although the Communists' participation in the affairs of government was no more than formal, because all real power remained entirely in the hands of the Ba`th, they nevertheless gained in return from this participation the following:



- (1) For the first time, the Communist Party acquired legal standing.
- (2) The Communist underground paper "*Ṭarīq al-Sha`b*", in which they could freely express their opinions and attitudes, was given permission to publish daily. The *Qaṣr al-Nihāyah*, the ill-famed torture prison, was closed down.
- (3) The Communists entered the government with two representatives, but only symbolic participation. The Ba`th retained the commanding role in government and banned all other political organisations, particularly within the armed forces. However, the Ba`th claimed that the governmental authority was in the hands of the Front and the members of the Front bore responsibility for governing, along with itself.(108)
- (4) The Communists extended their popular base, since the legalisation of the Party gave it more freedom to spread its literature and to recruit new members.(109)

However, the Front also created problems for the Communists:

- (a) It enabled the Ba`th to incorporate in itself most of the Communist mass organisations, either by merging them with its own associations or by

enacting decrees prohibiting opposition organisations.

(b) Association with the Ba`th discredited the Communist Party, especially when the Ba`th's attitude changed and it turned against them after having made use of them.

(c) The miscalculation of the most important political power in the country, the Communist Party, in entering into an alliance with the Ba`th, owing to Moscow's orders, served to consolidate the position of the Ba`th regime greatly.

Now sufficiently well established, it could devote itself more-single-minded to the Kurdish confrontation. Early in 1974, it passed the Draft Law of the Progressive National Front for the Autonomy of the Kurdish Region and gave the Kurds an ultimatum for accepting it.(110) However, the scheme was rejected by Al-Barazānī, and his ministers left the cabinet.(111) He enjoyed the unconditional support of the vast majority of the Kurdish community, even those who opposed his leadership and regarded it as feudal and reactionary. The new law retained the complete hegemony of the Baghdad government, giving the Iraqi head of state the right to appoint and dismiss the Kurdish President of the legislative and executive council and to dissolve the

assembly. Thus, these organs had in practice no power to make financial and administrative decisions.(112)

Accordingly, fighting in Kurdistan started again and broke out into open warfare in March, after the Ba`th had tried forcibly to impose its own autonomy plan on Kurds. A full-scale offensive began in October 1974, which caused heavy casualties on both sides.(113)

Under these pressures, Saddam personally engineered the most humiliating concession within his reconciliation process, in order to impose his will on the Kurds, by concluding the Algiers Agreement with the Shah on March 6 1975.(114) According to this agreement, Saddam gave up half of Shaţţ al-`Arab, Iraq's sole access to the Gulf, with a short coastline, only 15 miles long, to Iran. Iran has a long Gulf coastline of about 1,240 miles. By this act, Saddam sealed Iraq into a corner. In return, Iran withdrew its financial and military support for the Kurds.(115) It then become possible for Saddam effectively to crush Kurdish resistance within forty-eight hours of the signature of the Agreement. The Shah closed the border to Kurdish insurgents from Iraq and even threatened to combine with the Iraqis in a joint attack on the Kurds, if they refused the conditions of the Agreement.(116)

For Iran this action represented a retrograde step, after its promise to help the Kurds. The Shah justified his act in terms of "Realpolitik", he wanted to establish his



position in the Gulf, and he was afraid that an Iraqi Kurdish victory might give encouragement to the Iranian Kurds to revolt.(117)

For Saddam the Agreement was a matter of life and death. The choice was between national interests and his own political ends. He had to fight on more than one front. The Kurds in the north had caused the Iraqi Army heavy losses, and there had been wide discontent and uprising among the Shiah in the south, owing to the large number of funerals of Iraqi soldiers, most of whom came from that area. This movement frightened the Ba`th leaders greatly (Saddam in particular) and led them to return to measures of violence. In addition, the Iranians had been applying increasing pressure and had been supplying the Kurds with massive weaponry. If he had found no solution to the internal problem, his whole future would have been endangered, since he was the most likely person to have to pay the price of failure. He chose his own political survival instead of the Iraqi national interest; he chose to sacrifice half of the Shaṭṭ al-`Arab rather than lose his firm grip on Iraq itself.(118)

In the case of the USSR, it adopted an attitude of retreat from the Kurds as a matter of priority. Its own competition with the United State led it instead, to supply Saddam with massive quantities of arms, knowing that he would use them against the Kurds. Moscow considered the Kurdish question less important than increasing its

influence in Iraq, to compensate for the decline in its influence in Egypt and also to balance the growing power of Iran, backed by the US which affected Russian interests in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean. (119)

Thus, the interference of foreign powers in Iraqi internal affairs, on account of their alliances with Saddam and their interest in strengthening his regime, caused desolation and misery for the Kurds.

Once Saddam had managed to find the most effective way of dealing with the Kurds, by making his peace with Iran, through the attempts of powers both inside and outside the region, to mediate between the two, in order to contain the situation and save the Ba`th regime, (120) he no longer had any pressing need for an alliance with the Communists, or any need for the Soviet Union. He repudiated his alliance with the Communists after having exploited them in order to strengthen his regime and he cancelled all the Socialist resolutions. An end was put to the radical period of Iraq Ba`thism, and the new era of economic liberation was ushered in. He shifted his alignment to the Capitalist bloc. His new Policy was accompanied by a massive brutal campaign against his former allies, once he had made use of them to strengthen his basis of rule on the one side and to discredit them in the eyes of those who had suffered at the Party's hands, on the other.

## From radical to pragmatic policy

Saddam's earlier rapprochement with the Soviet Union and the Socialist bloc and his progressive achievements, clearly appeared a tactical moves because the period that followed the Algiers agreement in 1975 saw a clear shift of direction by the regime towards the western bloc and conservative Arab states. This shift occurred only very gradually and irregularly, since the Ba'th still claimed to be anti-imperialist and progressive. Thus, its dealings with the west proceeded very secretly and were kept away from the public eye.(121) The nationalisation of the IPC, and the sudden oil price increase, after the Arab-Israeli War of October 1973, enabled the regime to achieve its new policy of diversification by introduce major new programs in many fields, i.e. education, housing, health and welfare. The enormous expenditure which was required in these projects had the effect of showing Iraq to rely on the Western and non- socialist bloc rather than on the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc.

Published information indicates that, in the early 1970s, more than half of development contracts went to socialist countries, while in 1974-75, over two-thirds were going to western countries and other non-socialist countries.(122) According to one reference, Iraq's economic transactions with the Communist bloc declined to only 5 percent of its overall trade.(123)



The following samples will give some idea of the volume of Iraq's development contracts with western and non-socialist countries:-

- (1) Trade with the United States grew from \$32 million in 1971 to \$284 million in 1974, (124) in spite of the fact there were no diplomatic relations between the two countries.
- (2) Trade with Japan and west Germany expanded significantly over the period from 1971 to 1974. (125)
- (3) Economic and technical co-operation was given by France in many sectors of the economy, including oil. (126)
- (4) General economic co-operation and training programs with Italy were announced in 1972, covering many major projects in all spheres, including petrochemicals. (127)
- (5) Economic and technical co-operation agreements were signed with Spain to supply Iraq with industrial goods and to take part in industrial projects in Iraq. (128)
- (6) In November 1973, general economic and technical co-operation agreements were signed with Austria and also with a large number of other countries. (129)

These major contracts had already been agreed at a time when Iraq's political and economic relations with the Soviet Union and Socialist Countries still existed. It seems clear that the Ba`th policy was always careful to maintain solid commercial links with the west; at the same time it began gradually to turn away from the Easter Bloc, to the extent that the measure of Iraq's total foreign exchange with it was down to 2.67% in 1981, (130) whilst imports from Japan and the west formed about 75%. (131)

The above information indicates a clear change of direction to the west, but the Ba`th tried to obfuscate this. According to an under secretary in the Ministry of the Economy, in an interview with the International Herald Tribune, in April 1975:

**"....we cannot sacrifice technology for ideology....of course. We have to keep our friends happy and throw some business their way. Thus, we buy your Boeing air-craft and let you build our oil refineries. But a less important project like a brick factory will go to Bulgaria, even though we know we can get a better one from France."**

As for the Minister of Industry and Minerals, Ṭāhā al-Jazrāwī, he justified his regime's point of view thus:

"....it would be a mistake to interpret Iraq's awarding of major development contracts to western governments or firms as a sign of Iraq's re-orientation towards the west. The fact that 'Iraq is turning to the western companies is not a sign of change but of the speed and volume of development".(132)

As far as Iraq's conservative neighbours were concerned, the Ba`th regime improved its relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Sheikhdoms.(133) In increasing moderation, the Ba`th cancelled its support for the pro-Soviet regime in south Yemen, and in 1978, it threatened the Soviet Union with the breaking-off of diplomatic relations, if it continued to support the Ethiopian regime against Eritrean separatists.(134)

The undeclared reason for this action, however, was the coup in Afghanistan, supported by the Soviet Union, in April 1978, which it seemed, frightened the Ba`th regime increasingly. It now began to move openly against the Soviet Union. In an interview in an American newspaper, Saddam Husayn declared:

"....the Soviet Union will not be satisfied until the whole world is communist".(135)

He had forgotten his recent friendship treaty with the Soviet Union.



However, the regime's desire to change its direction towards the west became clearer through its changing its source of military materials. The first major order of western arms was from France, in September 1976. Other orders were from Brazil and Italy.(136) In spite of this, the Soviet Union was still, until the end of the 1970's, the main supplier of the Iraqi army's material, for these reasons:

- (1) It was difficult for Iraq to change immediately its entire weapons systems, which had been of Soviet manufacture since the 14 July 1958 Revolution.
- (2) Western countries did not wish to supply the Ba`th regime with arms on a large scale, while Iraq was still, apparently, a Soviet satellite. The west could not effect a complete replacement of Iraqi weapons systems until it had greater control over Iraq than it had yet achieved; there was an important element in the leadership that disagreed with the policy of diversification towards the west. This element caused more struggles within the Iraqi leadership, which were ended only by Saddam's rise to power.(137) In addition, this new policy of diversification was accompanied by a brutal campaign, launched by Saddam against the communists, Kurds and all other elements of political power in the country.

## The Suppression of the Opposition

The new circumstances after the Algiers Agreement of March 1975 and the collapse of Kurdish resistance which followed this agreement seriously changed the relationship between the Ba`th Party and its allies in the NPF, particularly the Iraqi Communist Party.

After Saddam neutralised the political power of the army, he purged the unwanted elements within the Ba`th Party. The Security apparatus evolved into a gigantic structure, working under Saddam's instructions only. He infiltrated party members into all State organs, to be the eyes and ears of the Party or specifically of its leadership, The way now was paved for Saddam to take the next step, which was the ending of his alliances in the NPF. In 1976 Saddam said, in a meeting of the National Patriotic Front:

"....according to our information some brothers, especially from the Communist Party, still feel embarrassed when asked: Are you with the regime or not? Are you with Revolution or not? Is it embarrassing for one to side with the great Revolution and its regime? The Revolution is cherished by every honest patriot and its major achievements are obvious to all. We should all criticise flawed details but errors in details should not bring us into a

psychological opposition to the Revolution and its regime. At the same time, however, the errors of the administrative apparatus should be neither a means nor a justification for pursuing party interest....Supposing we Ba`thists reversed the case and started attacking the Communists in our speeches through our media....The Communist Party would regard these as improper uses of the administrative apparatus and would try to put these tactics to their own advantage. What do you imagine would happen? Is such a state of affairs acceptable? If it is, you can imagine how much you would lose.... We say this not out of vanity, but rather out of the conviction that our relationship with the masses is based on positive co-operation and mutual trust. That is why they would listen to our words".(138)

From this speech, it may be inferred that Saddam had already decided to take action against the Communists.

The Communists' policy of throwing their full weight behind the Ba`th party has yet to be recognised by some of the Communist's leader for what it is,(140) an erroneous, and at best, an studied policy, worked entirely in favour of the Ba`th's strengthening its rule. It made use of the Communists' experience in many matters, particularly in controlling the mass organisations that had been under



communist domination since the July Revolution of 1958. The Ba`th eventually weakened the communists by changing the regulations of these organisations in such way that it became impossible for a non-Ba`thist to become a member of the union leadership.

Thus, these organisations were turned into bureaucratic institutions under the regime's control. Most of the union officers were not representatives of the work force but were full-time Ba`th party or security service members.(141) In addition, these deceitful Ba`th policies were followed by continual obligations on the Communists to restrict their activities to the Ba`th Party alone. They were stopped from working with popular organisations, which put them at a great disadvantage, and led them to question the wisdom of their association with the Ba`th. Thus, through the mechanism of the NPF, grass-roots support for the Ba`th was generated.

At the end of 1975 and over the next few years, the Ba`th launched an indiscriminate process of arrest and persecution against the Communists. This reached its highest point with the execution of twenty-one Communists on charges of organising communist cells within the army.(142) Subsequently the Ba`th instigated further extremely brutal campaigns against the Communists, which drove many of their leaders to leave the country. Thus, by 1979, the Communist Party was removed from the political scene as an effective factor.

On the Kurdish question, a disastrous experiment was tried, following the 1975 catastrophe of the Algiers Agreement. The Ba`th attempted forcibly to impose its own autonomy plan on Kurdistan, after the rejection of its scheme by the Kurds. To put this forced autonomy into effect, a series of shadowy administrative and economic measures were taken by the Ba`th. Most of the refugees had been repatriated from Iran under an amnesty resolution. A special budget was given to the autonomous region, but it went into industrial projects which enabled the government to control the area. At the same time, the Ba`th launched a large scale deportation of the Kurds, and an Arabizing of the area. The reason for this policy was to change the Kurdish balance in the north. Under this new resettlement scheme, thousands of Kurdish families were deported from Kurdistan to the lower Euphrates region.(143)

These measures were succeeded by the co-operation of some Kurds who disagreed with Barazānī's leadership or served their own interests. The Kurds who were appointed by the Ba`th to the Central government and the National Progressive Front, such as `Azīz `Aqrāwī, Hāshim Aqrāwī and Ismā`īl `Azīz, formed the new KDP. `Abd al-Sattār Ṭāḥir Sharīf formed the Kurdish Revolutionary Party. `Abd Allāh Ismā`īl Ahmad formed the Progressive Kurdish movement.(144) These elements gave the regime the Kurdish apparatus which it needed to put its autonomy plan into affect.

However, guerrilla activities were renewed from early 1976 and continued throughout the second half of the 1970s. However, the Kurdish movements showed signs of strong factionalism, splitting into the following groups.

- (1) The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), led by Jalāl al-Ṭalabānī, backed by Syria and professing Marxist-Leninist ideology.(145)
- (2) The Kurdish Democratic Party(KDP), led by Barzānī's son Mas`ūd, a traditional nationalist who claimed to be more radical than his father. The KDP had sympathy for the Iranian revolution, while the Ba`th government supported the Iranian KDP and corrupted some Kurdish tribal elements hostile to the Iraqi KDP.
- (3) A group split from the (KDP) under Muḥammad 'Uthmān, critical of its policy of trusting Iran and adopting confrontational military tactics rather than guerrilla operations.

Thus, the main armed struggles of these factions were between themselves for influence, rather than against the Central Government which increasingly encouraged the disunity between the Kurdish movements by attaching one of them to its own interest against the others. However, during the last years of the second half of the 1970s, Kurdistan transferred the focus of its opposition to the Central Government; in particular after the Ba`th



increasingly extended its repression against the Kurds and the Communists.(146) The Communists attached themselves to the Kurdish resistance and declared armed struggle in Kurdistan.

In general terms, the opposition movements in Iraq became more bitter throughout 1978-1979, because of the brutal Ba`thist repression campaign against not only the Kurdish nationalist movements and the communists but against the whole Iraqi people, all sects and ethnic minorities alike.

A variety of Islamic movements from both sects, Sunni and Shi`i, faced the same ruthless repression by the Ba`th Regime. The Islamic movements, in particular the Shi`ite movements, came into existence as an organised political force in the aftermath of the July Revolution of 1958. Their declared purpose was to face the rising tide of Communism, which had great influence throughout Qāsim's rule.(147) Some leading divines from the Shi`ite cities of Karbalā' and Najaf gave *Fatwas* which declared all the democratising reforms issued by Qāsim's government as "*haram*" and legalised the killing of Communists.(148)

These measures were given encouragement and massive support by the Ba`th party at the time when the term Communist was used to describe all supporters of the July Revolution. These Shi`ite religious movements played an active role in the political struggle which was spreading

throughout that period, in alliance with the Ba`th party, which carried out the coup and threw out Qāsim's government. (149)

Most political analysts point out that the Ba`th government represented the Sunni interest and increased its discrimination against the majority Shi'ite sect, as a sectarian campaign. (150) These views are wide of the mark, because the Ba`th regime, backed by Saddam, had in fact assailed the Sunni Islamic movement from the early years of its rule, and had executed from the Sunni sect probably more than from the Shi'i. The threat to Saddam's rule came more from the Sunni sect which had the key posts in the army and the Party, than from the Shi'ite sect, (151) except for Kizār's plot. However, the Ba`th party policy, which meant Saddam's policy, was simply to attack any movement, from any sect in Iraq, even from among his own family, if it posed any danger to his political survival.

Another view maintains that the Shi'ite sect in Iraq was not attracted to the Ba`thist ideology, because of its fear that it might be swamped by the Sunni sect if any unity was established between the Ba`th regime and another Arab country. (152) This seems implausible, because most of the Ba`thist leaders and active members in the 1950s and 1960s were from the Shi'ite sect. (153) The decrease of the Shi'ate sect in the second Ba`th regime was due to Saddam's policy of relying specifically on the strength of Tikrītī

clannishness. Even then, the Shi'ite sect played a large role in the second Ba'th regime, as follows:

- (1) The internal security of the early years of the Ba'th was run by Nāẓim Kizār, who had great power and was the right hand of Saddam.
- (2) The intelligence apparatus *Dā'irat al-Mukhābarāt* was headed by Sa'dūn Shākir, another right hand man of Saddam, who is still in Saddam's service.
- (3) Ḥasan `Ali, another Shi'i, a cell-mate of Saddam's during the `Ārif regime, was one of the most effective members of the Ba'th party throughout the 1970s and is still in Saddam's service.
- (4) Ghānim `Abd al-Jalāl was a member of the Regional Command of the Ba'th Party, a member of the RCC, and General Director of Saddam's Office.
- (5) `Adnān al-Ḥamdānī who a member of the Regional Command of the Ba'th Party, a member of the RCC, Planning Minister and Secretary General of the Committee for Oil Agreements and in charge of oil contracts and marketing. From their sensitive positions, we can infer that al-Jalāl and al-Ḥamdānī, both of them from the Shi'ite sect, were among Saddam's most intimate associates.



- (6) Hāmid al-Jabūrī was another Shi'i member of the Regional Command of the Ba'th Party, a member of the RCC, and Minister of Information.
- (7) Sa'dūn Ḥammādi was a member of the Regional Command of the Ba'th Party, a member of the RCC, and Foreign Minister. He then became Prime Minister, after the second Gulf War. He is still in Saddam's service.
- (8) Muḥammad Ḥamzah was a member of the Regional Command of the Ba'th Party, a member of the RCC, and Minister of Communication and Transport. He was then promoted to be Prime Minister after his participation in crushing the March revolt in 1991, which followed the Gulf war.
- (9) Fyḷayyih Ḥasan al-Jasim was a member of the Regional Command, a member of the RCC, Minister of Industry, then Minister of State for Kurdish Affairs. He was appointed with Ḥasan `Ali, the Minister of Trade, to be a member of the special court set up to investigate the incidents in Karbalā' and Najaf and to punish those responsible from the Shi'ite sect \_ which will be discussed later in this section. Saddam practised this tactic according to his special policy: "the Shi'is kill the Shi'is, the Sunnis kill the Sunnis, the Kurds kill the Kurds, the Ba'thists kill the Ba'thists and so on".

(10) Most of the journalists, artists, singers and poets who worked in Saddam's propaganda apparatus and praised Saddam's rule highly were from the Shi'ite sect.

Apart from these names, there were a number of other Shi'is in key military and security posts, and the most active membership of the Ba'th party throughout the second Ba'th regime was from the Shi'ite sect. They wrote reports and spied for the Ba'th government even on their own relatives and friends.

As a result, the Ba'th party greatly depended on the Shi'ite sect during its first and second periods of rule. One of the reasons which led the Ba'th government to initiate large scale arrests and executions against divines from the religious centres of Karbalā' and Najaf, was the serious unrest and wide discontent caused by the high casualties among Iraqi soldiers in the Kurdish war, before the Algeria Agreement, which the Ba'th could not conceal from the public.

As a result of these events, the Ba'th executed secretly five of the prominent religious leaders in December 1974.(154) However, the most important factor in provoking the Ba'th's intolerance of the Shi'ite forces was the announcement of the armed struggle by these forces to overthrow the Ba'th government.(155) The Ba'th regarded Ayatollah al-Khomayni, exiled in Najaf, as the moving

spirit behind the outbreak of this violence, in particular the massive demonstration of February 1977, which resulted in further executions of religious leaders.(156) The Ba`th government accused them as well of associating with neighbouring governments like Syria and Iran to overthrow their rule. The regime expelled Ayatollah Khomeini in 1978.

The Ba`th applied its familiar tactics of repression and conciliation to hold down these movements. They paid ostentatious attention to these religious centres, granting them large sums of money for religious purposes, and Saddam himself arranged many visits to the Shi`ate centre in Baghdad and to the holy cities. At the same time, a ruthless campaign was launched against the Shi`ite movements, in particular the Da`wah party, the strongest group within the Shi`ate underground force.(157) A large number of Da`wah members were arrested and the active members were executed.(158) The leader of the Da`wah party, Sayyīd Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr was put under house arrest, then eventually executed, with his sister Bint al-Huddā, on the excuse of an alleged attempt by an Iranian on the life of Tariq `Aziz at al-Mustanṣiriyyah University in April 1980.

As a consequence of the regime's ruthlessness, no more Shi`ite demonstrations were reported. The potential Shi`ite opposition seems to have become less effective after it lost its credibility, owing to its loyalty to Iran rather than to Iraq. This period also witnessed an increase in



Saddam's initiative to decrease the distance between him and the Iraqi masses, in an attempt to build his personality cult.

## The emergence of personal rule

The second part of the 1970s marked another increase in the control of the state machinery, in particular the military, security, education and information departments. It was brought about in two ways:-

- (1) The Ba`thization of every sphere of political life and the outlawing of other political forces.
- (2) The monopolisation of sensitive command positions by Saddam's close relatives and other trusted men from the tribes of Tikrīt.

These well planned processes were accompanied by a ruthless campaign of repression and blanket propaganda which eulogised Saddam's domestic and foreign policy. It witnessed also the high point of Saddam's effort to project himself as Iraq's primary figure.

Meanwhile, al-Bakr's rule became purely ceremonial, his only job being to sign orders presented to him by Saddam. Saddam's advance came gradually and was fully calculated. It started with the gradual withdrawal of al-Bakr's power and his removal as an active political ruler, under the pretext of his poor health.

The various justifications for these moves were far removed from the truth; (159) Saddam's arrangements since

the Ba`th took over power in 1968 showed his preparation for assuming the Iraqi leadership, and his pushing aside of al-Bakr, his last rival, was only the culmination of this process, as events proved in the long term. Saddam's preparations at this stage, the second half of the 1970s, were as follows:-

- (1) He fused the identities of the state and the party into one, by appointing all the members of the party's regional command as members of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). This meant that he could use the Ba`th Party as a tool to affirm the authority of the state, which was indeed his own authority. Moreover, he gave comprehensive power to his secret units, which were partly within the Ba`th party, to fulfil any order from himself. (160)
- (2) He implemented the policy of "Ba`thization", imposing the total domination of the Ba`th party on all spheres of life, especially the military, security, education and information. A network of cells of secret units and Ba`th party organisers was set up in every army unit. Their reports on any moves by hostile elements were sent to Saddam immediately. These units were linked directly with him and moved by his order only. (161)

Some accounts indicate that it was al-*Istikhbārāt al-`Askariyyah* that carried out this task. The duties



of *al-Istikhbārāt al-ʿAskariyyah*, or military intelligence, are to control military information about other countries' armies and so on; it employs for this purpose the military attaches' offices in Iraqi embassies abroad, which are linked with the Ministry of Defence. The secret unit called the Fifth Branch *al-ʿAmn al-ʿAskari* was responsible for the above task. There is another branch called *Jihāz al-Amn al-Khaārijī* which is responsible for terrorist operations abroad, in addition to other duties, such as spying on Iraqi and other nationals resident abroad, embassy officials and even security unit members themselves. These units appear to belong to the *al-Istikhbarat al-ʿAskariyyah*, but, in fact, they are linked with Saddam only and orders are given by him directly. (162)

- (3) He reinforced the position of the party and the government with a network of kinship and personal ties. All sensitive command positions were occupied by people of Tikrīt and cities around it, in particular in the military and security forces.

In 1977, ʿAdnān Khayr Allāh Ṭalfāḥ, Saddam's cousin and brother-in-law, was elected to the Regional Command of the party and appointed to the RCC, and became Minister of Defence. Barazān al-Tikrītī, Saddam's half-brother was appointed head of *Dā'irat al-Mukhābarāt al-ʿAmmah*, which had been *Jihāz Ḥanīn* before 1968, and then the Bureau of General

Relations after the second Ba`th coup. This was accompanied by a process of liquidation of the majority of al-Bakr's supporters, both military and civilian, leaving al-Bakr totally isolated. The elimination of two members of the Regional Command of the Ba`th party and the RCC, Flayyḥ Ḥasan al-Jāsim and `Izzat Muṣṭafā, owing to their lenient sentences on the Shi`ite rebels during the events at Karbalā' and Najaf in February 1977, (163) was an attempt to exert pressure on al-Bakr because they were close friends of his, on the one side, and to smash the Shi`ite sect, on the other.

- 4- The twin apparatus of the media and terror were highly developed at this stage by putting huge budgets at their disposal from the massive income of the oil revenues. The first was activated by getting Iraqi journalists to praise the Ba`th and, in particular, Saddam's economic and social achievements, especially his wide-ranging campaign to eradicate illiteracy. The mass organisations also played an important role in Ba`thist propaganda, such as: the General Federation of Iraqi women; the National Federation of Iraqi Students; the General Federation of Peasant Organisations.

The second was effected by the brutal intimidation of any opponent who would not be silenced, carried out by Saddam's security and intelligence units; the organisations listed above took part in this. (164)

5- Saddam's character as the father of the Iraqi Nation was emphasised. He exercised this policy by providing open phone lines for public complaints and arranging televised visits to many populous areas, such as Madinat al-Thawrah, which was later called Madinat Saddam. Also his photographs were displayed everywhere alongside those of al-Bakr.

However, the golden opportunity for Saddam to pose as an Arab leader came after Sadat's peace initiative and his visit to Israel. Through his propaganda machine and his political manoeuvres, Saddam was enabled to take a leading part in co-ordinating opposition to Sadāt.(165) According to one of Saddams's previous press organisers, Ḥasan `Alawi, at the time of Saddam's fierce attack on Sadāt's peace policy with Israel, he tried to make underground contact, through Oman, with the Sadāt regime. This suggests that Saddam was not concerned about Sadāt's political stance and that he made his heroic stand not for the Arab cause but because of his need to be recognised on an international Arab level.(166)

Another golden opportunity for Saddam to play an international role came with the fall of the Shah of Iran and his decision to assume the function of the United Nations' policeman in the area.



By these measures, Saddam proved that he had planned since the first years of the Ba`th rule to be the leader of Iraq; however, owing to his lack of power in the Party and the State at that time, and the difficult domestic problems that faced the Ba`th government, he decided to wait a few more years.

Briefly, the next chapter will discuss Saddam's domestic policy when he became President, his systematic invasion of every Iraqi's privacy, and his creation of a generation of fear.

## NOTES

- 1- Maṭar, Fu'ād, Saddam Hussein, the Man, the Cause, the Future, Third World Centre, London, 1981, p. 48.
- 2- See E. Kienle, Ba`th v Ba`th, I.B. Tauris & CO. Ltd, London, 1990, p. 58.
- 3- Batātū, Ḥannā, The Old Social Classes and Revolutionary Movement of Iraq, Princeton University Press, 1978, p. 1096.
- 4- *Middle East Record*, 1968, p. 521.
- 5- See Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1098.
- 6- See *al-Nahār* (Beirut), 6 September 1968.
- 7- See *al-Thawrah* (Baghdad), October 30 1973.
- 8- Revolutionary Command Council Communiqué, No. 27, *al-Jumhūriyyah*, 31 July 1968.
- 9- Statement by Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr on July 30 1968 in *al-Jumhūriyyah*; Revolutionary Command Council Communiqué, No. 27, *al-Jumhūriyyah*, 31 July 1968.
- 10- See Kienle, *ibid.*, p. 51.
- 11- Fu'ād Maṭar, *ibid.*, p.47.

- 12- *Baghdad Domestic Service*, July 30 1968.
- 13- Fu'ād Maṭar, *ibid.*, p.48.
- 14- Socialist Arab Ba'th Party, Thawrat 17 Tammūz: al-Tajribatu wa al-Āfāq (Revolution of July 17, the Experience and the Prospects), the Political Report of the Eight Regional Congress of the Socialist Arab Party, Iraq Region, Baghdad, January 1974, pp. 19-27.
- 15- *See Iraqi News Agency (INA)*, November 16 1969.
- 16- For the definition of the power of the council, see Article 44 of the interim constitution of 21 September 1968, *al-Jumhūriyyah*, 22 September 1968.
- 17- See Article 38 of the provisional constitution.
- 18- Miller, J. & L. Myllroie, Saddam Hussein and the Crisis in the Gulf, Times Books, Random House, New York, 1990, p. 32.
- 19- In addition to my preceding source about Saddam's link, I was told by an authoritative source, a retired army officer who "did not like to mention his name" and who was a close member of the al-Bakr/Saddam circle and had a key post after the July coup of 1968, that, shortly after the coup, Saddam



was approached by a high figure in the British intelligence services in the Embassy through a Bedouin with the name of `Ali `Abd al-Salām. A few months later, the Bedouin was informed by an army officer named Adnan Sharif that he was requested urgently at the Presidential Palace. The Bedouin disappeared and his body was later found in some part of Baghdad.

- 20- See Thawrat 17 Tammūz: al-Tajribatu wa al-Āfāq, ibid, Chapter two.
- 21- See the London Magazine *Now*, September 14 1979, p. 59 and also the *Guardian*, November 26 1971. The Mukhābarāt's (intelligence services) existence is acknowledged in the Political Report of 1974; see on this point Thawrat 17 Tammūz: al-Tajribah wa al-Āfāq, ibid, p. 139.
- 22- Wafīq al-Şammarrā'ī, The destruction of the Eastern Gate, forthcoming. al-Şammarrā'ī is a former general director of the military intelligence services.
- 23- *New York Times*, April 3, 1984.
- 24- See Batātū, ibid., p.1085.
- 25- See A. Dawīsha, "The Politics Of War, Presidential Centrality, Party Power, Political Opposition," in

Axelgard, F.W., (ed.), Iraq in transition, a political, economic, and strategic perspective, Boulder, Colorado, 1986.

- 26- `Abbās Kiliḍār, Iraq: The Search for Stability, London, 1975, p. 169 .
- 27- Thawrat 17 Tammūz: al-Tajribah wa al-Āfāq, ibid, pp. 36-38.
- 28- Ḥasan `Alawī, al-`Irāq Dawlat al-Munazzamah al-Sirriyah (Iraq: State of the Secret Organisation), London, 1990, p. 167.
- 29- Ibid.
- 30- For more details about this subject, see Nikolaos Van Dan, The Struggle for power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba`th Party, I.B.Tauris Publishers, London, 1992.
- 31- Thawrat 17 Tammūz: al-Tajribah wa al-Āfāq, ibid, chapter 3.
- 32- E. Karsh and I. Rautsi, Saddam Hussein, London, 1991,, p.41.

- 33- See al-Bakr's speech of February 8th, 1969 in Min Khutab al-Ra'īs, Ministry of Education and Information, Baghdad, 1969, Vol. 2, p. 58.
- 34- Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1093.
- 35- See Tāriq `Azīz's article on the events, published in *al-Thawrah* on 17 July 1972.
- 36- Quoted in Geoff Simons, Iraq from Sumer to Saddam, London, Second edition, 1996, p. 280.
- 37- Penrose, Edith and E. F. Penrose, Iraq, International Relations and National Development, London, 1978, p. 418, footnote 14. See also *al-Nahār* (Beirut), No. 10041, July 19 1968.
- 38- See Thawrat 17 Tammūz: al-Tajribatu wa al-Āfāq, *ibid*, Chapter 6.
- 39- Marr, Phebe, The Modern History of Iraq, West View Press, San Francisco and Oxford, 1985, p. 213.
- 40- See note 38, pp. 19-27.
- 41- Adel Darwish and Gregory Alexander, Unholy Babylon, Victor Gollancz, London, 1991, *ibid.*, p. 203.



- 42- The killer of al-Hānī was a Ba`thist agent named `Abd Karīm, who, after the murder, became a member in the Regional Command of the Ba`th Party and a member in the RCC. Eventually, it was arranged for him to have a car accident when he was identified by al-Hānī's widow from a photograph shown on television. Penrose & Penrose, *ibid.*, p. 355.
- 43- al-Bakr's speech of February 8th, 1969, *ibid.* See the *Guardian*, 30 June 1969; *Sunday Times*, February 28 1969. See also L.K. Kimball, The changing patterns of political power in Iraq 1958-1971, New York, Robert Speller, 1972, p. 148.
- 44- `Alawī, *ibid.*, p. 29.
- 45- Bulloch, John & Harvey Morris, Saddam's War, London, 1991, p. 71. al-Bakr/Saddam group's feud with al-Rikābī goes back to his press conference in June 25 1961 in Beirut, when he accused the National Command of the Ba`th Party with treason; see al-`Urūba Sound, Beirut, June 25 1961. See also Nidāl al-Ba`th 7: pp. 127-141 on the National Command's stance towards al-Rikābī.
- 46- There are numerous accusations against Ṭahir Yaḥyā, including those of corruption, but the one close to the truth involved his siding with the `Ārif Regime against the Ba`th Party in November 1963. He put the

leaders of the National Command of the Ba`th Party, `Aflaq and Amīn al-Ḥāfiẓ, under arrest, and did not release them until `Ārif's coup had succeeded. See, on this point, Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1028; M. Khaddūrī, Socialist Iraq, Washington, 1978, p. 286.

- 47- *Baghdad Observer*, December 13th, 1968. see `Abd al-Karīm Farḥān, Ḥaṣād Thawrah (A Revolution's Harvest), Dār al-Barrāk, London, 1994, p. 245-250, for a full account of the rough treatment and torture of al-`Uqaylī and the other political opponents
- 48- *Ibid.*
- 49- Conversation with Ismā`īl al-Qādirī, a former Ba`thist and a defector, Syria wing, London, on 24 September 1994. See also *Baghdad Domestic Service*, 13 February 1969.
- 50- Khaddūrī, *ibid.*, pp. 57-61. The Mukhābarāt agent who assassinated General Ḥarḍān was Ḥammūdī al-`Azzāwī, an Iraqi consultant in the Iraqi embassy in Kuwait and brother-in-law of `Adnān al-Ḥamdānī, one of the RCC members liquidated by Saddām in 1979. Ḥarḍān's assassin, with the help of the Kuwaiti government, was never caught and, together with some other Ba`thists, was subsequently killed in a planned plane crash on the way to Sudan in 1971. Saddām thought

that they knew too many secrets and had to be liquidated.

- 51- Sluglett, Marion-Farouk and Peter Sluglett, Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship, KPI Ltd, London, 1987, p. 135; see also *New York Times*, 16 October 1970 and the *Guardian*, 16 October 1970.
- 52- For the declared reason of 'Ammāsh's liquidation by al-Bakr/Saddam, see *The Middle East Economic Survey* (MEES), 1 October 1971.
- 53- See Penrose & Penrose, *ibid.*, p. 406.
- 54- *Ibid.*
- 55- *al-Jumhūriyyah*, January 22 1970. For a full account of the plot, See B. al-Tikrītī, Muhāwalat Ightiyyāl al-Ra'īs Saddām Husayn (Assassination Attempt against President Saddam Husayn), Baghdad, Maṭba'at al-Dār al-'Arabiyyah, 1982, p. 45-79.

- In a conversation in London, on 26 September 1994, with Sa'd Ṣaliḥ Jabr, an opposition leader, he admitted that Iran was involved in this plot and that he was invited with three other members, namely, al-Nāyif, 'Abd al-Ghānī al-Rāwī and Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm, to stay in Iran for nine months to prepare for the operation. He also revealed that the plot had failed



owing to Saddam's intelligence agents infiltrating the army units operating under the plotters' orders. See also the *Guardian*, 31 January 1970, and *Le Monde*, 26 January 1970.

56- Penrose & Penrose, *ibid.*, p. 364.

57- See M-F & P. Sluglett, *ibid.*, p. 131.

58- This citation was quoted by David Hirst, "The Terror From Tikrīt", in the *Guardian*, November 26 1971.

59- Thawrat 17 Tammūz: al-Tajribah wa al-Āfāq, *ibid.*, p. 103.

60- *Baghdad Domestic Service*, March 29 , 1970 .

61- In a conversation in London, on 22th March 1994, with Ṣaliḥ `Umar al-`Ali, announced that his dismissal from his post was due to differences with al-Bakr about Saddam's increasing influence in the Party and the State and that his dissatisfaction with Saddam's mounting influence forced him to eventually to revoke his membership in the RCC.

62- Karsh and Rautsi, *ibid.*, p. 50.

63- Baram, Amazia, "The Ruling Political Elite in Ba`thi Iraq, 1968-1986," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol 21, 1989, p. 452.

- 64- This was so in spite of the fact that al-Shaykhī was a close associate of Saddam and both had a long record of underground conspiracy within the Ba`th Party since the late 1950s.
- 65- Walīd al-Ḥillī, Iraq: Reality and future prospects, Dār al-Furāt, Beirut, 1992, pp. 41-42.
- 66- For a discussion of the history of the Kizār's plot and its outcome, see especially Eric Roulean's three illuminating articles in *Le monde*, 19-20-21 July 1973, and Jean Guegras in *Le monde*, 3-4 July 1973 for the events of the plot's climax. See also *Times*, July 20, 1973; *Financial Times*, July 25, 1973; Kiliḍār, *ibid.*, p. 62; Samīr al-Khalīl, Republic of Fear, Hutchinson Radius, London, 1989, p. 11.
- 67- Saddam wanted to give al-Ṣamarrā'ī, together with Kizār and his group, the death sentence, but on `Aflaq's strong appeal, the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. In 1979, Saddam took full control of power and al-Ṣamarrā'ī was executed with the `Adnān al-Ḥamdānī group.
- 68- See *al-Nahār*, July 8, 1973, p. 8.
- 69- Khaddūri, *ibid.*, p. 63, note 24.

- 70- This information was supplied to me in 1973 by the family of Laṭīf Rashīd, who was Kizār's righthand man and who was executed with him.
- 71- This information was supplied to me by Sa'dūn Ghaydān himself in 1980 when I was one of his office staff at the Ministry of Communication and transport.
- 72- Samīr al-Khalīl, *ibid.*, p. 12 .
- 73- Ṣaddām Husayn wa al-Ahdāth al-Mu`āṣirah bi al-`Irāq (Saddam Hussein on Current Affairs in Iraq), London, 1977, p. 18.
- 74- See the Political Report of the Ba'th Party 1974, which made an unusually frank assessment of previous Ba'th practices, especially the Kizār reign in the secret police. See Thawrat 17 Tammūz: al-Tajribatu wa al-Āfāq, *ibid.*, 1979, p. 106.
- 75- *Ibid.* Stalin did the same; his intelligence services were run by such ruthless elements as Yagoda and Yaezhov, the 'maniac dwarf' of Moscow during the 1930s, and then Beria, both famous for their cruelty. See Alan Bullock, Hitler and Stalin, Parallel Lives, Harper Collins, London, 1991.
- 76- *Le monde*, 20 July, 1973.



- 77- See note 73, pp. 17-18.
- 78- The text is in Khaddūrī, *ibid.*, p. 195-196.
- 79- *al-Nahār*, July 14-15, 1973.
- 80- See K. Eberhard, *ibid.*, pp. 51-52.
- 81- Pension and Social Security Law No. 112 of July 1969, *al-Waqā'i' al-'Irāqiyyah*, No. 1762, 1 August 1969.
- 82- Agrarian Reform Law No. 117 of 1970, *al-Waqā'i' al-'Irāqiyyah*, No. 1884, 30 May 1970.
- 83- See *Financial Times*, 7 July 1969.
- 84- *Financial Times*, 2 May 1969.
- 85- *Le Monde*, 11 October 1968.
- 86- See MER, 1969/1970, p.142.
- 87- See Karsh and Rautsi, *ibid.*, p. 63.
- 88- For the full text of the March Manifesto, see Khaddūrī, pp. 231-240.
- 89- *al-Thawrah*, March 12, 1970.

- 90- See chapter one of this thesis, footnote 222. See also Karsh & Rautsi, *ibid.*, p.75.
- 91- *Washington Post*, 22 June 1973.
- 92- The text is quoted in full in M. Khaddūrī, Socialist Iraq, Washington, 1978, pp. 199-229 (a study in Iraq politics since 1968).
- 93- Alvin Conttrell and R.M. Burrell, "Soviet-U.S Naval Competition in the Indian Ocean," in *Orbis*, 23 (1975), p. 1113. See also BBC, SWB, 13 January 1972 and ARR, 10 February 1972.
- 94- For the text of the agreement, see *New Middle East*, June 1972, p. 42. This agreement was the second of its kind signed by USSR with a Middle Eastern country in the post-World War II, after the first signed with Egypt in May 1971.
- 95- In the course of this issue, al-Bakr declared in July 1973 that the Nationalisation of the IPC would have been impossible without the assistance of the Soviet Union. See BBC, SWB, 18 July 1973.
- 96 BBC, SWB, 8 November 1973.
- 97- See Stork, Joe, Middle East Oil and the Energy Crisis, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1975, p. 230.

- 98- MEES, 5 October, 1973.
- 99- E. Penrose & E.F. Penrose, p.439.
- 100- Since Nationalization, huge oil money payouts have been used to strengthen Saddam's power base and prepare him as "a gentlemen of the Gulf", in stead of the Shah of Iran. see Anthony Lake (Deputy chairman of President Clinton), "Confronting Backlash States", in *Foreign Affairs*, March / April 1994.
- 101- These theories, adopted by the Soviet Union and its local Communist Parties in the Middle East, have been discussed in Helene Carrere D' Encausse, La Politique Soviétique au Moyen Orient, 1955-1975, Paris, 1975.
- 102- See the Statement of the Politbureau published on 27 November 1971. The text of the Statement was quoted in *al-Akhabār*, 11 December 1971.
- 103- See Batātū, *ibid.*, p.1105.
- 104- BBC, SWB, 25 February 1972.
- 105- BBC, SWB, 19 July 1973.
- 106- See *Le Monde*, 20 July 1973.



- 107- E. Penrose, ??, p.369.
- 108- BBC, SWB, 6 July 1973.
- 109- See Michael Confino and Shimon Shamir, The USSR and the Middle East, Jerusalem, 1973. See also *al-Nahār*, 15 July 1973.
- 110- See *al-Waqā'i` al-`Irāqiyyah*, 26 March 1974.
- 111- See Karsh and Rautsi, *ibid.*, p. 80.
- 112- BBC, SWB, 3 April 1973. See I. Vanly, "Kurdistan in Iraq," in Chaliand, G., (ed.), People without a country, the Kurds and Kurdistan, London, 1980, pp. 171-76.
- 113- *Financial Times*, 25 October 1974; *Daily Telegraph*, 18 November 1974.
- 114- For the text of the Algiers Agreement, See INA, 6 March 1975. For a convenient summary and analysis of the Agreement from the point of view of Iraq and Iran, though not of the Kurds, see Hāmid al-Shāwī in *Maghreb-Machrek Magazem*, No.63, 1974.
- 115- MEES, 7 March 1975.
- 116- see the *Financial Times*, 24 March 1975.

- 117- Iran supported and supplied aid to the Kurds against Baghdad Government but the Iranian military assistance was designed in such a way as not to allow the Kurds achieve a real victory over the Iraqi army. See also *Le Monde*, 8 March 1975.
- 118- In describing the Agreement, Ṭaha Yāsīn Ramaḍān, Saddam's main chieftain, says: "our signing of the Agreement came in circumstances under which we had to make calculation as to whether we would lose either Iraq (the truth is Saddam) or half of Shaṭṭ al-`Arab; we chose what was in the best interests of Iraq"; from Ramaḍān's interview with *al-Taḍāmūn* (London), October 29, 1990, pp. 25-27.
- 119- See E. & F. Penrose, pp. 370-371.
- 120- According to a well-informed source, the discussion between the Shah and Kissinger when they met in Zurich laid the foundation for the Algiers Agreement. See the Confidential Diary of Iran's Royal Court from 1969-1977, in Asadollah Alam, The Shah and I, introduced and edited by Alinaghi Alikhani, and translated into English by Alinaghi Alikhani and Nicholas Vincent, I.B. Tauris and Co. Ltd, London, 1991, p. 412. See also Faradūn Huwaydā, Suqūṭ al-Shāh (The Fall of the Shah), translated into Arabic by Aḥmad `Abd al-Qādir al-Shadhilī, pp. 279-280, note 33.

- 121- *Observer foreign news service*, (London).
- 122- *Middle East Economic Digest*, (MEED) 25 July 1975, Vol. 19:30, p. 16.
- 123- *Middle East Contemporary Survey* (MECS), London and New York, 1978-1981.
- 124- *New York Times*, 2 April 1975.
- 125- See *Arabic Report Record* (ARR), 27 July 1973, 3 September 1973, 5 October 1973, 14 July 1974, and the BCC, SWB 15 January 1975.
- 126- In an interview with Eric Rouleau of *Le Monde* during his official visit to Paris in 1972, Saddam declared that he wanted to see Iraqi relations with France raised to the same level as Iraqi relations with the Soviet Union; see *Le Monde*, 20 June 1972.
- 127- See B. al-Ḥaydarī, Tatawwur al-Şina`ah al-Naftiyyah bi al-`Irāq wa Dawr Sharikat al-Naft al-Waṭaniyyah al-`Irāqiyyah (Development of the Iraqi Oil Industry and Role of the Iraq National Oil Company 1925-74-76), undated, p. 289.
- 128- Ibid.
- 129- Ibid.



- 130- Dawisha, K., The USSR in the Middle East: Super-Power in Eclipse, in *Foreign Affairs*, Winter, 1982.
- 131- M-F and P Sluglett, *ibid.*, p. 251
- 132- *Middle East Economic Digest* (MEED), 25 July 1975, vol. 19:30, p. 16.
- 133- BBC, SWB, 19 July 1975.
- 134- *Financial Times*, 27 May 1978.
- 135- *International Herald Tribune*, 10 July 1978.
- 136- *Fiches Du Monde Arabe: Iraq*, 1401/8.
- 137- *The Economist* (London), 10 January 1985.
- 138- Husayn, Saddam, Khandaq Wāhid Am Khandaqān? (One Common Trench or Two Opposite Ones?), Baghdad, Arab Ba'th Socialist Party pamphlet, 1977, pp. 18-21
- 139- In February and June of 1969, Soviet naval squadrons paid visits to Umm-Qaşr and Basra, indicating their support for Iraq in the face of its 'imperialist' neighbours, i.e., Iran. See, on this point, George Lenczowski, Soviet Advance in the Middle East,

Washington, DC, American Enterprise Institute, 1972, p. 142.

- 140- `Azīz Muḥammad was asked, while in exile, whether he still thought it had been correct to enter the National Front. After reaffirming the general principle of forming alliances with national forces, in order to advance the struggle against imperialism, he stated: "We never said the National Front was final and that we would not face setbacks. We were under no illusions, we could see that the Front was reversible. It is too easy to pass judgment on those matters if you are sitting abroad. The particular reason for the breakdown in relations was the fact that the Ba`th was engaged in a wholesale retreat from the position we had agreed on." See MERIP Reports, 97, June 1981, pp. 20-21.
- 141- Khajadur, A., Min Tajārib Shakhṣiyyah fi al-`Amal al-Niqābī al-`Ummālī fi al-`Irāq (Trade Union Movement in Iraq: From some Personal Experiences), 1984, p. 52.
- 142- *Financial Times*, London, 27 May 1978; *Daily Telegraph*, London, 7 June 1978.
- 143- Deportation of Kurds and Arabization of Kurdistan: Report of the KDP to the United Nations, 18 March 1978, Exhibit A, pp. 27-29.

- 144- Khaddūrī, *ibid.*, pp. 93-94.
- 145- I. Vanly, People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan, *ibid.*, p. 300.
- 146- *al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ*, London, May 1978.
- 147- The religious leaders' hostility towards the Communists was, in reality, on account of the strong support enjoyed by the Communists among wide sections of the Shi'ite community and the profound threat this popularity posed to their traditional position and privileges.
- 148- al-Rāḍī, Mājid, Islam and Contemporary Experience, al-Hadaf, 1983, p. 71.
- 149- The key members who organised and carried out the Ba'th coup and the expulsion of Qāsim's government were eight. Five of them were Shi'ites, namely, Ṭālib Shabīb, Muḥsin al-Shaykh Rāḍī, Hānī al-Fikaykī, Ḥazim Jawād and Ḥamīd Khalkhāl, see H. `Alawī, The Iraqi Shi'ites and the State, Dār al-Zora, London, 1990, p. 216.
- 150- See, for instance, `Alawī, *ibid.*
- 151- Wafīq al-Samarrah'ī, Hiṭām al-Bawwābah al-sharqīyah (The Destruction of the Eastern Gate), Kuwait, 1997, p.



186. al-Samarrā'ī is the former general director of the military intelligence services.

152- M-F and P. Sluglett, *ibid.*, p.194.

153- See Batātū, *ibid.*, p. 1132.

154- *al-Hawadith*, 20 December 1974; *The Guardian*, 16 December 1974; *The Times* (London), 8 Jan 1975.

155- *Alif Bā'* (Baghdad), 602, 9 April 1980, pp. 8-9.

156- Dilip Hiro, *Inside the Middle East*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London and McGraw-Hill, New York, 1982, pp. 144-145. See also *Le Monde*, Paris, 26 March 1977.

157- The other Shi'ite Islamic organizations formed in this period were The Organization of Islamic Action and Jam'iyyat al-'Ulamā' al-Mujāhidīn (Community of Combatant 'Ulamas) led by Āyatullāh Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ḥakīm and supported by Iran.

158- Amnesty International, Report of an Amnesty International mission to the Government of the Republic of Iraq, 22-28 January, 1983, London, 1983.

159- Marr, *ibid.*, pp. 228-229.

- 160- These units were reorganized by Saddam after Kizār's coup to make them independently responsible to him. Their activities were to oversee all government departments, military and civilian alike, and all the mass organizations, while, at the same time, keeping a watchful eye on each other. Through this system of "spying on spies", Saddam was able to maintain absolute control on party (machinery) and the state.
- 161- Darwish and Alexander, *ibid.*, p. 219; Samīr al-Khalīl, *ibid.* p. 13.
- 162- In an interview with Wafīq al-Samarra'ī, head of military intelligence during the 1980s and who later joined the opposition in northern Iraq, in *Kull al-'Arab* (All Arab), broadcasting from *International Spectrum*, London, 5 December 1994.
- 163- *al-Thawrah* (Baghdad), 25 March 1977.
- 164- Its duties are spying on Iraqi students. Its branches abroad have carried out ruthless activities against Iraqi and even other Arab students opposed to the Ba`th regime. See *Naḥnu Nuḏīn* (We Condemn), French committee against repression in Iraq, Paris, pp. 75-89, on the issue of Ba`thist agents abroad.
- 165- *Arabic Report Record* (ARR), 17 April, 12 August, 9 September and 1 October 1978.

165- *Arabic Report Record* (ARR), 17 April, 12 August, 9 September and 1 October 1978.

166- See Ḥasan `Alawī, *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SADDAM IN POWER**

## The political climate prior to Saddam's presidency

There are significant developments that characterise the years before Saddam's attainment of Power in July 1979, such as Sadāt's visit to Jerusalem, the rapprochement with Syria in late 1978 and early 1979 and the domestic strife in Iran which by the end of 1978 had turned into a popular uprising and overthrown the Shah's regime. These events, accompanied by the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, which increased Soviet influence in an area that was regarded as one of western influence, allowed the political circumstances in the region to produce an atmosphere for Saddam to play a more vigorous part in its politics.

The inter-Arab Crisis caused by Sadāt's visit to Jerusalem, the Camp David Accord of 1978 and the Peace Treaty of 1979 gave Saddam the opportunity to play a role in the Arab political affairs. In March 1979, immediately after Sadāt's conclusion of the Peace Treaty with Israel, Saddam organised an Arab Conference in Baghdad, which ended with a boycott decision against Egypt. Saddam was pursuing political aims with this conference. He attempted to play a key role in exerting influence on the composition of the Arab resolution, more to be able to lay emphasis on his claim to a position of Arab leadership than to punish Egypt for its treaty with Israel.(1) What proved this was Saddam's refusal to participate in the militant grouping which established the anti-Sadat Front, *Jabhat al-Şumūd wa al-Taşaddī* (Steadfastness and Resistance Front). This

grouping represented the desire of the hard-line Arab countries, like Algeria, Syria and Libya, to take strong measures against Egypt. He even adopted measures to impede the creation of this Front, on the grounds that it was too lenient towards Egypt. He did, however, succeed in having Egypt expelled from the Arab League, which his media presented as a great success for him. He was then able to achieve his ambition of playing a leading role in Arab politics by posing as the champion of the Arabs, under the banner of Ba`thist pan-Arabism.

In this period, another tactical move took place. A rapprochement was announced between Baghdad and Damascus, with the avowed aim to unifying the two countries. Before this rapprochement, relations with Syria had remained as turbulent as ever. Since July 1968, when the Ba`th took-over power in Iraq, the country was ruled by a regime claiming to represent the Ba`th values and to pursue Ba`thist policies. This claim heavily compromised relations with Ba`thist Syria. Their bilateral relations were dominated by disputes over Ba`thist legitimacy and competition for regional influence and resources.(2) One accused the other of employing imperialist power and its agents in the area. But despite the fact that each of them aimed to undermine the other, neither of them resorted to sectarian propaganda as a weapon. The reason for this was that the two regimes wished to deny the sectarian practices that both of them clearly employed.



Against this backdrop, it is highly doubtful whether the two regimes would have been able to patch up their mutual differences; this temporary rapprochement was nothing more than the pursuit of the same competition for influence between the Ba`thist leaders but by different means. The rapprochement was not viewed favourably by many forces in the region, in particular Israel, which regarded it as a threat to its national security, since it resulted in a marked shifting in power in favour of those two countries.

However, discussion of the motives behind the rapprochement between Iraq and Syria is still surrounded by contradictions. Several explanations have been given for it. According to Marr, there were strong indications that Saddam opposed the scheme, because a union headed by al-Asad, in which Saddam would have played a lesser role, threatened his power base.(3) It is also said that al-Bakr was to become the President of the unified State and the Head of the unified Ba`th Party, while al-Asad was to be his deputy, leaving Saddam without any real position of power.(4)

Most sources suggest that the Unity Scheme was not Saddam's, and that he was dragged into the negotiations against his will, by President al-Bakr. Many Ba`thists who suspected Saddam's growing ambitions tried to warn al-Bakr and made suggestions to him that a new pact with Syria might serve to curtail Saddam's power. But it was too late,

because Saddam had achieved a position to discover any plans before any move could be made to threaten him, having attained supremacy over the Party and the State. From early 1970, he effected the total monopolisation of all media, and the nationalisation of the public facilities. He introduced laws which facilitated an extension of State terror. The Iraqis were made loyal to his leadership through his massive propaganda machine. Any institution in the Party and the State, including the armed forces and the intelligence services, simply became a further means of asserting his authority. He imposed a system of State terror through the security apparatus, in order to discourage any real or potential threats to his power.

Thus, Saddam played the key role in eliminating the Scheme. But in order not to be thought to be less interested in it than al-Bakr, he introduced points that the Syrians would find objectionable, thus making them apparently the ones to reject the scheme; for example, he asked for full union which did not suit the Syrians, since Syria, as the inferior power, would thus have come under Iraqi control.(5)

The other underlying cause for the failure of the Unity Scheme was some developments which affected the strategic balance in the region, such as the domestic strife in Iran and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Syria, which was Moscow's ally, took a positive attitude towards the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, while Iraq

voted against it in accordance with Saddam's new shift towards the western bloc and the moderate States in the region. Also, when conflict between Iraq and Iran broke out Syria supported Iran, delivered arms to it, (6) and was even accused of sending military experts. (7) This gave Saddam credibility for his claim of Arab legitimacy, and gave him justification for accusing the Ba`thist Syrians of stabbing Arab solidarity in the back by supporting Iran, which, by refusing to end the War, prevented Iraq from fighting Israel. (8)

To meet the new challenge in the region, a new strategy had to be designed. Saddam played the card of Iraq's strategic importance to regional and international interests. He was thus also to serve his political interests by assuming the role of policeman of the area instead of the Shah of Iran.

Fortunately for Saddam, the new regime in Teheran pursued fundamentalist policies and demonstrated their intention to overthrow the neighbouring secular regimes and to export the Islamic Revolution to the whole region. In particular they directed their efforts toward the Gulf States.

Saddam's position as a deputy did not suit his new mission, which required him to be the first man in Iraq, in order to unify the Iraqis and then the Arabs behind his leadership. This will be discussed in the next section.



## The transfer of Power

As events in the last chapter revealed, Saddam Husayn had been the real power in Iraq for many years. He had been the strong man of Iraq since the Ba`th took over power in 1968. He alone occupied a decision-making role, even when the decision was declared formally by President al-Bakr.(9) In addition, Saddam's huge propaganda machine tirelessly presented him as the one who was building up Iraq: the Struggler with a strategic mind and a precise calculation.

These measures of preparation increased in the second half of the 1970s, which marked the culmination of Saddam's attempt to make himself the leading statesman. He had taken all possible measures to guard his power base, in order to achieve this objective, and it expanded to such a degree that the Iraqi people, and even the other Arab and international media, began to comment that Saddam was the leader of Iraq, not al-Bakr. This was confirmed by Saddam's biographer:

"...When he assumed overall responsibility for the State and the Party on 17 July, the Iraqi People showed no surprise, as he had been the leader for many years. As for Arab and foreign states, whether friendly or unfriendly to Iraq, they simply said that the "strongman" of Iraq since 1968 had now become the Head of

**State."** (10)

Thus, Saddam gave instructions to his media to refer to President al-Bakr as "President and Commander", while he was to be referred to as "Comrade Secretary-General of the Regional Command". (11) This was mainly an attempt to hide the fact that Saddam was indeed the real power in Iraq and that al-Bakr was just a shadow.

A cult of personality grew up around him to the extent that an advertisement in New York Times was wondering whether Iraq under Saddam leadership would repeat the former Iraqi glories of Hammurabi, Ashurbanipal, al-Manşūr and Hārūn al-Rashīd. (12)

As the time for Saddam to take over power had not yet arrived, he always behaved in an exemplary manner toward al-Bakr; he continued until the last day of al-Bakr's presidency fully to acknowledge him. (13) Saddam's attempts gradually to restrict al-Bakr's role and to lessen his influence over the whole of the second decade of their partnership in power clearly revealed his plot against him; this ended in his forced resignation under the pretext of poor health on 16 July 1979, after much pressure from affected elements of the Party, State and family, such as the founder of the Ba`th Party, Comrade Michel `Aflaq, Shafiq al-Darājī, the ambassador of Iraq to the Arab League and Khayr Allāh Ṭalfāh, Saddam's uncle. (14)

It might be asked here why Saddam did not take over power in the first place at the beginning of the Ba`thist coup, in 1968. The answer, as has already been mentioned in Chapter Five, is that he did not wish to push himself forward at the beginning, since this might have caused him trouble with the main element in the Ba`th Party and the State, especially since he had not yet proved that he was a capable man for serious missions. He also wanted to give himself the chance to concentrate on the security and intelligence organs of the Party and the State, his power base, together with the propaganda machine.

The rapidly changing political circumstances in the Middle East, such as the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, which increased Soviet influence in the area that was regarded as one of western influence, and the complete success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, which put an end to the rule of the Shah, the guardian of western interests in the Gulf Region, made it necessary for Saddam to time his arrival in power very carefully in order to close ranks against a variety of internal and external threats.

As inevitably happened throughout Saddam's eleven years of rule with al-Bakr, when an important event had been planned behind closed doors, some ostensible reason was publicly announced. The ostensible reason for al-Bakr's resignation, announced by Saddam's media on 16 July 1979, on the eve of the anniversary of the Ba`th 17 July 1968



coup, was the poor health of the President, which no longer permitted him to carry the responsibilities of the leadership of the Party and the Revolution.

To make this transfer of power more acceptable to the Iraqi Nation, to retain his image as "a good Son" to al-Bakr and to render this chosen role crystallised in him, Saddam declared in his first speech, on 17 July 1970, after assuming all Party and State responsibility:

**"... It has never happened before, either in ancient history (including that of our nation since its dawn) or in modern times, that two leaders have been in power for eleven years within one Command without this resulting in a dangerous moral or practical imbalance in leadership and without their relation ending in one of them driving the other out." (15)**

Saddam's speech, of course, was an example of the "double speak" that he had so regularly practised. (16) He liquidated members of al-Bakr's family, (17) and after his retirement, placed him himself under house-arrest and prevented anybody visiting him; two years after his retirement he was reported dead from 'natural causes'. (18)

Al-Bakr's resignation was accompanied by an extensive purge of some elements in high positions within the Ba'th Party leadership itself who had tried to put an end to

Saddam's influence as he acquired one position after another, and his plan to drive out al-Bakr and claim power became clear.

Obviously they had tried to obtain a degree of influence in the decision-making process in both the Party and the Government, in order to prevent Saddam's attainment of power, since they were understandably afraid that if this occurred their own lives would be in danger. Their clear opposition to him made it necessary for him to liquidate them. Thus Saddam began his rule with the execution of the main elements in the Party, the RCC and the armed forces; this was reminiscent of the 1969 executions with which the Ba'th began its rule. All Saddam's legitimising and reconciliation measures throughout this period, were prerequisites for his regime of terror that followed. Saddam's gaining of full control over Iraq and the Ba'th ended one era of Iraqi history and began another; this gave a severe blow to the Iraqi State and the Iraqi people. The next section will discuss the major purge with which Saddam started his presidency, and the motives behind it.

## The 1979 executions

After he became President in July 1979, Saddam exercised absolute monopoly in the decision-making process, since he became President of the RCC, Secretary General of the Ba`th Party, Commander-in-Chief of the army, Chairman of the Supreme Planning Council, Chairman of the Committee on Agreements, Chairman of the Supreme Agricultural Council. However, still Saddam's power base could not come into existence, until he had won another power struggle within the Ba`th leadership and ousted the last major opponents of his hegemony. Thus, there were strong indications that the executions of 1979 may have been connected with al-Bakr's departure and Saddam's final elevation to the pinnacle of Power.

However, little was announced publicly about the alleged Coup, and its real motivation remained obscure. The official story suggests that there was a plot to overthrow the government by a number of the Ba`th Party Leaders, including five members of the Revolutionary Command Council, with outside aid. It was said that those elements were enormously afraid of Saddam's attaining complete power.(19) It is difficult to trace the actual Pressures and manoeuvres that were taking place behind closed doors. The most important factor for many within the Ba`th leadership was the threat posed by Saddam's gradual acquisition of one position of power after another. They



also feared that if his power became absolute, they would find themselves more unable to protect their own lives. Therefore they tried to achieve a degree of influence within the decision-making process by raising an objection to the decision to transfer power, which would otherwise have been decided unanimously. (20)

In fact, the characterisation of the bitter struggle for supremacy within the higher echelons of the Ba`th Party which accompanied the rise of Saddam, as analysed by the Ba`th Party Political Reports, almost obscures rather than clarifies the real nature of what was taking place throughout the period of the Ba`th rule. Mostly it was analysed in ideological terms. Other Pro-Ba`th sources give a similar account. (21) But, in reality the struggle was centred primary around the person of Saddam. In other words, any other individual to remain in a position of power in the Party or in the State apparatus had to submit to Saddam's orders, and his position was entirely dependent on the degree of his acceptability to Saddam. Thus, those who disagreed with him, or posed a threat, actual, or potential to his position, were dismissed at once, under the pretence of a plot against the Party and the Revolution or, if they had a major power base of their own, they were eased out gradually.

However, according to Saddam's account, he was not astonished by his comrades' attitude; he had suspected them for some time. He based his suspicions on the fact that he

had noticed the looks of hatred that some of them displayed, and he knew that those elements wished to play a leading role in the Ba`th Party and the Command for which they were not qualified.(22) The reason why they had risen to their high positions in the Party and the State was that they had been active members. Thus, he claimed, he put them under observation.(23)

According to the assessment of many, Saddam arrested half of the families of those suspicious elements as "hostages" in order to extract admissions from them, under this painful pressure, that they had participated in a plot against the Ba`th Party, the Revolution and Iraq.(24) On July 15, the regime revealed that, Muḥyī 'Abd al-Ḥusayn al-Mashhadānī, Secretary of the Revolutionary Command Council and a Shi`ite Party member for over twenty years, had been relieved three days earlier of all his duties, without mentioning the reason.(25)

Then, at the Extraordinary Regional Conference of the progressive cadre and popular leaders of the Ba`th Party which was held in Baghdad on 22 July 1979, 'Abd al-Ḥusayn al-Mashhadānī read, and looking like a broken person, "instructed", a fabricated confession detailing his participation in Syrian-backed plots to overthrow the Ba`th Government and its leadership. He named the other supposed ringleaders as 'Adnān Ḥusayn al-Ḥamdaānī, Muḥammad Maḥjūb, Ghānim 'Abd al-Jalīl and Muḥammad 'Āyish.

After al-Mashadānī had ended his confession, Saddam began his speech to rally the remaining members of the Ba`th Party and the Command to his leadership, claiming that he had been betrayed by his closest associates, five of whom were members of the Revolutionary Command Council. He then ordered all the people who had been named by al-Mashhadānī to be led away one by one from the meeting hall. This made the remaining members in the hall faint with terror and caused them to acclaim Saddam and call for the death of the conspirators and traitors. Meanwhile Saddam broke down in tears and then took a handkerchief from his pocket to wipe his tears away and hide his emotions. According to his instructions the meeting was filmed, and a videotape was distributed to the principal members of the Ba`th Party and the military forces; it was even distributed outside the country. (26)

This was a highly skilful psychological game played by Saddam, which gave warning to everyone that nobody would be safe. All should be subservient to him or face death. Everybody should be an extension of his will. He said:

**"....we are now in our Stalinist era. We shall strike with an iron fist against the slightest deviation or backsliding, beginning with the Ba`thists themselves." (27)**

A special Ba`thist court was set up, headed by Na`īm Ḥaddād, a Shi`ite and member of the Revolutionary Command



Council and including Sa`dūn Ghaydān, a RCC member and Minister of Communication and Transport, Tāyah `Abd al-Karīm, a RCC member and Minister of Oil, Ḥasan `Ali, a Shi`ite, a RCC member and Minister of Trade, Sa`dūn Shākīr, a Shi`ate, RCC member and Minister of the Interior, to try the alleged plotters.(28) The court condemned twenty-two to death, including the five members of the RCC. The members condemned by the RCC represented almost quarter of the Council. Also, Unit Commander Walīd Maḥmūd Sīrat and Saddam's old enemy, and `Abd al-Khāliq al-Samarraī, who had been held in prison since 1973 for being implicated in Kīzār's coup. Thirty-three were sentenced to imprisonment for different periods, ranging from one to fifteen years. Thirteen were released.(29) The Regional Command and RCC issued on 28 July 1979 a declaration that the plotters were:

**"...a group of people who had infiltrated the Party Leadership and the Revolution and included traitors belonging to the Party. This group had for some years been preparing an ugly plot aimed at hitting the Party, the Revolution and the achievements of our socialist and democratic people, in order to force Iraq to take part in the defeatist plans drawn up by American imperialism in the service of Zionism and the forces of darkness."**

As part of Saddam's devious plan to remove any doubts

about the authenticity of the plot, he had promoted one of the alleged plotters, `Adnān Ḥusayn al-Ḥamdānī for twenty four hours only, to a key government position as Deputy Prime Minister and Head of the President's Office. On his way back from his official visit to Syria, carrying Saddam's message to President Asad about the alleged plot, he was arrested at the airport and tortured with the other alleged plotters.(30) This was in spite of the fact that some former Ba`thists' reports indicated that al-Ḥamdānī had never been among Saddam's enemies and that this purge was because of his being a potential overachiever.(31)

From Saddam's point of view, the plot was more serious than that of Kīzār against the Party in 1973, because it caused an uneasy atmosphere in the Party ranks and a feeling of defeat, since the plotters all held high positions and had participated in running the Party and the State. It was for this reason, he claimed, that he followed the reading of the confession by his speech to the Ba`th Party Leaders, which was designed to raise their morale and strengthen their resolution.(32) The reasons for Saddam's making al-Mashhadānī confess before the meeting and having the event filmed were that:

- (1) Many reports indicated that the alleged plotters did indeed wish to prevent Saddam's rise to power, because of his savage violence, the way he liquidated his opponents and his unthinking policies. These might bring disaster to Iraq, if he obtained absolute power.

There was a sombre atmosphere inside Iraq and, indeed, throughout the whole region, which presaged the occurrence of something disastrous, (33) but it was not an attempt to overthrow the government, as Saddam claimed. It seems probable that Saddam managed to record some of the conversations and discussions of al-Mashhadānī and his group concerning the means of preventing his attainment of power. Such recordings would have been made by his intelligence men, who had taken hold of all the State apparatus and the Ba`th Party itself. Apparently, he used these recordings to condemn the alleged plotters.

In the Kīzār affair, Saddam did not prepare public confessions or a trial, he did not allow anyone to meet Kīzār, not even President al-Bakr, and the execution was carried out by him personally. This indicates that he was one of those who had plotted with Kīzār to get rid of al-Bakr and to take over the State.

- (2) He intended to create, at the beginning of his rule, a particular atmosphere of fear among the Ba`th Party members. This fear influenced them deeply; after the actual spectacle of al-Mashhadānī and his group of alleged plotters being arrested in the meeting hall and being executed receded from their minds, the fear inspired by the spectacle has continued ever since. This dictatorial style of



control has been practised frequently throughout the period of Saddam's rule.(34)

- (3) He intended to have passed the resolution of the Extraordinary Conference -in fact, his own resolution- to the effect that all the Ba`th Party leadership had to take a unanimous decision on the fate of the alleged plotters. Party Members should carry out the executions; as the alleged plotters had been members of the Party and had betrayed the Party, so the Party should punish them.(35) By this move Saddam involved all the Ba`th Party in his crime, under the pretext of his desire to improve Party morale after it had been shaken by the plot; in fact it had been shaken by the fear inspired by Saddam's violence.(36) His action achieved the following results:

- (a) It helped Saddam to realise the ambition that he had held from the early years of the 1970s, i.e. to become the Head of State.
- (b) Saddam turned fear into the foundation of his legitimacy and his consolidated power, which was born and sustained through complicity. He tried to rally the masses behind his leadership by mobilising popular sentiment; thousands gathered in the streets of the capital -most of them Saddam's intelligence servants and Ba`thist elements who had been told to demonstrate- giving

their support for the sentences and calling for long life to Saddam, the Party and the Revolution.(37) This popular demonstration was similar to that with which the Ba`th Party began its rule, the popular spectacle of the executions of 1968-69. The difference between the two events was that, in the 1968-69 purge most of the demonstrators were amazed at the unprecedented act, especially as it was done in the name of patriotism. The 1979 purge demonstrators participated out of fear, wishing to show their absolute loyalty to Saddam in order to save their lives.

- (c) Saddam implicated the Ba`th Party and the RCC - even his harshest critics - in his crime, in order to make them a party to his system of violence, so that they might be obliged to defend his regime for their lives' sakes, since they shared responsibility for the regime's crime. This, was probably the reason for the failure of all the attempts to overthrow his regime.(38)
- (d) Saddam like Stalin always concealed his role in every purge. He openly proclaimed that the 1979 purge and the suppression of the opposition were acts of State in which he had act, as the supreme Judge of the 'Iraqi People.(39)

(e) He reduced all the Ba`th Party leadership and the remaining members of the RCC to unquestioning subservience; they lacked any ability to come to an independent decision. The Party and the state simply became useful executive instruments which carried out Saddam's orders and protected his power base.

(f) He tried to give his regime a patriotic image in the eyes of the Iraqi people by linking the alleged plot with American imperialism and Zionism. He said:

"...Comrades, do not give in to a feeling of defeat. This is a Revolution which aims to destroy the base of imperialism, to shine over the whole 'Arab world, to make it a new power on the world scene, to involve every 'Arab and change his life radically, to make him a progressive element....cannot such a Revolution stand up to such despicable plotters? The whole people is with you now, and your organisation has over one million members. In this case, where can the plotters come from? Can they arrange a military invasion to overthrow the Revolution? This is impossible now, and they will not achieve their goal. Even America cannot carry out such an operation, except by hurling an atomic bomb, and then it



would take over a land without a people. This is the only way, then, in which outsiders can hurt us: to find traitors in the Party ranks who occupy sensitive positions and to extend material assistance to them." (40)

(g) Saddam managed to get rid of the plan for unity which had been under way between Iraq and Syria for some time by declaring that the plot was masterminded by Syria, in spite of the fact that Syria declared its innocence and affirmed that the plot was not in Syria's interests. (41) Saddam accused the plotters of betraying the principles of the Party and the revolution by having built up secret connections with the rival Syrian Ba`th Party to pull down the Party from power in Iraq. This despite the fact that Saddam himself depended largely throughout his period in the political field, before and after he reached power, on this kind of connection and intrigue to maintain his position of Power in the Party, then in the State, and very probably profited from sectarian, regional and tribal loyalties to strengthen those positions.

(h) As far as Shi`ism was concerned, Saddam created internal dissension by appointing the Shi`ite Na`im Ḥaddād head, and the Shi`te Ḥasan `Ali and Sa`dūn Shākīr as members of the special court to

try and execute two of the most prominent Shi'ites in the Ba'th Party, al-Mashhadānī and al-Ḥamdānī. By this move, Saddam isolated Ḥaddād and the two other members; they lost credit among the Shi'ite community, and this led them to increase their dependence on their master and become a tool in his hand.

- (i) He gave a signal to everybody, since most of the executed group were very close personal friends of his, that no opposition whatsoever would be tolerated either inside or outside the Party.
- (j) He regarded the uncovering of the plot as one of the greatest achievements of the Ba'th Party under his leadership. So he gave extraordinary power to the Ba'th Party, meaning extraordinary power for himself. (42)

Saddam was thus successful in organising the entire Ba'th Party and the RCC under his own absolute power. The fear he created caused an absolute loss of identity and collapse of self-confidence for the Ba'th Party and the remaining members of the RCC, who now competed with one another to show Saddam their loyalty, in order to avoid his violent purging. Moreover, Saddam took the following measures once he had achieved the presidency, in order to assume more power:

- (1) He put various family members into key posts. To disguise this fact, he decreed that family names would be abolished.
- (2) He replaced eight Ministers with close confidants, like Sa`dūn Shīkir, who became Minister of the Interior.
- (3) He created the post of First Deputy Premier, given to Ṭāhā Yāsīn Ramaḍān.
- (4) He created five posts of Deputy Minister, which were filled by `Adnān Khayr Allāh (Minister of Defence and Saddam's cousin), Na`īm Ḥaddād, Ṭāriq `Azīz, Sa`dūn Ghaydān and `Adnān Ḥusayn al-Ḥamdānī, who was executed soon after his promotion, which was purely for show.
- (5) He appointed several Kurdish figures, who held pro-government positions to senior Party roles, in order to boost the position of his regime among the Kurdish people.
- (6) He excluded the army from politics. This, is well illustrated by the composition of the RCC which after June 1982 included no member from the ranks of the army, while in 1968 it was exclusively composed of army officers.
- (7) He transferred the Ba`th Party into an instrument for



himself and his clan, by the absorption of the Ba`th Regional Command into the RCC. The regime claimed that this step was designed to deepen collective participation and democracy.(43) But in reality, it was part of Saddam's long-term strategy of containing anyone posing a real or potential threat, if he could not be weakened or excluded. This gives the impression that Saddam and his relative Tikrītī governed 'Iraq through the Ba`th Party rather than the reverse.

- 8- He created new social groups, who found their fortunes were increasingly linked with him, and their interests were served by the regime's policies. Indeed, Saddam's domination effectively succeeded through his ability to collect around himself an inner core of men whose loyalty was just to him. These men were either members of his family or from his close friends who had proved their personal loyalty to him during their association with him since the clandestine years. These people owed their position to their official rank in the State, not to their position within the ideological vehicle of the Ba`th Party. This meant that they did not represent any principle of formal authority. They owed their high positions to their personal relationships with Saddam. This allowed him to control their activities and they were obliged to give him their full loyalty, because they were his creation.

However, in the early part of 1980 other executions were reported, such as those of Munīf al-Razzāz ('Aflaq's deputy), Saddam's old friend, 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shaykhī and Sa'd 'Abd al-Bāqī al-Ḥadīthī, a retired Ba'thist.

As he had always done, since he and al-Ba'th had climbed to power in 1968, he accompanied this massive campaign of terror with some reform measures, allied to a huge personality cult campaign, designed to show the Iraqi people his good will. These measures will be discussed in the next section.

## Saddam's personality cult and the Mesopotamian heritage

After Saddam assumed full responsibility for the State and the Party in July 1979, he set his nation on a new course, motivated by both fear and love. He realised that fear was not enough to safeguard his power permanently; he had to cancel out the effects of the ruthless policy with which he had begun his presidency. He decided to make the Iraqi people admire him and love him and, eventually, himself to become Iraq.(44) His speech, on the seventeenth anniversary of the revolution of February 1963 carried this implication:

"...western journalists say that Saddam Husayn is a Tikriti. I say to them with pity: Saddam Husayn was born in a village in the southern part of Tikrīt province, Tikrīt province is a part of the muḥāfaẓa of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, and he is an Iraqi. Saddam Husayn was born in the muḥāfaẓa of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn but he is not only a son of the muḥāfaẓa of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, because he is a son of the province of Arbīl, of Sulaimaniya, he is a son of Anbār, a son of the Tigris and Euphrates, a son of Baradā, and Jordan, and of the Nile, of Damascus and Amman, Cairo and Casablanca, a son of every Iraqi city and a son of the Iraqi People, of the Iraqi soil and of the Iraqi air



**and of the Arab homeland and the Arab nation.**

He achieved this aim by the following measures, on which he spent considerable funds from the massive oil revenues, which had increased many times since 1968.(45) Iraqi oil revenues in 1980 reached \$21.3 billion, and foreign reserves amounted to \$35 billion. These unlimited funds became available to Saddam to expand and strengthen his organs of repression, and at the Same time to seek popularity by the following steps:

- (1) He established an absolute monopoly of the media. He had realised the importance of the media from the time that he shared power with al-Bakr. When he became President, the Iraqi nation had already become habituated to the effect of his media, which expanded into a gigantic structure once he took total control of it. The propaganda machine, -radio, television, newspapers, the State news agency, advertising and press distribution- made for the greater glory of Saddam, helped him to consolidate his power base and provided him, together with his agencies of terror, with greater internal stability than at any other time in the history of modern Iraq. He has continued to make the Iraqis happily accept any humiliating concession that he has made. Indeed, his ability has gone beyond any that previous dictators have shown, either in ancient nor in modern history.

This course of action, which some political analysts have rationalised in terms of a personality cult, portrayed Saddam as the stern paternalistic guardian of the Iraqi nation, the Leader of pan-Arabism, the Guardian of the Eastern Gate of the Arab world- the Arab empire which he wishes to lead - and the creator of the Ba`th Party, a role which he assumed on his accession to power in 1968.(46)

His life story, filmed and presented on Iraqi Television, tells of his bravery and struggle during his underground activities. His appearance on television every day for several hours portrays him in different aspects, in uniform, in Kurdish dress, in designer sunglasses, opening new buildings, fondling babies, visiting nurseries, schools, factories and families, sharing food with people as a family man, praying in the mosque, reading the Qur'an, meeting faithful Shi'ite religious figures, giving lectures to undergraduate students as a university teacher, giving lectures on architecture as an architect and giving lectures on economics as an economist. His inventor, the media, simply presents him as one who is not to be underestimated in any field of life. He is the consummate politician, the skilful negotiator, the publicist and the successful administrator. He is the "Genius".(47)

The media put a huge fence between him and the

ordinary citizen. Any objection to, or even dissatisfaction with, his Command or his Policy on the part of an individual is taken as high treason against the Homeland, the Revolution and the Iraqi People.

His image has sprung up everywhere. Numerous statues have been erected to him up and down the country; immense posters of him have covered the walls in Baghdad and all other Iraqi cities, showing him in his various preferred images. A government department, the Special Projects Implementation Authority, has been created merely to oversee his posters and murals and has had large funds put at its disposal.

- (2) He has made an effort to travel regularly around the country visiting urban and rural population centres, military camps, Party branches, Shi'ite and Kurdish community areas, seeking support; this has eventually developed into invitations to visiting Heads of State to accompany him on his tours. In addition, he has singled out in his visits working-class people and children for the following purposes:

- (a) To give him the opportunity to test the mood of the Iraqi people and to see how they think, in order to take the appropriate measures to deal with them.

- (b) To remind people on his widely reported -on



television and radio-visits and mass meetings in Baghdad and around the country, of the many favours he has bestowed on them and of the poor quality of life that they would have, but for him. He also appears, criticising and humiliating other social groups, in particular the educated, reproaching them for their lack of responsibility and their failure in their duty.

- (c) To continue to dupe ordinary gullible working class people and children into believing that he is their benefactor. This policy has produced a subservient people who follow the lines that Saddam has laid down for them. They had submitted to his orders to the extent that a large number of Iraqi men have begun to imitate him in the way he walks, dresses, talks and styles his moustache. (48)

His frequent visits to schools and nurseries, which have been copied also by his Cabinet and Members of the Party, are based on his belief that the younger generation, having longer to live, can be more valuable to the Ba`th and to the Revolution, if they are organised early according to Ba`thist principles. (49) In accordance with this policy, children are organised from the primary school in the *Ruwwād* (Pioneers). Those between the ages of ten and fifteen are the *Ṭalā'i'* (Vanguards). Between fifteen and twenty they belong to the youth organisation

*Futuwwah*. Thus, most Iraqi children undergo direction of thought in these organisations, which are grouped under the so-called "General Federation of Youth". These organisations belong to the State; the Party has its own youth front organisation called *Ansār* (Partisans), who are instructed in Party ways by high-ranking Party Members and are asked as well to write reports and provide information. (50) This policy has caused a loss of identity for the Iraqi people; along with this has been eroded national sovereignty and individual freedom. Stalin and Hitler employed the same policy to take over the system of education by reorganisation of the school system and teacher training and reworking of text books in line with the Nazi and the Communist ideologies.

During his visiting, his speeches focus on one issue, his own glorification.

(3) A weekly meeting in the Presidential Palace is arranged with the citizens, so that Saddam may see and hear for himself what the people's problems are, and discuss their needs - or so his media claim.

(4) He has imposed his name as follows:

(a) Baghdad International Airport has become Saddam International Airport.

(b) Revolution City, the working-class Shi'ite suburb

of Baghdad has become Saddam City.

- (c) The Military Institution for the building of factories has become Saddam's Military Institution for the building of factories.(51)
  - (d) The Established College of Medicine in Baghdad has been renamed Saddam's College of Medicine; it accepted its first students on 17 August 1987.
  - (e) The Established College of Law in Baghdad has been renamed Saddam's College of Law; it accepted its first students on 24 August 1987;
  - (f) The Seventh Marbad Poetry Festival has introduced Saddam's Medal for Literature, value \$30,000, to encourage authors and poets to praise and glorify him.
- (5) Each year his birthday is celebrated on 28th April, which is regarded as a National Day; he is the first Iraqi leader officially to celebrate his birthday.
- (6) Iraqi Television and Baghdad Radio have produced about three hundred songs glorifying Saddam's personality.

He has also announced various liberalising measures

- (a) He established the National Assembly in March



1980 to which two hundred and fifty Members were to be elected from both sexes. Na'im Haddād was made the Speaker of the Assembly. From the long list of requirements for candidates, it was clear that the election of non-Ba'thists was impossible;(52) the results of the election, which took place on 20 June 1980, indicated that all the votes were for the Ba'thist candidates. Other political representatives in the Assembly were defined by the Ba'th Party as subordinate only. This Assembly was another creation employed by Saddam to impart a semblance of democracy to his personal rule and to improve his hold on the levers of power. Under its aegis, Saddam was enabled to pension off and replace any disagreeable political elements and to declare or abrogate any of his tactical decisions. Moreover, it is part of the framework of Saddam's personality cult, another aspect of which is described in the account of a foreign journalist:

"....here in Najaf, a city near the banks of the Euphrates, sacred to Shi'ite Muslims, the Governor, Mizbān, greeted visitors in an office equipped with eight telephones and six portraits of President Husayn. Telling them that he expected a large turnout to give thanks to 'the leadership of the Party and Revolution' he said: "They will show that they like and

love Saddam Husayn. Saddam Husayn is the hope of the 'Arab Nation and the Arab Homeland' ". (53)

- (b) A general amnesty was declared for all political prisoners in Iraq, except for those who had taken part in plots against the regime.
- (c) A call was made to the Iraqi Communist Party abroad to enter into a dialogue with the National Progressive Front, claiming that the Ba'th had not taken a decision to expel the Communist Party.
- (d) Increases were announced for a wide range of wage earners, and a large pay rise was given to all members of the armed forces.
- (e) In order to boost Kurdish confidence, the RCC issued a decree on 24 December 1979 providing special incentives for Kurds wishing to return to Iraq. Any Kurd who wanted to return was allowed to bring in a car without paying tax or duty and to bring furniture up to the value of £5,000 without paying duty.

Briefly, Saddam largely succeeded in taking the Iraqi Nation in by these measures, which were accompanied by the Ba'thisisation campaign, designed to make every Iraqi citizen

a Ba`thist even if he did not join the Party, as well as the Ba`thisation of the State organs, the social organisation, the education system, the armed forces and the cultural life of the whole country. A campaign of terror was launched to force people, especially civil servants, to join the Ba`th Party. Non-Ba`thists were banned from employment in good posts, and they were denied scholarships to study abroad. They were also denied admission in particular to the Military College, Teacher Training Colleges, and the Ministries of Culture, Information and Foreign Affairs. Thousands of officials were dismissed from these offices and replaced by unqualified Ba`thists, especially in the teaching field, causing a severe decline in the standards of education. The outcome of this policy was that the Iraqi people either submitted to Saddam's orders or faced arrest, torture and disappearance. (54)

In addition to all these measures on the domestic level, he went further. He placed thousands of journalists all over the Arab world and even took some foreign journalists on his payroll in order to build up his image outside Iraq. He structured his media to emphasise Iraqism, in particular during the period before he began the war with Iran, attempting to make Iraq, under his leadership, the dominant power in the Gulf region and the Arab world, and to make himself, rather than the other Arab leaders, the principal focus of attention. He expressed this motive clearly in a hyperbolic speech in a southern Shi`ite city,



during his visits to all Iraqi cities, after becoming President:

"....The glory of the Arabs stems from the glory of Iraq....throughout history, whenever Iraq became mighty and flourished, so did the Arab nation. This is why we are striving to make Iraq mighty, formidable, able to develop, and we shall spare nothing to improve welfare and to brighten the glory of Iraq." (55)

Under his cultural campaign, his claim to make Iraq a "shining light", which had been noted earlier in the 1970s, gained more attention after he took full responsibility in Iraq. (56)

Saddam restored and preserved historic sites and Arabised the various Mesopotamian periods to suit his own purposes. He claimed to have retrieved the heritage stolen during the Ottoman and British occupations of Iraq. Iraq's stolen heritage includes Ashurbanipal's library, which was taken at the end of the last century to the British Museum; 'Ashtār's door from King Nebuchadnezzar's Palace in Babylon, which is in Berlin. Iraq has only a copy of the original; the Law code of Ḥammūrābi engraved on stone, which is in the Louvre, and many other valuable pieces which are scattered around the museums of the world. (57)

Saddam presented a new ideology, based on his

superior leadership, imitating Iraqi rulers of previous golden eras of Iraq's history, from the time of the Sumerians, Chaldeans, Babylonians and Assyrians. The ancient rulers of Iraq recorded their battles and carved their images on huge stones, to immortalise themselves and their power. Saddam's personality cult served the same purpose. Saddam used as well the glories of the 'Abassid Empire in the eighth century AD, which reached the highest point of Iraqi political and cultural development, ruling the area from present-day Afghanistan to North Africa. He desired to revive the dream of a Muslim Arab empire ruled by a strong man from Baghdad, as it had been in the past. His autobiographical fragment below clearly expresses this motive:

**"... Abu Ja`far was the architect of the Abbasid State and he was succeeded by thirty-five caliphs. Abū 'Uday is the architect of the Ba`thist state and he has travelled a long way along this road. History is repeating itself in Iraq." (58)**

Thus in his attempt to be an Arab leader, he started to represent himself as a successor of the ancient Iraqi rulers, like Ḥammūrābi, Nebuchadnezzar and Harūn al-Rashd. He used this policy as a means to mobilise the Iraqi masses as well as the other Arabs. At the same time, he exploited the Palestine question as another means to mobilise the nation; Arab leadership always implies a certain

responsibility for the Palestine cause.

Saddam's associates have participated in this intensive campaign as well. In an article in al-Jumhuriyyah newspaper on 4 April 1980, Ṭāriq Ḥamad al-`Abdallah, a RCC member and Director of the President's Office, writes:

"....Our Leader and the Justice of `Umar, the Principles of `Ali and the Courage of Khālīd". (59)

Saddam's propaganda went further than this in an attempt to introduce him to a foreign audience. An official statement by the Iraqi Government, which was published in the London Times, reads:

"....and the question is now pertinently asked, with a leader like this man, the wealth of oil resources and a forceful people like the Iraqis, will she repeat her former glories and the name of Saddam Husayn (sic) link up with that of Ḥammūrābī, Ashurbanipal, al-Mansūr and Harūn al-Rashīd? To be sure, they have not really achieved half of what he has already done at the helm of the Ba`th Arab Socialist Party and he is still only forty-three." (60)

Saddam wished to create from the Iraqi man, who developed from the great, ancient Iraqi man, a new man



called the Ba`thist man, *al-Insān al-Ba`thi*, of whom he himself was to be the shining example.(61) He stressed the importance of Arab unification and the part to be played in this by the Ba`th Party, under his leadership.

These grandiose statements, emphasising the rule of the great leader who was to revive this great historical nation as a mighty power in this sensitive part of the world were part of the preparations for the next stage of Saddam's campaign, the Iraq-Iran war.

## Saddam's quest for regional influence

From the Algiers Agreement untill Saddam's take-over power of in July 1979, his policy was to strengthen his own internal and regional position economically as well as politically, as noted above. As his hold on power heightened, his influence in the region increased. After he became president, he increasingly adopted the stance of champion of Iraq's rights and sovereignty, as well as of the rights and sovereignty of the Arab Nation.

In order to conceal his visible shift of policy at this time towards the western camp and the pro-western Arab states, he tried to show a policy independent of both super Powers. He claimed he would free the Arab World from dependence on the two blocs. Therefore, he criticised the close military co-operation of Oman with the United States. This new tactic appears very obvious through Saddam's effort to hold the non-aligned summit, which was due to take place in Baghdad in late 1982. Saddam's view of the possibilities of a leading role in Arab politics became very clear from the Pan-Arab Declaration, which was published on 8 February 1980. According to some of these declarations:

- (1) Rejection of the presence of all foreign armies, military forces and bases on Arab soil, or extension of facilities to such forces in any shape or form.

- (2) Forbidding the use of military force by any Arab state against any other Arab state. Conflicts between Arab states were to be settled by peaceful means.
- (3) Arab states would co-operate in order to repel any attack or any aggression carried out by a foreign party against the regional sovereignty of any Arab country.
- (4) The richer states should render economic aid to the poorer ones. (62)

Saddam attempted to gain regional influence, by initiating regional alliances that pretended to serve the Arab cause, especially with the conservative countries, which all feared the danger of the Islamic revolution of Khomeini, since he regarded himself the defender of the Arabs against the Persian peril, according to pan-Arab principles and aims of the Ba`th Party which was to bear the heaviest burdens in protecting the Arabs against dangers and encroachment. (63)

On the Palestinian question, Saddam's shift was most noticeable. He ended his support for the extreme faction of the Abu Niḍāl group, and restored his relation with `Arafāt. He reversed his support for the pro-Soviet regime in South Yemen.

In several speeches, Saddam stressed the significance



of Arab unification, and the rule of Iraq under his leadership in this question. In his view, the united Arabs, particularly on account of their oil reserves which were vital to the western industrial nations, might play as important a role as the United States, Europe, the Soviet Union and Japan. He said:

**"...we are called to influence the course of Arab Policies effectively, in accordance with our conception. It will be extremely important and valuable for the future, if the Arabs show their ability to unite at least at a minimum level in politics and attitudes and thereby influence the process of international politics". (64)**

This kind of policy is also illustrated by the effort which Saddam made to manoeuvre himself into a position to act as the policeman of the region, following the overthrow of the Shah of Iran, and the establishment of the Islamic Republic. This policy was encouraged by the Western powers, in particular the United States, because it suited their interests in the region. In brief, Saddam was able to swing the regional balance, as well as the internal, in his favour, and he demonstrated his ability to unify an Arab Front to face the Iranian challenge. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

## The Ba`th policy and authority

In the light of the record of the Ba`th in power, we may make the following observations about its practices and authority:

- (1) The absence of any clear political line for the Ba`th leaders, because they had no true faith or doctrine. Ideological purity was not their chief object. It was just a slogan to achieve their ends.
- (2) The prevention of any division within the ranks of the Party, as their experience had shown that their loss of power in November 1963 had occurred because the Party had split into two wings.
- (3) The destruction of Iraqi civil society in all its aspects, so as to prevent the emergence or the continuation of any centres of alternative power. Thus the Ba`th regime had to destroy the market, then the education system, and then the health services, and replace all these with their own creations; a state-run economy on the Soviet model, a Ba`thist educational system, including such things as the Arabisation of medical, engineering and science subjects at university, which meant using Egyptian textbooks instead of the British and American ones that previous Iraqi students were used to and, finally, the syphoning off of the best medical skills

and equipment into elitist hospitals that only cared for the Ba`th leadership and their non-Iraqi friends, excluding ordinary Iraqis. The Ba`th regime of 1968 was highly inferior intellectually to that of 1963, because it was made up of the dredgs of Iraqi society from Tikrīt, Dūr, `Ānah and Sāmmarā'. The Iraqi communists, as expected, went along with this Sovietisation of Iraq, particularly following the 1972 signing of the Iraqi-Soviet treaty. This enabled the Ba`th regime to enjoy:

- (a) The relative political stability and durability of the regime, which allowed them further to tighten their grip on Iraq.
- (b) The establishment of a front with the Iraqi Communist Party, named the (Nationalist and Pan-Arabist Progressive Front) 'progressive' being a communist catch-word and not necessarily used literally. By this dubious procedure the Ba`thist regime, as did the communist regimes that it emulated, painted a false picture of pluralism, while the truth was that the Ba`th regime was, in all its aspects, in the hands of one man. The Iraqi Communist Party, being totally subservient to the Soviet Union, was ordered by its masters to support the Ba`th regime, with all the terrible consequences that this support inflicted on the people of Iraq.



- (c) The subjugation of all other ideologies, including Marxism, to the service of the regime.
- (4) The grouping of all essential elements of the regime in one coherent structure, impervious to social and political change outside that structure, and making all social and political changes flow from that structure itself. This explains why the regime has survived for such a long period, despite two wars.
- (5) The Ba`thisation of the Iraqi armed forces. The Ba`thist leaders, particularly Saddam, saw the supreme necessity of concentrating all their efforts towards the implementation of the "Ba`thist theory of Action" in the armed forces. This meant the replacement of non-Ba`thist officers by Ba`thists, even if they were of lower rank and lower calibre. Thousands of non-Ba`thist officers were pensioned off, while new recruitment to military colleges was strictly limited to Ba`thist teenagers. Thus the Iraqi armed forces became a tool for suppressing the people.
- (6) The militarisation of Iraqi society: This was implemented through the institutionalisation of military codes in civil society. Thus, severe discipline, compulsion, and group ideology became the order of the day in Iraq. This was justified by the Ba`thists on the grounds that Iraqi society was

fragmented, ignorant, undisciplined and, even, anarchic, and that only militarisation could transform Iraq from a backward state to a modern one. In fact this particular Ba`thist policy was similar to the Stalinist policy of the 1930s in the Soviet Union. Just as Stalinism, in its cultural, political and economic arrangements, failed to deliver its promises, but created tens of millions of victims instead. Ba`thism had a similar result, but smaller in scale.

- (7) The destruction of those non-Ba`thist Iraqis who were accomplished, educated and intellectual, so as to prevent society from stumbling on any alternative to Ba`thism. The Ba`th regime was particularly zealous in destroying the middle classes in Iraq.
- (8) The centralisation of power around the presidency, personified by the president himself: The president was awarded a standing identical to that given to the leader in Fascism, as he became above suspicion. Everyone had to approve of his decisions, which had to be carried out without objection, however ill-advised. During the 1970s, al-Bakr was the president, but Saddam was actually more powerful, controlling all security, the armed forces and the state apparatus. Saddam was, then, like Stalin, preparing the ground to seize power when the time was right. When Saddam seized power, this centralisation served him well, as he was immediately elevated to the status of an

infallible holy leader. Consequently, decrees were issued by Saddam, imposing the death penalty on any Iraqi who even doubted his abilities, let alone criticised him.

(9) The ending of the previous duality of power *'Izdiwājiyyat al-Şulṭah* between the Party and the army, and replacement with the singularity of state security, which would prove far more repressive. The reasons for this transfer from duality to singularity were:

- (a) To avoid the danger that the army, even though it was Ba`thist, might still strike at the civilian Ba`thists, as happened in November 1963, and then in Syria in February 1966. The regime had to be entrusted to a security apparatus that would turn the army into a subservient tool in the hands of Saddam.
- (b) To create military and party discipline which ended the previous struggle for power. This allowed the regime to enjoy a period of political stability.
- (c) To end all the feuds within the party that had led to the Ba`th losing power in November 1963 in Iraq, and the `Aflaq wing losing power to the Alawite wing in Syria in 1966, and to al-Asad



rise to power in 1970. These party set-backs convinced Saddam that neither the Party nor the Army could safeguard the continuation of his regime, but only a central repressive and authoritarian security apparatus. He was helped in this by foreign experts from the Soviet Union and the former East Germany, who were adroit in the Stalinist method of rule by terror. During 1963, the first period of Ba`thist rule, it was *al-Ḥaras al-Qawmī* who were the Party's repressive apparatus. In 1968, it changed to a security apparatus, to which both the party and the military apparatus had to answer. Saddam headed the security apparatus, which had been designed and built by him with substantial and crucial help from the Soviet Union and East Germany. This was the real authority in the country, while the Party and the army were mere tools in its extremely repressive hands. The other establishments of the state, the various ministries and utilities, each played their roles in the overall security plan. The ministries and public utilities began to work like secret police organisations, even though, they were part of society, rather than the state. The various unions and professional associations were all Ba`thistised and then given their respective roles in the regime's security plan. The Ba`th regime, in fact, destroyed the Iraqi state and

society that it had inherited from the previous regime, exactly as happened in Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany. Saddam in a Party meeting confirmed that:

"....we want you, dear comrades, to follow Party principle at every turn when you are in authority, and to apply them in your everyday work so that these may be the principles of a progressive and developed nation. There is a difference in substance between State and the political structure and the organisation, although the State is the Party's State. If the difference between ... State authority and Party authority disappears then the Party will become the State's Party, instead of the State being the Party's State, and our role as revolutionaries bringing progressive change will be over. This role will become so weak that the Party will become one of the traditional institutions of the State and the State will no longer be guided and activated by a Party conscience and intellect." (65)

This is a Hitlerian concept, the unity of the party and the state: the party now becomes the state. In Russia, the meaning of a one-party state was clear enough. The party decided policy and issued orders to the state. (66)

(10) The prevention of any form of misunderstanding among those concerned about the true nature of the Ba`th regime. The regime does not represent Party authority, army authority, civilian executive authority, or a conglomeration of all of these: it is, rather, the authority of an all-embracing security apparatus, consisting of *al-Mukhabarat* (General Intelligence), *al-Amn al-Khās* (special security), *al-Istikhbarat al-`Askariyyah* (Military Intelligence), *Amn al-Hīzb* (party security) and *al-Amn al-`Amm* (General Security). Thus the security apparatus is not merely a political, but also an economic, social, and cultural apparatus headed by none other than Saddam.

Saddam built up this all-embracing body from elements that were carefully selected and taught to recognise no loyalty other than loyalty to him himself. But even these selected elements are not taken into Saddam's confidence. He works on the principle that each one who works with him should know no more than is required to carry out orders.

Gellner describes the relation between Saddam and the members of the above structure as like the relation between "patron and client", (67) because these members gain their actual authority from him only. He supplies them with his protection and high standard of life, in exchange for their loyalty. But



they can lose their position and even their lives if they lack in loyalty to him. The elimination of Ḥusayn and Saddam Kāmīl (Saddam's sons in law) is the obvious example. At the same time, he depends on their service to protect his position; any lack of obedience will threaten the regime. By this kind of system, Saddam has continued to remain in power.

Thus, it is true to say that the Ba`th regime rests on the basis of an organisational apparatus, rather than on a social base. In fact, the base of the regime can be considered an alternative society to civil Iraqi society, which Saddam's regime smashed. The elements that Saddam recruited to his all-embracing security apparatus have to begin a new life, rather than continue their previous life, i.e. a new history charted for them by Saddam, for he and he alone will decide whether these elements in his service will live or die. Thus Saddam established a new class in Iraq, i.e. the class of authority, which is primarily security, that he superimposed on top of the Iraqi society that he inherited from the previous regime.

He recruited his security apparatus mainly from those with a poor, under-privileged background, who were also uneducated and, in most cases, thugs, criminals and psychopaths. However, this was seen by some outsiders as an indication of the regime's

socialist tendency and an experiment in freeing the under-privileged and poor to build a modern, secular state. Of course the reality of the situation was the reverse as Saddam is highly sectarian and he only relies on his relations from Tikrīt and the nearby villages, such as al-Dūr. It also so happened that Saddam's relatives were, in the main, the scum of Iraqi society. They came to form, as the years and decades went by, a class in their own right.

- (11) The fabrication of an ideological *raison d'être* for the regime that had a certain popular appeal, while, at the same time, serving as a justification for the terror and repression that the regime intended to rely on as the real tools of maintaining its grip on power. Thus the regime fabricated a short-list of ideological catch-phrases that are available in Ba'th literature and the literature of the Iraqi Communist Party. This short list of ideological catch-phrases was, in the main, that of Stalinism, which the Iraqi Communist Party adheres to until today. It is a stark irony of a regime that preaches socialism while, in reality, it is a regime of thieves and get-rich-quick schemers, who were former primary school teachers and former shepherds from Tikrīt and Dur and who, later on, became non-commissioned army and police officers; a stark irony of a regime that claimed to be secular, while being blatantly sectarian in favour of the Sunnis; a stark irony of a regime that preaches pan-

Arabism, while basing its power on the sole base of a tiny sub-tribe or, in fact, an alliance of a few barbaric families from Tikrīt.

- (12) The seizure of financial resources that were necessary to build such a security apparatus, i.e. oil resources. Previous Iraqi governments had to abide by a certain procedure in spending this money, by allocating a certain percentage, e.g. 50%-70%, to development. Saddam cancelled this and took control of all oil revenues, which allowed him to spend them without any restriction whatsoever.

**The Nature of Ba`th Authority:** Many writers find it difficult to figure out the decision making process within the Iraqi leadership.(68) It is puzzling for them to tell whether it is in the hands of the RCC, of the Cabinet, of the National Assembly, of the Ba`th Party or of a Tikrīti group which controls the Party and the State. The fact is that neither these institutions nor the Tikrīti elements (military or civilian) have any real power. It is in the hands of Saddam and his security apparatus. Ostensibly, he takes decisions in the name of all these structures. In an interview with Helms, he said:

"....the Revolutionary Command Council is a constitutional body with vested authority. It has an agenda which is distributed a sufficient time before meeting convene. Decisions are



taken by majority. Usually a consensus develops through discussions, so it is rare that an actual vote must be called. In fact I can count these occasions on less than the fingers of my hands. We are mostly interested in unanimous decisions, but not necessarily identical mentalities. I have no veto power, but my opinion as a question of courtesy is viewed in a different way." (69)

In fact, duality is the true description of the actual mechanism of the way authority is practised in Iraq. On the surface there is a State with a President, a party, then a Revolutionary Command Council, a Cabinet of Ministers and a Parliament. But all these institutions and structures are a facade, built up on the principle of obedience to the president's will. Even the Party and the entire administrative strata are a sham. The real authority is obviously something else - the person of Saddam, his sons, and his family, aided by the all-powerful, all-embracing total authority of the security apparatus. The security apparatus is ubiquitous. The commander of an army unit is less important than the representative of the security apparatus in that unit, because it is he who is the real commander. This is something very similar to the Stalinist type of political commissars that he placed everywhere in the Soviet Union. In fact, Saddam uses the Stalinist term "political guidance officers", i.e. political commissars. Hence it is clear now that the real authority in Iraq is

the one which exercises its authority furtively. Some high-ranking members also serve as members of the bogus authority, such as Saddam himself and his son, 'Uday, whose formal capacity is that of the Chairman of the Iraqi Olympic Committee, and director of a newspaper and TV station. Yet his real authority is greater than that of any of Saddam's vice-presidents.

Any blows that members or institutions of the bogus authority might receive will not materially affect the regime's ability to maintain its grip on power. This has been proved beyond the shadow of a doubt following the Gulf War. The regime will only collapse when its real authority is destroyed, i.e. when the security apparatus is completely crushed.

Turning to the regime's Arab relations, it has been very disruptive and guilty of seriously harming the interests of the Palestinians, as happened when it encouraged them to confront King Ḥusayn in 1970. When they did so, the faith regime decided to pull out of Jordan altogether. Then, again, during the Lebanese civil war, when the regime was nominally on the side of the Palestinians and Lebanese Muslims, and Syria was on the side of the Christians, owing to 'Aflaq's influence on the pan-Arab leadership, Saddam was even more pro-Lebanese Christian than Syria, as he supplied weapons to the Christian General Michel 'Aoun and his militia during 1980-1990. Saddam's regime was a major weakness in Arab efforts

to achieve a just and lasting peace with Israel, as its extreme verbal rhetoric played into the hands of extreme fascist Zionists, such as Menahem Begin. In the same way his confrontation with the Gulf Shaykdoms and Saudi Arabia drove them into the arms of the US, Britain and Israel. The regime's fear of Khomayni's revolution being exported to Iraq was a supreme example of the regime's stupidity and ignorance of Iraqi society, as the majority of Iraqis, including the Shi'ah, would not accept rule by a non-Iraqi, whether Iranian, Syrian or Egyptian, as Nasir himself discovered much earlier than Khomayni. The sum total of Saddam's regime's efforts in the Arab world has been to the advantage of anti-Arab and Anti-Islamic forces, as the Iraq-Iran war and, even more obviously, the Gulf War, have shown.

More serious than this was the destruction of Iraq as a unified State and, increasingly, as a coherent society. The order of the day is now that the US and Britain, particularly, treat Iraq as bits and pieces of lands and sects, encouraging each of these, using the excuse of Saddam's threatening behaviour, to follow their own objective which is the dismemberment of Iraq, as perhaps desired by the US and Britain, so as to safeguard their long-term interests in the Gulf Shaykdoms.

The consequences of the wedge that the Ba'th regime has driven between the State and society has been catastrophic for Iraq and its people. As the wedge has been



driven deeper and deeper, authority has become more and more an exercise of absolute terror, which has stretched from the Presidential Palace to the smallest village. The destruction of Iraq's civil society by the Ba'th regime has inevitably led to the destruction of the Iraqi state itself. Thus, values such as honesty, dedication to one's profession, justice, law, order, human rights, rights of citizenship and neighbourhood rights have become meaningless, as Saddam's will has overwhelmed Iraqi life.

Once a society has lost all its value system, it becomes very difficult for its citizens to agree on a common proposal for saving their country from extinction. This is the very difficulty faced by Iraqis who are now increasingly rediscovering `Abd al-Karīm Qāsim as the first true pioneer of the Iraqi nation. The future of Iraq, if it is left to the nationalist Iraqis, will most certainly follow the path of Iraqism as opposed to Arabism, fulfilling Qāsim's wishes even fifty years after his death.

## NOTES

- 1- See Colin Legum, Haim Shaked and Daniel Dishon, eds., Middle East Contemporary Survey (MECS) 1978-79, pp. 219-222.
- 2- On `Iraq's search for regional influence, see Ahmad, A.Y., The dialectics of domestic environment and role performance: the foreign policy of Iraq, in A.E.H. Dessouki and B. Korany, The Foreign Policy of Arab States, Boulder Co., 1984. On Syria's search for regional influence, see A.I. Dawisha, Syria and the Lebanese Crisis, London, 1980 and W. Harris, Syria in Lebanon, in *MERIP-Report*, XV, 6 (no.134), 1985, pp. 9-14.
- 3- See Marr, Phebe, The Modern History of Iraq, West View Press, San Francisco and Oxford, 1985, p. 231.
- 4- See Seale, Patrick, Asad, the Struggle for the Middle East, University of California Press, 1989, p.355.
- 5- See E. Karsh and I. Rautsi, Saddam Husayn, p.107.
- 6- *Le Monde*, 12-13 October 1980.
- 7- Baghdad Voice of Masses, Baghdad, 17 October 1980.
- 8- See the statement released on 27 June 1982 by the

Regional Congress of the Iraqi Ba`th Party in the *al-Jumhūriyya* newspaper, Baghdad, 28 June 1982.

- 9- Fu'ād Maṭar, Saddam Husayn, the Man, the Cause and the Future, Third World Center, London, 1981, p. 63.
- 10- Ibid, pp. 64-65.
- 11- Ibid, p. 64.
- 12- *New York Times*, 17 July 1980.
- 13- Ḥasan al-`Alawī, Al-`Irāq, Dawlat al-Mu'assasah al-Sirriyah (Iraq, the State of the Secret Institution), Sharif al-Radi, London, 1990, p 167.
- 14- *Baghdād* (an opposition newspaper issued in London), No. 161, 14 January 1994, p.3.
- 15- Saddam's speech on the first day of his taking power, 17 July 1979.
- 16- See George Orwell's account of the concept of 'double speak' in his Nineteen Eighty-four, London, 1948.
- 17- Ḥasan al-`Alawī, *ibid.*, pp. 170-171.
- 18- According to a reliable source and former member of staff at the Teaching Institute in Baghdad, al-Bakr's



daughter said, during her mourning for her father: "... Saddam was the source of all the disasters in my family." According to al-`Alawī's account, al-Bakr was given an injection which increased the sugar level in his blood and, being a diabetic, caused his death. See Ḥasan al-`Alawī, *ibid.*, p. 172.

- 19- Sluglett, Marion-Farouk and Peter Sluglett, Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship, KPI Ltd, London, 1987, p.209.
- 20- Maṭar makes the point that al-Mashhadī was suspicious of a unanimous transfer of power to Saddam and did not want to vote for it. See Maṭar, *ibid.*, p. 54.
- 21- See, for example, M. Khaddūrī, Socialist Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics Since 1968, Washington, 1978, pp. 57-63. See also C.M. Helms, Iraq: The Eastern Flank of the Arab world, Washington, 1984, pp. 103-125. The same view was expressed in Devlin, John F., The Ba`th Party, A History from its Origins to 1966, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, California, 1975.
- 22- Maṭar, *ibid*, pp. 59-60. In fact none in the Ba`th Party Leadership, Saddam's Cabinet, or even Saddam himself, was qualified for the positions they held.
- 23- See Saddam's statement at the Extraordinary Regional

Conference at the Khālīd Hall, Baghdad, 22 July 1979.

24- *Baghdād*, London, No.163, 16 January 1994, p. 3.  
Saddam employed this method of repression as a means of increasing the pressure on those in prison; if the suspected rivals could not be captured, relatives, including women, children and old people were arrested and tortured to force confessions incriminating those rivals.

25- Baghdad Voice of the Masses, July 15 1970.

26- I have viewed a copy of this film.

- This account draws on *al-Ahrām*, 5 August 1979.

- A few minutes of the tape appeared on American Television, see J. and L. Mylroie, Saddam Husayn and the Crisis in the Gulf, Time Books, Random House, New York, 1990, p. 44.

- The account is quoted in full in al-Tikrītī, B., Muhawalat Iqhtiyāl al-Ra'īs Ṣaḍḍām Husayn (Assassination Attempt against President Saddam Husayn), Baghdad, Maṭbū'at al-Dār al-'Arabiyya, 1982, pp. 139-160.

27- *The Guardian*, London, 11 April 1980.

28- Maṭar, *ibid.*, p. 58.

29- MECS, 1978 - 1979, p. 564.

*New York Times*, 28 July 1979.

*International Herald Tribune*, 30 July 1979.

30- `Alawī, *ibid.*, p. 181.

31- *Ibid.*

32- See Saddam's speech quoted in Maṭar, *ibid.*, p. 62.

33- *Baghdād*, London, No. 163, 16 January 1994, p.3.

- See P. Marr, *ibid.*, p. 245.

34- There is a striking similarity between this kind of method of governing and that followed by al-Hajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī, who was appointed by the Umayyad Caliph `Abd al-Malik as governor of the province of al-Kūfa in 694 AD. It is reported that, once he had executed scores of opponents, al-Hajjāj placed their severed heads on public display and proceeded to address (a speech to) the masses gathered to watch the public execution. See B. Lewis, ed., Islam: From the Prophet Muḥammad to the Capture of



Constantinople, vol. 1, Politics and War, New York, Harper and Row, 1974, pp. 23-24, an annotated English-Language collection of historical documents.

35- See Maṭar, *ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

36- Saddam combined the techniques of Stalin and Hitler; whenever he made a mistake, he would associate others with his failure and whenever he triumphed, he would take all the credit for himself.

37- Baghdad radio, domestic service, 8 August 1979.

38- One of the reasons for the failure of all attempts to overthrow Saddam's regime was that he contrived to implicate the totality of the Ba'th Party in his crimes. Barzān al-Tikrītī, Saddam's half-brother, affirmed this in an interview with the Swedish journalist, Fan Hal, on 28 November 1994:

"... the present government is not a government of thirty or forty persons whom we can try and put in prison ... the government is the Ba'th Party ... its membership is now one million and a half; if we suppose one million of those members are married and have three to four children, that means that there are five million Ba'thists and if we suppose each Ba'thist has one friend, the number of Ba'thists will reach ten million ... and so on. The ring becomes

bigger and bigger, so that any government that comes from outside this ring will not succeed...". The interview is quoted in full in The Iraqi File: a Political and Documentary Review, issued by the Centre for Iraqi Studies, No. 37, January 1995.

- 39- See Bullock, Alan, Hitler and Stalin, Parallel Lives, Harper Collins, London, 1991, p.699.
- 40- See Saddam Husayn's speech to some of the Party Leadership at al-Mustansiriyyah University on 23 July 1979, the day after al-Mashhadī's confession conference.
- See the report of the Regional Command and the RCC, issued on 28 July 1979.
- 41- *The Observer*, London, 5 August 1979.
- 42- Saddam Husayn's speech on the day of the executions, 8 August 1979.
- 43- See *al-Thawrah*, Baghdad, 5 September 1977.
- 44- One of the moves of the autocratic French King, Louis XIV (1643-1715), was to insist on his Minister and Nation calling him Mr France, in a concealed but

measured manoeuvre to justify his tyranny and discourage any uprising against his dictatorial rule. Saddam adopted the same artifice; Iraq is now routinely referred to by Iraqis as 'Saddam's Iraq'.

45- See the United States Interest Section's Foreign Economic Trends Report: Iraq 1984, Baghdad, 1984, p. 2.

46- Even Stalin had the self-effacement to reserve this role for Lenin. See Alan Bullock, Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives, p. 463.

47- Maṭar, pp. 165 ff.

- The Stalinist leadership exercised the same monopoly over the propaganda machine in the 1930s. See Alan Bullock, *ibid.*, pp. 318-319.

48- For more information, see Samīr al-Khalīl, Republic of Fear, the Politics of Modern Iraq, Hutchinson Radius, London, 1989.

49- Speech by Saddam Husayn delivered at a meeting of the General Federation of Iraqi Youth on 15 February 1976. See Saddam Husayn, Social and foreign affairs in Iraq, London, Croom Helm, 1979, pp. 56-57.

50- Children have innocently played a serious role by



giving information about their parents and relatives. This phenomenon has caused the arrests and executions of the many families reported by their children. This has forced all Iraqi people to continually pretend in front of their children that they support and are loyal to the regime, or join the Ba`th Party in order to secure their own and their children's lives.

- 51- Revolutionary Command Council Communiqué, No 13, 1985, issued in Baghdad on 27 January 1985.
- 52- Iraqi News Agency (INA), 30 June 1980.
- 53- *New York Times*, 21 June 1980.
- 54- For more details about these campaigns, see Samīr al-Khalīl, *ibid*.
- 55- Quoted in A. Baram's article, "Qawmiyya and Waṭaniyya in Ba`thi Iraq: The Search for a New Balance," in *Middle East Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, April 1983, p 194.
- 56- See Alan Bullock, Hitler and Stalin, p. 467.
- 57- If Saddam had been sincere in his intentions to recover these stolen national treasures, he could have taken action under the UN General Assembly's 1975 call on countries to return national treasures

to their rightful owners, or at least offered to pay for their return with some of the massive `Iraqi oil reserves wasted on repression, propaganda campaigns and acquisition of weaponry with a view to attacking and antagonising neighbouring countries.

58- Maṭar, op cit, p 224.

59- Tāriq Ḥamad al-`Abd Allāh died in suspicious circumstances two years after Saddam took Power; his death was officially reported as suicide. The fact was, however, that he had been al-Bakr's associate, but worked under Saddam's orders and reported details of all President al-Bakr's activities to Saddam. He thus possessed serious secret information and had to be silenced.

60- *The Times*, London, 17 July 1980.

61- *Al-Thawra* Newspaper, Baghdad, 10 January 1980. For a detailed discussion of Saddam's efforts to create 'a new Mesopotamian man', see A. Baram, "Culture in the Service of Waṭaniyya: The Treatment of Mesopotamian-inspired Art in Ba`thi Iraq," in *Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 17, 1987, pp. 265-313 and "Mesopotamian Identity in Ba`thi Iraq," in *Middle East Studies*, Vol. 19, 1983, p. 425

62- Text in Maṭar, pp. 89-91.

- 63- The Political Report of the Eight Congress of the Ba`th Party in Iraq, January 1974, p. 133.
- 64- Saddam Husayn, Social and foreign affairs in Iraq, London, 1979, p. 73.
- 65- The Political Report, *ibid*, 1974, p. 36.
- 66- See Alan Bullock, Hitler and Stalin, p.375.
- 67- See Gellner, A., Patrons and Clients, London, 1977, p. 3.
- 68- See Peter Heine, "Political Parties, Institutions and Administration Structures," in Derek Hopwood, Habib Ishow and Tomas Koszinowski, eds., `Iraq: Power and Society, 1982, p. 48.
- 69- See C.M. Helms, Iraq: The Eastern Flank of the Arab world, Washington, 1984, pp. 84-85.



## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

**THE FIRST GULF WAR  
THE IRAQ-IRAN WAR**

## Political development in the area before the war

Iran's ancient and contemporary history has affected the Middle East and Iraq in particular. In this chapter I will discuss events in Iran so as to clarify the political circumstances and conflicting foreign interests that lay behind Saddam's decision to go to war. His reasons for the war were unreal and could not justify such a gamble, serving the interests only of other regional and outside powers, particularly Israel. There is a thesis that considers the Islamic Revolution in Iran as a preliminary stage for a coup, intended to attack stability in the area, (1) made by persons such as Ibrāhim Yazdi, Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, Bani Sadr and Amir Intizām, Khomeini's supporters. It accuses Yazdi of being an American agent and of being in continuous contact with Richard Katum, Professor of Political Science at Pittsburgh University. It also considers that the basic role in this plot, on behalf of Arab Governments, was played by a secret organisation called the Brotherhood, which adopted Islamic fundamentalism as a strong weapon for implementing its programme in the third world. It chose Iran as the first place to implement its plans, because of its favourable circumstances, and then planned to work in other parts of the area.

The fact that such great powers as America did not take any position vis-à-vis events in Iran, particularly after opposition to the Shah increased, and that they

declined to help the Shah seriously, as they did in 1953, suggests that his downfall was due to external circumstances and that foreign interference had a hand in Iran's revolution. The corruption of the Shah's Regime and its repression was not the real reason for its fall. Most third world countries have repressive regimes. Hence, there may be occasions for subscribing to this thesis, but it is not in accordance with the already mentioned American strategy during the Nixon Administration, with Kissinger, during the seventies, which was to support the Shah and to supply him with weapons, (2) so as to make him the defender of Western interests in the Gulf, following the British withdrawal in 1971. The Shah's deal with Britain gave him half of Abū Muūsā and the greater and lesser Tumbs in the strait of Hormuz, so as to defend the strait and become the policeman of the area. (3)

It seems as though the above strategies and unlimited support of the West, with the fourfold increase in oil prices in 1973, (4) led the Shah to become arrogant, conceited and megalomaniac, ignoring the feelings and sensitivities of regional and world powers, as follows:

- (1) The Shah continued until the last days of his regime to say that he would make Iran the fifth largest industrial power in the world. (5) This might explain his fever in buying weapons, which made the Soviet Union feel concerned about the Iranian build-up and the increase in the United States' involvement in



Iran, which it saw as a threat to its southern border. This may have led the Soviet Union to invade Afghanistan, which, in turn, led the United States to arm Pakistan, fearing that Pakistan might follow Afghanistan. (6)

- (2) In his book, Towards a Greater Civilisation, the Shah painted a picture of his regime and his society as unparalleled, superior even to Western society, which the Shah considered to be dying; he criticised western leaders, their policies and their societies openly on several occasions. (7)
- (3) The Shah began to expand his influence by strengthening his relationship with the South African regime, ignoring the feelings of the Black African nations, which were beginning to have some importance on the world scene at that time.
- (4) His dealing with Arab States, in particular the Gulf States, was based on arrogance, and he made continuous efforts to interfere in their internal affairs, so as to impose his expansionist aims, which were contrary to western interests. (8) In fact the CIA described the Shah in a report in 1976 as megalomaniac. Hence the great powers and their allies in the area, through their agents inside Iran, in addition to a western media campaign, worked against the Shah and weakened him, each according to its own interests, as follows:

- (a) A radio station in Baku, the Capital of Azerbaijan in the Soviet Union, under the name of the Voice of Nationalist Iran, began broadcasting to inflame revolution against the Shah. This radio station called for an Iranian revolution to destroy American Imperialism, whose interest the Shah served. It followed the Khomeini line until the Shah fell, so as to spite the Americans.
- (b) The BBC, in its broadcasts to the Middle East, completely covered Khomeini's announcements during his stay in Paris. The BBC was probably moved by a desire to take revenge on the Americans who had taken the British position in Iran.(10) Such news of Khomeini as the BBC broadcast was extremely popular and was a source of considerable profit, in accordance with the capitalist logic that the media are a commodity. The BBC was very effective in discomfiting the Shah and his Generals and so nourished the revolution.
- (c) The reports of the United States President, his adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and the CIA affirmed a few months before the Shah's downfall, that the situation in Iran was no cause for worry, and that they were in full control.(11)

This was to mislead the Shah, who was meeting every day with the British and American Ambassadors to discuss the situation and events that frightened him. This policy was to prevent the Shah from rescuing the situation before it was too late. They were encouraging him purposely to make mistakes which would lead to his further weakness in the eyes of the Iranian People, who had begun to mock the regime openly.(12) America's superficial support for the Shah during the uprising was to deceive the Saudis and friendly Gulf Sheikhs into believing that America did not abandon its allies for its own interests. What confirms America's lack of serious support for the Shah is the meeting held on 5 January 1979 in Guadeloupe between Britain, western Germany, the United States and France, to discuss events in Iran and the situation of the Shah, so as to take a united stand which would enable them to serve their interests.(13) Sources close to the French President announced that the United States had known of the serious developments in Iran since November, but had failed to alert the Shah. General Huyser (Deputy Commander of NATO forces in Europe) was sent to Tehran on 7 January 1979, two days after the Guadeloupe meeting to implement the plan that had been drawn up by America and its allies, so as to save the situation in Iran.

All the above clearly show that America and its allies wanted to get rid of the Shah by helping the Islamic



Revolution to succeed for the moment; they were ready to destroy it in the future. But it seems that they overshot their target and that the Islamic Revolution became a serious threat to their interests. So the great Powers and all their allies began to move:

- (1) The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on 27 December 1979, to prevent any American military action and to force America to share their influence in Iran in just the same way as they had shared it with the British before. What supports this thesis is President Carter's statement after the invasion:

**"....we knew of the importance of the Soviet Union's military preparations, we were not taken by surprise."**

This means that they knew of the invasion, but could not reach an understanding with the Soviet Union.(14) The Soviet Union also took military steps in the Caucasus, on the border with Iran. There was also Soviet mobilisation on the Soviet/Afghan border. This measure, in particular, has a strong significance because the main part of the Islamic Resistance in Afghanistan was during that period in the Eastern area. It confirms that the Soviet Union would not allow the Americans to turn Iran again into a large base for listening and observation directed against the Soviet Union.(15) It also prevented Iranian

revolutionary support reaching the Afghan Muslim rebels. Thus, American hands were tied after the Soviet Union adopted such measures; they were taken to deter the Americans from interfering in Iran, when they seemed likely to refuse to share influence in Iran and to consider it as American.

- (2) For the United States the situation was highly complex, with Brzezinski favouring a military intervention to save the situation, particularly after the taking of the American hostages in the American Embassy in November 1979.(16) This was a cause of disagreement with Cyrus Vance, the Secretary of State, who preferred a peaceful solution. Since the Americans did not want to share Iran with the Soviet Union and could not bring down the Islamic regime in a coup, so as to bring back stability in the area, the question was how the situation of the American hostages was to be solved, without compromising American interests, in accords with Carter's announcement,(17) while also making a stand against the Islamic Revolution and the Soviet threat.

This will be analysed in the next section, Interests in the War.

## Interests in the war

Evidence in the last section confirmed that the great powers and their allies contributed to the development of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, in order to bring down the Peacock Throne and force Shah Muḥammad Reza Pahlavi, after a prolonged struggle throughout 1978, to leave the country on 16 January 1979.

The Ayatollah took over power in Iran in February 1980, backed by the entire Iranian people, who were amazed by the overwhelming victory over the Shah.(18)

Soon after assuming power the Iranian Mullahs took the following steps:

- (1) They tore up the Shah's agreements with the United States and Israel.
- (2) They broke off diplomatic relations with Israel and stopped the flow of oil to it.
- (3) They withdrew from the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO). (19)
- (4) They stopped the flow of oil to South Africa.
- (5) They turned over the Israeli embassy in Tehran to



`Arafāt's PLO.

In addition they announced that the Islamic Revolution in Iran was an indigenous movement, determined to affirm itself against outsiders, eastern or western. The Mullahs then went further by denouncing the United States as the "Great Satan", seizing the US embassy in Iran and holding its diplomats hostage. Moreover, the radical clerics in Iran began to call for the exporting of Iran's Islamic Revolution and to campaign for the rights of disadvantaged Shi'ite communities in the Muslim world. On the regional level, al-Asad made moves to ally himself with Revolutionary Iran and stepped outside the Arab National mainstream. (20)

The extremist policies of revolutionary Iran and the clerics' demands caused tremors in the regional balance of power, and gave rise to many uprisings in the region, as follows:

- (1) In November 1979 the grand mosque at Mecca was seized by some Muslim extremists. This event alarmed the Saudi Royal Family, who asked for western protection, to contain Khomeini's Iran, which had begun greatly to threaten their regime. Also, widespread riots exploded in the oil-rich Saudi province of Ḥasaā', causing severe casualties, which led the Saudi authorities to close the Shi'ite areas. Similar disorders took place in Bahrain during the summer of 1979 and the spring of

1980. In Kuwait, as well, many terrorist attacks occurred.(21) On 1 December 1981 a massive revolt broke out again in Bahrain. The Sheikh of Bahrain would have fallen if the riots had not been ruthlessly suppressed with the help of the British officer on the Island. Three thousand were arrested, in addition to many casualties.

- (2) Iranian appeals fomented the Muslims in Turkey. Disorder increased to such an extent that it started to threaten the regime. So the United States planned a coup on 12 September 1980, ten days before the Iraq-Iran war, to bring Turkish generals to power in order to control the Islamic uprising.(22)
- (3) The Muslims in the Soviet Republics insisted on showing their support for Revolutionary Iran by relaying Khomeini's addresses and contributing to his cause. This led Soviet officials to encourage the minorities in Iran against the Islamic Revolution.(23)
- (4) The Afghan Muslims, who had received aid and support from the Americans and their agents in the area against the communist regime in Afghanistan, rebelled and established an Islamic Republic on the model of Pakistan. They began to change their minds after the coming to power of the Mullahs, who encouraged them to reproduce the situation in Iran.(24)

(5) On the Iraqi side, the underground Da`wah party and Ayatollah al-Sadr were galvanised by the Iranian Revolution at first and showed their support for the new regime. In an unthinking congratulatory telegram to Khomeini al-Sadr expressed his opinion openly, challenging the Ba`th regime:

**"...other tyrants have yet to see their day of reckoning." (25)**

People demonstrated in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbalā' in favour of Ayatollah Khomeini and al-Sadr, followed by armed operations throughout Iraq, particularly in Baghdad, against some prominent Iraqi officials. Saddam's response to the event was quick and ruthless. He effectively crushed the Shi`ite unrest on 19 April 1980. Al-Sadr and his sister, Bint al-Hudā, were executed, after being held under house arrest in Najaf, and hundreds of Shi`ite political prisoners, most of them members of the Da`wah party, were also executed. By this move, Saddam seemed to be seeking to exploit these riots, to provoke rivalry with the new Iranian regime. Indeed, as soon as the news about the executions of al-Sadr and his sister reached Iran, there were prolonged demonstrations there. Khomeini called on the Iraqi Shi`ites to overthrow Saddam's government.

In the political circumstances caused by the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the instability of the new regime



seemed to offer an ominous invitation to the Soviet Union to meddle further in Gulf affairs, in particular after the invasion of Afghanistan and the failure of many American attempts to change the regime and to save the American situation in Iran.(26)

The Soviet Union seemed to be deliberately exploiting this political dilemma to challenge America, by not supporting the American call for the upholding of International Law, after Iran had seized its embassy, and also seeking a further resolution threatening Iran with economic sanctions if it did not release the hostages. Moreover, the Soviet Union took military steps in the Caucasus on the border with Iran, and mobilised its 66th armoured division in the area of Herat on the Afghanistan border, as noted in the last section.(27)

These Soviet manoeuvres, the tipping of the strategic situation in this vital region against American interests and concern for the lives of the American hostages in Tehran, led American policy-makers to look for a way out of the impasse. In their attempts to shape a regional security framework to rescue the American situation, they had the strongest external interest in stirring up war against Iran, especially if such a war would achieve all their regional and international objectives with no direct intervention on their part.

Thus, it seems that the increasing skirmishes on the

Iraqi border which escalated into war after Brzezinski's commitment, were the framework for saving the US strategic doctrine. The following points bear witness to this thesis:

- (1) Bani Sadr, the first President of Iran after the revolution, told Eric Rouleau of Le Monde that Iran had been forewarned of the Iraqi attack by an intelligence report of secret talks in Paris in the summer of 1980, in which Israelis, the United States military experts, Iranian exiles and Iraqis had taken part.(28)
- (2) Another statement from Bani Sadr claims that the Iraq-Iran war was planned by America, and that a secret meeting took place in Jordan between Saddam and President Carter's National Security Adviser, Brzezinski, to shape the plans.(29)
- (3) Brzezinski announced that the US was facing a wider strategic challenge which would require a similarly wide response: he tried to concentrate all his efforts on policies designed to pursue and maximise American power.(30) He then admitted that the Iraq-Iran war created in Iran a need for America's spare parts, and he held out this option as a way of enticing the Iranians into a prompt settlement.(31)
- (4) According to an Iraqi staff officer who participated in the preparation for the war, there were secret

American delegations before and after the war to conclude secret military contracts and commitments with the Iraqi intelligence department, which was headed by Barzān al-Tikrītī, whilst the Ministry of Defence was supposed to take care of these commitments and delegations. (32)

The other party mostly involved in activating the war with Iran was Israel, for these reasons:

- Its alliance with the Shah had collapsed and Asad had moved to take its place as Iran's regional ally.
- Khomeini had called on the Muslim world to liberate Jerusalem. This constituted a real danger for Israel's national security.
- If revolutionary Iran was involved in some external clash, it would need arms, and because of its negative attitude towards the United States, it was no longer able to get them from it. It would be looking for alternative supplies. This opportunity might enable Israel to establish some sort of relationship with the new regime. Thus, many Israeli delegations paid numerous secret visits to Tehran to achieve this strategic objective which, a few years later, precipitated the United States into the Iran-gate scandal. (33)



- Israeli concern was always to prevent a concentration of strength on its eastern front; thus the Iraq-Iran war would neutralise Iraq and divert its growing military capability away from Israel.
- As preparations for the *Tammūz* attack on the Iraqi reactor began, a major difference emerged among Israeli decision-makers, who were conscious their bombing Baghdad might prompt Iraq and Iran to call off their war and unite against them. This threatened their national security.(34) This was despite the fact that Begin's doctrine considered the destruction of the Iraqi reactor as one of Israel's supreme national goals, and he would not allow any Arab state to develop an offensive nuclear capability.

It seems clear that a war between Iraq and Iran was greatly in Israel's favour. However, whatever foreign and regional parties were involved in the war, Saddam had his own pressing reasons for challenging his eastern neighbour:

- (1) His ambitions played a large part in the war. He was making a bid to be the principal focus of attention. He wanted to be the Arabs' hero by subjecting the Gulf States to his will and by imposing his strategy on this vital region.(35) His strategy began with the

fall of the Shah, and he was encouraged in it by the following:

- (a) His high self-esteem and his belief in the insurmountable economic might of his country, in particular after the rise in oil prices in 1980.
- (b) His control over the Iraqi state, which seemed to mark it out for greatness at a time when his regional rivals were preoccupied, Syria paralysed by internal terrorism; Egypt out of line with the other Arabs; Turkey in the hands of a military junta; Iran struggling with revolutionary turmoil; Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States afraid of the Iranian threat and its implications for their own domestic security, In addition, outsiders could never contemplate the prospect of a victorious Iran. Thus Saddam offered to assume the role of a protector of the weak Arab monarchies and confused outsiders.
- (c) At the beginning of the 1980s, a report by an oil expert was submitted to Saddam, which stated that OPEC had transferred its leadership to the Arab States, because they were the main oil producers. But, because the Gulf oil producers, despite their large oil production, did not have the political power that would make them effective on the world scene, Iraq was the one that could

achieve this, particularly after the isolation of Egypt because of the Camp David accord with Israel. Therefore Iraq could create an Arab bloc to help achieve Arab economic and political independence and to help the Palestinian cause. This was a goal that might be exploited by Saddam to achieve primacy over the Arab world.

- (d) Many reports indicate that Saddam was trying to create a network of allies and friends with third world countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Saddam provided them with aid, loans and oil for less than the OPEC price, to strengthen Iraqi influence in the world.(36)
- (2) Most outside observers, Arab and western alike, assumed that Saddam had an important and pressing motive for the war against Iran, since it was certainly defensive. They described his war as pre-emptive, since the regime was fighting for its survival. It is true that the revolutionary regime in Iran, from its earliest days in power, sought to overthrow the Ba`th regime. Even though Iran's revolutionary zeal was directed against the Gulf states and other states in the region, in order to export the revolution to undermine the Gulf authorities, it still made Iraq the primary target for the export of its Islamic revolution. Also Khomeini's Shi'ite revanchisme was threatening the integrity of



Iraq, in particular since the majority of Iraqis were Shi'ite and in sympathy with the Islamic system in Iran. Even so, Saddam was able to eliminate any kind of political, religious or nationalist movement completely. Indeed, he eliminated the Shi'ite religious movement in Najaf and Karbalā' in 1977, as already noted. After the Islamic revolution, which aroused the Iraqi Shi'ites and caused some unrest in Iraq, Saddam moved quickly to eliminate this source of disorder by executing al-Sadr, and his sister, which was a heavy blow to the Shi'ite community in Iraq and around the Islamic world, and he discouraged the underground religious party, al-Da'wah.(37)

- (3) Many sources for the conflict between Iraq and Iran refer to the disagreement over territory and the profound mutual antipathy that is said to characterise the attitudes of Iraqis and Iranians.(39) Indeed, Saddam Husayn intended to wring territorial concessions from Iran by tearing up the 1975 Algiers Agreement, which was extorted from him under the pressure of the Kurdish war, as already noted, and which forced him to yield to the Shah partial control of the Shaṭṭ al-'Arab waterway.

However, the sequence of events indicates that the above factors were not the dominating factors. The Iraqi regime formally announced that they were, in order to conceal the contingency plan to rescue regional and

international interests, which had suffered a heavy blow from Revolutionary Iran; this provided the real casus belli of the Iraq-Iran war.

In the next section we will examine the preparations for the war and indicate how much outsiders were involved and led the Iraqi regime to pursue their interests.

## Preparations for the war

Tension between Iran and Iraq had been increasing since February 1979, after Ayatollah Khomeini took over power in Iran, threatened the pro-western regimes in the area and aroused the western phobia of Islamic fundamentalism. According to a Sunday Times report, Saddam attempted to attack Iran in July 1979.(39) As he knew very well, the Iraqi nation, with a Shi'ite majority, would not support him and sacrifice themselves for him, just to prop up his personal rule. He needed to pave the way for this big move, so he made use of his special stick and carrot policy, a tactic he had always used successfully since the early 1970s when he made a gratuitous decision concerning his political position.

From this standpoint, we can see clearly from the following massive preparations, prior to the war with Iran, that Saddam was planning something serious:

- (1) Setting up the Iraqis: He directed all the mass media to give a certain message to the Iraqis, indicating the direction in which he wanted events to go. Apart from the personality cult which resulted in an incredible peak of propaganda and forced flattery, he used the sectarian weapon to arouse rancour and hostility between the two nations. For this reason, he called his war with Iran Al-Qadisiyyah, to recall



memories of the Arabs' victory over the Persians in AD 637, under the Arab commander Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, whom Saddam intended to replace in the new Qādisiyyah and teach the Magian Persians another lesson.(40)

A series of editorials in the Iraqi press and some broadcasts on the radio and television set up hatred and bitter feelings between the Iraqi and Iranian nations, and many books were published and theses written, focused on the same subject. A film was made of the battle of Qādisiyyah, depicting the Arabs' victory over the Persians. To challenge the Imām Khomeini's pressure in accusing him of being an unbeliever, Saddam used the same weapon. He pointed out that the Ba'th party drew on Islam for its ideology and accused the Imām Khomeini of using the weapon of sectarianism to divide the Muslims instead of uniting them. He paid frequent visits to various Shi'ite cities and holy places; he proclaimed that he was a directed descendant of the Imām 'Ali, hence of the prophet Muḥammad. He wore the traditional Shi'ite robe 'Abayah. To attract Iraqi support for his regime, he broadcast telegrams from religious leaders, and from Arabs and Kurds, with their pledge to him and his revolution. Thus once the war broke out, the Iraqis at large were convinced that they were fighting for their own territory against Iranian aggression, together with their faithful leader.

- (2) On the economic level: During the months preceding the war, a large and ambitious development programme was carried out by Saddam's regime. Construction projects of all kinds began. Public spending rose from £21 billion, prior to the war, to £29 billion, after the war broke out. The budget for civilian imports was increased, to prevent commodity shortages.(41) Due to the world oil boom in 1979 and 1980, Iraqi oil export revenues rose from £1 billion in 1972 to £21 billion in 1979 and £26 billion in 1980.(42) Saddam wanted to impress on the Iraqi people that when the war occurred, it would not affect ordinary life, and to prove to his nation that he could wage the war and maintain a strong business-as-usual atmosphere at the same time.
- (3) Setting up the military force: From the mid-1970s, Saddam entered into an arms race with Iran, with the support of outside powers. He worked out a long-range plan that included a massive build-up of conventional weapons and the development of Iraqi strategic weapon industries, intending to construct a powerful modern Arab army and war industry.(43)

According to an Iraqi army officer's account, the army was prepared for the war two months before its outbreak in July 1980, with discussions of the Iraqi plan for the war, in particular the army plan, between the Defence Minister, `Adnān Khayr Allāh, and the

divisional commanders. When the Defence Minister visited army units he announced openly that war with Iran had become almost certain.(44) Intensive training programmes were devised to mobilise the soldiers for the war and to get them to accept the idea of the war. There was a large re-deployment throughout the army; officers and commanders in sensitive positions were replaced with others absolutely loyal to Saddam.(45) The army received a massive salary rise, in particular the officers, who also obtained priority for a free car, a free plot of land and a free loan to build a house.(46)

One of the preparations for war, which the International Journal of the Armed Forces noted, was that Saddam invited senior NATO officers to discuss his war plans, informing them that questions of control of the Gulf for the next fifty years had been settled.(47)

The Guardian also noted Iraqi attempts to buy anti-tetanus serum in August 1980, two months before the war started. The amount that Iraq sought was about ten times the annual United Kingdom consumption, and the population of Britain was about four times that of Iraq.(48) This indicated that Saddam intended to use this serum for military purposes.

(4) Focus on Iraq's great heritage: Saddam concentrated on



Iraq's glorious history throughout the pre-Islamic and Islamic period, as noted before, to emphasise the greatness of Iraq, its special identity within the Arab world, and his role in the effort to revive its civilisation. In one of his speeches, eight months prior to the war, he represented Iraq as equivalent to a super-power:

**"...Iraq is as great as China, as great as the Soviet Union and as great as the United States." (49)**

Moreover, in his speech at the Regional Festival of popular Arab poetry on 23 April, Saddam directed a strong message to Bani Sadr, who threatened Saddam with military action because of his interference in Iranian internal affairs, the deterioration in the situation on the border, and his harsh repression of the Shi'ite community in Iraq. Saddam said:

**"... I say to my enemies great and small, if they imagine the land of Iraq will be open to them once they have overcome half a million men in khaki, they are wrong. Millions upon millions will be born to defend the soil of Iraq. Bani Sadr deludes himself if he thinks the Iranian army can walk into Iraq. Not even the Army of the Soviet Union or the United States can walk into Iraq."**

(5) Setting up on a wider regional level: The period prior to the war marks the culmination of Saddam's attempt to rally the Arab States behind him. In his speech on 8 February 1980, the seventeenth anniversary of the 1963 coup, he issued the pan-Arab call which sought to solidify the Arab Nation and to rally Arab defence against external aggression.(50) This step was a clear indication that Saddam had decided to go to war. He had begun to draw closer to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the other Gulf States by the second half of the 1980s. At the end of February 1979, one month after the fall of the Shah, he signed a mutual security agreement with Saudi Arabia. After the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in late December 1979, and when President Carter declared that the United States was against foreign aggression, Saddam declared as well two weeks later, that Iraq would never allow Saudi Arabia to be occupied by the Soviet Union.(51) This move indicated clearly Saddam's new moderate stand and his new role, the pro-western defender of the Arabs and the protector of western interests.(52)

In the Palestinian cause, Saddam moved from his ultra-radical anti-Zionist stance, to a more moderate stance. His relations with Jordan also improved significantly.

Apart from these preparations, Saddam welcomed to Baghdad Iranian opposition politicians such as Shahpur

Bakhtiār, the former Iranian Prime Minister, who was ousted from Iran in 1979, and former Generals of the Shah, such as Ali Oveysi, the former martial-law governor of Tehran.(53) All were seeking the support of Iran's traditional enemy to get rid of the Mullahs' regime and return home in triumph. Saddam also attempted to foment rebellion among minorities in Iran. He gave support in weapons and money openly to dissident groups in Khuzistan and Iranian Kurdistan in order to put pressure on the Iranian Government.(54) This Iraqi interference in Iranian internal affairs increased to the extent that the Iranian Foreign Minister, Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, the Iranian Minister of Defence and the Iranian President Bani Sadr warned him that Iran would go to war if there was any further provocation from the Iraqi side.(55)

The most effective step taken by Saddam to stir up Khomeini's regime was the execution of the distinguished Shi'ite leader in Iraq, Sayyid Muḥammad Bakr al-Ṣadr, and his sister, which was followed by a ruthless campaign against the Shi'ite religious movement and the 'Ulemā' in the holy city of Najiaf, as noted in the last chapter. Then about a hundred thousand Iraqis were expelled to Iran in brutal conditions, under the pretext that they were of Iranian origin, according to the Revolutionary Command Council's resolution in June 1980, which announced that any Iranian family which proved to be disloyal to the Iraqi Revolution and the homeland was subject to deportation, even if it held Iraqi Nationality Certification.(56)



These were counter-measures, as the Iraqi regime claimed, because of the al-Mustanshiriyyah attempt to assassinate the vice-president, Ṭāriq `Azīz, by a naturalised Iraqi of Iranian origin, and were accompanied with ruthless measures against the `Ulemā' of the Iraqi Shi'ite community. They irritated the regime in Tehran increasingly, in particular Ayatollah Khomeini, who called, on 4 June 1980, on the Iraqi Shi'ites to overthrow Saddam's government. The Iranian regime also started to support the Kurds in the North. Clashes on the borders increased between the two sides. In August these clashes escalated into heavy fighting, involving tank and artillery duels and air strikes. By this stage, Iranian-Iraqi relations entered a new phase, that for which Saddam had paved the way since he had attained power; he told the Iraqi people, who did not know what was secretly planned, that he had no alternative, and that he had to contain the Iranian threat by resort to arms.

## The course of the war

Relations between Iraq and Iran rapidly deteriorated, with their armies periodically clashing along the border.(57) Claims and counter-claims were made by both sides. On 7 September, Saddam accused Iran of shelling Iraqi border towns from territories that, according to the Algiers Accord, belonged to Iraq, and ordered the immediate withdrawal of Iranian forces from these areas, such as Zayn al-Qaws and Sayf Sa'd. Soon Saddam moved to "liberate" them. A week later he announced the abrogation of the Algiers Accord.(58) This move was preceded by sabotage and terrorist attacks inside both countries -as we have seen in the last section- which reached a critical point, with both countries threatening war in the case of further interference in internal affairs or frontier violations. Few could dispute that the course of events would escalate into total war. From Saddam's point of view, a quick military action would seriously affect the Iranian Revolutionary Regime, whose response might be in kind, or perhaps an indication of willingness to reach a settlement in accordance with his ambitions and make some territorial concessions, since it was weak, divided and isolated. However, Iran had a population three times larger than that of Iraq, the distance to Tehran from Baghdad was 850 kilometres, of which 650 were inside Iran, and the common border was 1300 km long. It was a critical error of Saddam's to imagine that he would ever be able to defeat

Iran, and it made him pay a high price. A month after the outbreak of hostilities when he was at the height of his success, he admitted:

"....Despite our victory, if you were to ask me now if we should have gone to war, I would say that it would have been better if we had not gone to war. But we had no other choice." (59)

However, a few days after Saddam's declaration of the abrogation of the Algiers Accord, the Iraqi forces crossed into Iran, launching the Gulf War on a course of many phases of defeat and victory for both sides.

**(1) The Iraqi Invasion Stage:** This began with Saddam's rapid advances into Iranian territory, occupying a strip of about 800 miles from Khurramshahr in the south to Qaṣr Shīrīn in the north. Saddam concentrated on taking and holding the southern Iranian border province of Khuzistan, "rich in oil", and incorporating it into Iraq; this would have given him access to the Gulf. Saddam's main spokesman, Ṭāha Yāsīn Ramaḍān, declared openly that his underlying purpose was to incorporate Khuzistan into Iraq.(60)

The response to this threat, at the beginning of the war, was greater than Saddam had expected. Iran regrouped its forces and launched a series of damaging air attacks on Iraq, in particular against Baghdad, the Iraqi oil installation near Kirkuk in the North and the industrial



and oil installations in Basrah in the south. These unexpected attacks caused the closure of the oil-producing centres, because of varying degrees of damage, and prevented Iraq exporting its oil from its southern fields throughout the rest of the war.(61) Thus, in late October, Saddam ordered his troops to stop advancing and to take up defensive positions, so that the war became a static slogging match.

Saddam managed to stand fast until the middle of 1981, when the pendulum swung in Iran's favour, after the initiation of large scale Iranian attacks on the Iraqi forces, which pushed them back to the border. This retreat was embarrassing to Saddam personally. In June 1982, he ordered, as an attempt to save face, an Iraqi withdrawal to the international border, using the Israeli invasion of Lebanon as a justification.(62)

Saddam's limited success at the beginning of the war appears to have depended largely on the following factors:

- (a) Iraq's strong accumulated foreign exchange reserves;
- (b) The weakness and divisions within the various groups in Iran;
- (c) The propaganda war, which mobilised the Iraqi nation, in particular the Shi'ites, to take the

side of their country rather than that of Islam, and which portrayed the war as a struggle between the forces of the Arabs and the Persians. Only the most religious Shi'ites went over to the Iranian side, especially after the regime had given generous financial compensation to the families of those killed at the front.

(d) Massive financial and political support from the Gulf States and the pro-Western countries in the region such as:

- Saudi Arabia, which used its ports for the shipment of goods to and from Iraq. It also allowed its territory to be used for the construction of an Iraqi pipeline to the Red Sea. (63)
- Kuwait, which effectively replaced Basrah as Iraq's major port and sold some of Iraq's oil on Iraq's behalf.
- Jordan, which from the beginning of the war urged Iraq to stand firm. The port of Aqaba was open to Iraq's civilian and military suppliers. Jordan regarded the Iranian Revolution as a deadly threat in the region. (64)
- Egypt, which supplied Iraq from the beginning of

the conflict with weapons and training, despite its being isolated by the anti-Egyptian campaign, led by Saddam himself since 1978, after Sadāt's peace treaty with Israel.

- Turkey, which allowed its ports to be used for the shipment of goods from Iraq, and allowed its territory to be used for the construction of an Iraqi pipeline to export Iraqi oil.
- Sudan, from which troops were sent by President Numairi, to assist Iraq early in the war.

In general, without the above support, in particular the massive financial support from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Gulf states, which was estimated at \$1 billion a month, (65) Saddam's growing economic plight and deteriorating political situation would have been much more serious.

The international attitude and that of the Super Powers to the conflict during this period were as follows:

- (a) The United States had no desire to promote an Iraqi victory in the war, fearing that too much success would increase Saddam's ambitions and pose another serious threat in the area, not less than that posed by Iranian fundamentalism. Besides, an Iranian defeat would increase the



threat of Iran's being pushed into the arms of the Soviet Union. Thus, when Iran appeared to be defeated on the battlefield, and because the United States had no diplomatic presence in Tehran, the Washington administration approved Israel's covert arms sales to Tehran to bolster the Khomeini regime.(66)

- (b) The Soviet Union's attitude to the Iraqi conflict with Iran was ambivalent. It was happy to see the United States expelled from Iran, but it was panicked by the rapid advance of Iraqi arms into Iranian territory at the beginning of the war. Its response was to impose an arms embargo on Baghdad. At the same time, the Soviets encouraged minorities in Iran against the Islamic regime in order to weaken it; its security was threatened by the possibility of a fundamental Islamic movement being exported to the Soviet Islamic Republics.(67)

- (c) France was the second country for Iraqi military supplies after the Soviet Union. It assisted Iraq with arms technology, training and logistical support throughout the war period, including co-operation in the fields of intelligence and security. This contributed greatly to Iraqi success in the early period, besides proving a decisive factor in the eventual outcome of the

war in Iraq's favour.(68)

**(2) The Iraqi Defeat Stage:** This began when the Iranian regime started to gain control and regrouped its forces, launching a large-scale counter-offensive on all fronts and pushing Iraqi troops out of occupied territory.  
(69)

This Iranian success was largely due to the following factors:

(a) Iraq: military strategy was determined by Saddam Husayn only. The front-line commanders were paralysed. Any military action was rigidly controlled to the last detail by Saddam.(70) His lack of any military knowledge and experience contributed to the inept strategy and tactics of the Iraqi forces,(71) but those who paid the price for his misjudgements, which caused the defeat, were the army commanders and officers. Thus, after each Iraqi defeat, following the Iranian incursions, many high-ranking officers were executed and many others purged. Saddam himself admitted having executed one brigade and two divisional commanders.(72)

(b) The morale of the Iranian army, both regular troops and irregular revolutionary guards, was much higher than Iraqi morale, despite the

massive casualties on the Iranian side. This was because the Iraqis were beginning to question why they should be sacrificed in a war pursued for purposes that might be better achieved by other means, particularly after Saddam's humiliating announcement of withdrawal from occupied Iranian territory, following the Iranian counter-offensive, and his frequent requests for a ceasefire, which were rejected by the Iranian regime unless he himself resigned his power. This thesis is borne out by the higher number of Iraqi prisoners of war taken than Iranian.

For Saddam the result was bitter; after severe human losses, large numbers taken as prisoners of war, a damaged economy, dissatisfaction in all quarters, civilian and military, with his regime, the balance of power and the border were essentially what they had been at the start of the war, or even worse.

So Saddam's dreams of defeating or weakening the Iranians, so that they might be prepared to co-operate with him, on similar lines to those on which the Shah had been dealing with him before, were dashed. His dream of having the south of Iran, Khuzistan, with its oil resources and its access to the Gulf was also dashed. The locus of the Non-aligned Nations' conference, in September 1982, was changed from Baghdad to New Delhi, after his massive preparations for this event, at which he expected to become



the leader of the Non-aligned World for the next four years.

On the domestic front the mood everywhere had become sad and hopeless. Feelings of bitterness against Saddam spread among Iraqis, for having involved Iraq in a war against a nation well known for its arrogance and stubbornness. Saddam faced many attempts on his life.(73) To deal with this situation and to ensure his political survival, he took the following steps:

- (a) He augmented his personality cult-campaign, which had begun when he took power and had grown with the passage of time. In the strains of the war, this campaign was accompanied by a public-relations campaign emphasising his desire for peace and placing the responsibility for the continuation of the war on the Iranian leadership.
- (b) He called a Party Congress to elect a new regional command. The members had a long-standing personal loyalty to Saddam.(74)
- (c) There was a new purge of the RCC. Eight of the sixteen members were removed and two of these lost their lives, Sa`dūn Ghaydān, the Minister of Communications and Transport, and Riyād Ibrāhīm Ḥusayn, the Minister of Health.(75)

(d) He renewed the National Front scheme and announced a general amnesty for communists in an attempt to woo the Left, asking for an alliance with them, as he had always done in his desperate moments, when his position faced a threat, (76) and at the same time, to show the Soviet Union his good will, after its reversed attitude to arming his regime again, following the Iraqi armed forces retreat and the Iranian incursions into their territory. (77)

(e) He made changes in the Party's ideology. The commitment to socialism was significantly reduced. The issue of liberating Palestine was not mentioned any more. (78) Iraqi nationalism was given precedence over Arab nationalism.

On the Arab level, Saddam began to play the role of a victim, who had sacrificed his armed forces to defend Arab interests against the Iranian threat, in order to make the Arabs feel responsible for his political survival. The war had been a serious drain on the economies of the pro-western states, in particularly the Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. It was their duty to continue to finance Saddam's regime, since otherwise they would never be able properly to defeat Iran. (79)

Saddam's pro-western neighbours, Jordan and Turkey,

gave Saddam great help in the difficult moment after his retreat, in order to bolster his regime;(80) his relations with Syria had deteriorated to their lowest point, after its move to close the oil pipeline.

The Iraqi reverse in the war affected international attitudes at large. The United States could not accept any Iranian victory which paved the way for the establishing of a fundamentalist regime in Iraq. Since it had no diplomatic presence in Baghdad at that time, it took the following steps:

- (a) The Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, warned Iran strongly against expanding the war;
- (b) The US gave permission for arms sales to Iraq by its friends and allies;(81)
- (c) Baghdad was removed from the US government's list of states supporting international terrorism. This policy was adopted by America to pave the way for restoring trade relations with Iraq in order to help repair Saddam's seriously damaged economy. Saddam, in return, reduced the attack by his media on the United States as the leader of world imperialism. He also expelled the notorious international terrorist, Abā Niḍāl, from Baghdad.

As for the Soviet Union, which had responded to Iraq's



invitation by declaring its neutrality and imposing an arms embargo on Saddam's regime, it resumed shipments in mid-1981, once the Iranians had begun their counter-offensive. A year later, after the Iranians had expelled the Iraqis from their territory, the flow of Soviet arms turned into a flood, in addition to economic support.

In spite of their contradictory motivations and differing interests, the Super Power and all foreign suppliers united for the first time to arm Saddam against the Iranian regime, some for commercial, and others for strategic reasons. France actually admired Saddam's regime, regarding the Ba`th as reflecting its own revolutionary ideals.(82)

**(3) The shift of the war to Iraqi territory:** After the Iraqi withdrawal from Iranian territory in the summer of 1982, the Iranians declared that one of their conditions for ending the conflict had been met, but not completely, since Saddam's regime still held some Iranian pockets. They also stipulated two further conditions:

(a) Condemnation of Saddam as the aggressor;

(b) Payment of compensation;

Thus they refused all compromises attempted by the international peace missions, which travelled many times between Baghdad and Tehran, and would accept no

negotiations for a peace that did not involve the removal of Saddam from power.

Thus, Ayatollah Khomeini managed to turn the war into an Iranian national crusade, with Saddam as Satan, seeking to bring down his regime. In summer 1982, the Iranians made two unsuccessful attempts to take Basrah city and cut the Baghdad-Basrah highway, causing heavy losses on both sides.(83) Throughout 1983/84 they launched attacks in many areas using huge human waves, but they failed,(84) because they faced a formidable Iraqi defensive line, protected by greatly superior air power.

The Iranian major offensive on the northern part of Iraq occurred in summer 1983 at Ḥajī `Omran and Penjewin. In the south, in February and March 1984, Khomeini amassed some five hundred thousand Iranians for what was called "the final offensive" in the marshlands. They succeeded in capturing the oil-rich Majnūn Island, together with some pockets of territory on the mainland. In summer 1984 the Iraqi forces made many attempts, using chemical warfare, to dislodge the Iranians and recapture the island, but they managed only, at a high cost in lives, to hold back the Iranian's advance; they could not push them back across the border.(85)

For the next year and a half neither side appeared to be able to achieve a decisive advantage on the battlefield, despite heavy casualties until in early 1986, the Iranians

captured the Fao peninsula, which was their most significant advance into Iraqi territory, and the most severe Iraqi setback in the whole war.

Obviously, it is difficult to gauge apparent feeling against the war or Saddam's continuation in power, because the regime so terrorised the population with its ruthless internal security forces against any kind of opposition. However, as the fighting continued year upon year, the number of casualties greatly increased. The regime became very sensitive to this and stopped publishing casualty figures. Because of the pressure he was feeling from the military leaders, in particular after the Fao setback, Saddam began to deal somewhat differently with the army. He limited still further the authority of his military commanders in the conduct of the war.(86) For the first time he began to allow the public mention of army commanders' names; previously these had been kept secret.(87)

In addition to the lack of political opposition to the regime during this period, there was also little in the way of effective Shi'ite opposition, except what came from the Supreme council of Islamic Revolution of Iraq (SCIRI), an exiled military Shi'ite group trained and operated in Iran. In order to stop this group's activities, Saddam sent the group's exiled leader, Ḥujjat al Islam Muḥammad Baqir al-Ḥakīm, a message from ninety members of his family, some of whom were executed.(88) The prominent Shi'ite member of the



Revolutionary Command Council and the speaker of the National Assembly, Na'im Haddād, was expelled from his position in the Party and the State.

As for the Kurds, they were hit extremely hard by Saddam during this period. After the major Iranian offensive into the north of Iraq in the summer of 1983, Mas'ūd al-Barzānī's KDP joined the Iranian assault on the central government in Baghdad. Saddam's response was brutal repression. According to one report in March 1985, eight thousand Kurdish members of the Barazānī clan, who had been imprisoned in 1983, disappeared. Another eye-witness report claimed that about four thousand political prisoners in Abū Ghurayb prison were killed in 1984 in a mass execution.(89) The other Kurdish group, PUK, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, headed by Jalāl al-Ṭalabānī, made a joint attack, in collaboration with Turkish forces, to help Saddam's regime against the joint KDP and Iranian offensive, which took place in Kurdistan in summer 1983.(90)

In an attempt to repress even his own family, Saddam removed his half-brother, Barazān, as head of intelligence, also his other two half brothers, Waṭbān and Sab'āwī. The three were placed under house arrest for alleged family squabbles, but it seems that the true reason was Saddam's dissatisfaction with their loyalty.(91)

As far as the rest of the Arab world was concerned at this period, Saddam developed much closer ties with all the

pro-American Arab monarchies from Morocco to Saudi Arabia. Egypt tried to pave the way for its return to the Arab community by playing a considerable role in supplying the aid that Iraq required; it sent volunteers who were deployed with the Iraqi armed forces and it supplied Iraq with munitions, tanks and spare parts for Iraq's Soviet-supplied arsenal.(93)

As Saddam's difficulties with Iran increased and his need for international support became desperate, the United States re-established full diplomatic relations with Iraq, on 27 October 1984, and began supplying the Iraqi armed forces with satellite and intelligence information, in addition to loans for food products and agricultural equipment to diminish the pressure on Saddam on the domestic level. France, on which Iraq relied for much of its armaments and loans, increased its support and credits despite Iraq's heavy debt. According to some sources, Saddam's desperate need led him to approach even Israel for military and intelligence assistance.(94)

However, in summer 1986, all circumstances indicated that political change in Iraq might be expected for these reasons:

- (a) The Iranians had captured strategic Iraqi territory, and the Iraqis, even after many costly attempts, using chemical weapons, had been unable to regain it;(95)

- (b) The Iranians were demanding -as they pretended- just Saddam's head as their price for peace, refusing any other proposal;
- (c) The Iraqi army had become increasingly incapable of withstanding Iran's superior numbers, despite the international community's full support for Saddam's war effort;
- (d) Saddam had sophisticated weapons technology and military industry, which, if they fell into the hands of some fundamentalist power like Iran, would be a real threat to the area and to American interests.

Therefore, according to many accounts, America tried to remove Saddam from power, to save the situation. One account claimed that the fall of the Fao was occasioned by the help of American intelligence technology to the Iranian side, in order to put heavy pressure on Saddam and to compel him to resign his power.(96) What supports this account is Saddam's regime's admission of receiving incorrect information from the American intelligence service, accusing it of deliberately misleading Iraq with false information.(97) Also, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Gulf States increased their oil exports; this lowered the price of oil from \$27 per barrel in 1985 to \$15 per barrel in early 1986,(98) putting further pressure on Saddam's



regime. However, the American plan to remove Saddam was unsuccessful, owing to the fact that Saddam's full control of the party and the state machinery, including the armed forces, frustrated any attempt at his removal from power. This left the United States and its allies only one alternative, to save the regime from the undoubted Iranian victory.

**(4) Internationalisation Stage:** At this stage, a major shift in the war took place. Saddam realised that the west was working for his removal, because of his failure to stop the Iranian threat, and he began a new ferocious campaign to destroy Iran's oil export facilities, trying to cut off Iran's oil exports and deprive the Tehran regime of oil revenues, thus provoking an international crisis as well. In summer 1986, Iraq started to attack the Iranian oil terminals - the so-called "Tanker War".(99)

Saddam's aim in this move was to provoke Iran into some extreme action, such as closing the Strait of Hormuz, in order to draw the western powers into the war and to generate international pressure on Iran; this would perhaps help to bring about a settlement for ending the war and might save his regime. However, Iran's response to Saddam's new strategy was the opposite of his expectations. Realising Saddam's plan, in order to avoid such a result, Iran declared that it would not close the Strait of Hormuz and harm the west.(100) In order to put pressure on Saddam's regime from its supporters, the Gulf States to

stop attacks on Iranian economic targets, Iran's navy made some attacks on the shipping trading with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.(101) However, in late 1986 Saddam increased his attacks on Iranian economic targets and commercial shipping,(102) compelling Iran to make a maximum response, in particular against tankers shipping oil from Kuwait, since Iraq had no navy in the Gulf. This caused Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to ask the two super powers for naval protection. Foreign naval forces were rushed to the Gulf region. In March 1987 the United States declared that it would protect Kuwaiti oil tankers by putting them under the American flag. A month later the Soviet Union did the same. In addition, the American navy made some attacks on Iranian shipping and Iranian oil installations.(103) This policy showed clearly that the United States stood firmly on the Iraqi side.

Besides this full-scale tanker war, Saddam launched massive missile attacks against Iranian civilian targets, ferociously continuing these, despite the United Nations' warning not to attack civilians. Iran did the same against Iraqi cities, starting the so-called "Cities War". The Iraqi intensive air raids, as well as killing large numbers of civilians and hitting high-value economic targets, also caused a blockade by cutting sharply the commercial air traffic entering Iran. This was another effective blow to Iran; Saddam's new policy was a fresh attempt to put an end to the war.

**(5) The Iraqi Victory Stage:** The Tanker and Cities Wars were launched by Saddam against Iran in the last two years of the war. There was, besides, considerable international pressure on Iran and a greater involvement of the two super powers which remained firmly on Iraq's side.(104) In addition to their substantial military and intelligence assistance, the two powers also increased their trade with Iraq during this period. The United States signed a five year economic and technical agreement with Iraq on 26 August 1987,(105) while Soviet-Iraqi trade increased to \$1,200 million, an increase of 46% over 1986.(106)

Accordingly, Iran seemed to be increasingly weakened, and the Iranian people lost their morale. However, Iran still had the capacity to inflict serious damage on Iraq, despite international opposition to their regime; it remained arrogant and stubborn. On 15 March 1988, Iran launched an offensive in northern Iraq with the aid of the two Kurdish Parties, the PUK and the KDP, and captured the city of Halabjah. Saddam quickly retaliated by bombing Halabjah with poison gas, causing some five thousand deaths among the civilian population: a measure of revenge against the Kurdish opposition for its aid to Iran against the central Government.(107)

However, as a result of a series of military attacks, in which there was wide-scale use of chemical weapons, which caused a total breakdown of Iranian resistance, Iran



lost almost all the Iraqi territory that it had captured.(108) A further blow to Iranian morale was the new American policy of naval engagement in the Gulf to protect the right of free passage in the war zone; this resulted in the shooting down of an Iranian Airbus. The United States claimed that this incident was due to a tragic error, thus placing the responsibility on the Iranian side, for allowing a passenger aircraft to fly in a war zone.

Soon after the airbus episode, Ayatollah Khomeini accepted United Nations' Resolution 598 without conditions and a cease-fire came into effect. Many commentators, as well as most of the Iraqi people, had not expected that the long, bloody Iraq-Iran war would come to an end, but it seems that Ayatallāh Khomeini's acceptance of the cease-fire was due to these factors:

- (a) Saddam's campaign of missile attacks on population centres caused Iranian pro-war and pro-government sentiments to diminish sharply.
- (b) Saddam's chemical weapons warfare diminished the military fighting spirit, as was demonstrated by the drop in the number of volunteers.
- (c) Saddam's campaign against Iranian economic targets and commercial shipping, besides the international blockade, totally paralysed the Iranian economy.

- (d) Saddam's Tanker War compelled Iran directly to confront the multinational armada; Khomeini was anxious to disengage from this, in particular after the Iranian Airbus tragedy.
- (e) Most importantly, the high human and political cost which caused the Ayatollah's regime to be questioned, in particular the logic of taking the war to Iraqi soil, by the Iranian people and even by the Iraqi Shi'ites, who had sympathised with the Islamic revolution.

The Iranians came to realise subsequently that their victories against the Shah and in the first year of the war were not the result of their capacity or their faith, as they had thought, but of the Super Powers' toleration of the Islamic revolution, in order to break the hold of both the ambitious Shah and Saddam, and, at the same time, to weaken both the Iraqi and Iranian armed forces; when Iran started to present a real threat to their interests, their efforts to restrict its role were very severe, notwithstanding the economic and human destruction that ensued. The United States' policy followed Brzezinski's contingency plan to protect the interests of America and its allies. In the next section, the destructiveness of the war on both sides will be described.

## The Impact of the war

Both countries, Iraq and Iran, were heavily damaged by the war, and needed extensive infrastructure repairs. Estimates of war damage ranged from \$200 billion to \$500 billion. Most accounts agreed that the war had hit Iran much harder than Iraq. Casualties were high and involved almost all classes of the two countries. Casualty figures for the War came to one million altogether. The Iranian losses were 20%-30% more than the Iraqi losses, (110) although the war created for Saddam's regime serious labour shortages as all available manpower was mobilised for the front. (111)

Both sides suffered economic disasters. The monthly running cost of the war was about \$1 billion. By the end, Iraq was in severe financial difficulties, owing about \$80 billion, nearly half of it to Arab States, mainly Gulf States. But the greater economic damage was suffered by the Iranians who were drastically hit, in particular in the last two years, when an attempt was made to force Iran to end to war. In terms of war materiel, Iraqi losses were 50% greater than Iranian. (112)

Throughout the period of the war, the Iranians' morale was higher than that of the Iraqis. This fact is shown by the large numbers of Iraqi prisoners of war, estimated at about 75,000 - 80,000, while those of the Iranians were



30,000, most of whom were taken in the final offensive, which was launched by Saddam's army after the ceasefire.(113)

For Saddam, however, not all the results of the war were negative. It brought him certain advantages, such as the following:

- (1) The personality cult of Saddam throughout the course of the war continued unabated; in fact, it increased. His media depicted him to the Iraqis as the hero, who brought victory over Iran and defended the homeland.(114) His media misled other Arab nations as well. The pro-Saddam Arab press, inside and outside Iraq, shaped the collective mind of the Arabs into believing that it was he who had saved the security and the stability of the region and protected them from the unknown flood coming from Iran. Simply, he became the new Saladin, the Muslim warrior who drove the Christian crusaders out of the holy lands in the twelfth century.
- (2) The war provided for Saddam the justification for tightening his grip even more on the military forces, the Ba'th Party and the State machinery in general; this strengthened his position greatly from what it had been before the war.
- (3) The most serious advantage he obtained from the war

was that he had been allowed to develop and escalate chemical and biological weapons, which had been supplied to him by both Eastern and Western blocs.(115) An objective which Saddam had long been trying to achieve was to obtain weapons of mass destruction *Aslihat al-Dimār al-Shāmīl*, which included a nuclear capability, and chemical weapons, which he already possessed. Thus, by the end of the war, he was in possession of the most powerful war machine in the Middle East, after Israel.

Moreover, the war provided Saddam with the opportunity to gain experience in the use of his weapons of mass destruction; he exploited the muted international attitude to the full for his own purposes.(117)

History as well produced for Saddam another opportunity which he fully exploited, using the historically based feeling of enmity between the Arabs and the racist Persians (as the Ba`th began to call them, instead of "Iranians" when the war started). Saddam's chief aim in this move was to convince the Iraqis, in particular the Shi`ah, that the Iranians did not represent Islam, accusing them of being Majūs "Zoroastrians" working together with the Jews to further the imperialist designs of Persia. He accused them as well of using the cover of religion to affirm their fundamental hostility to the Arab Nation, in particular the Iraqis, the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, the centre of the Abbasid Empire, which was

challenged by Persian movements, such as the *Shu'ūbiyyah*.(118) So, Saddam presented the Iranians as no more than the new *Shu'ūbīs*. Thanks to this concept, based largely on the idea of the enemy within, which became the main focus of Saddam's propaganda, thousands of Iraqis were ousted from Iraq, as has already been mentioned. By means of this racist language, which was introduced at the start of the war and continued throughout its eight years. Saddam created a racist and ethnic hatred between the two neighbouring Muslim countries.(119)

Another impact of the war was to produce an effect upon oil production and oil prices; the fall in oil production in both Iraq and Iran, due to the war, led other oil producing states, in particular the Gulf States, to increase their production, which resulted in the fall of oil prices by half. The statement of the Brookings Institute in 1984 confirmed that the scenario of the prolonged stalemate probably helped to ensure a relatively soft oil market for the next few years. Thus, the war favoured both producers and consumers of oil.(120)

The most serious impact of the war was to demonstrate Iraq's vulnerability as a state, comprising different ethnic groups, of whom two, the Shi'ah in the south and the Kurds in the north, were allied with Iran throughout its course. This phenomenon became more apparent as the war developed: the reason for this serious disloyalty to the Iraqi State was Saddam's deliberately discriminatory



policy, which suited his needs throughout the course of the war. In addition it was compounded with his ruthless campaign to gain control over all political movements in Iraq, notwithstanding the reverse consequences of this frequently mindless policy, which would undoubtedly affect Iraq's unity, provoke guerrilla warfare against the regime and create separatist movements calling for independence. This would bring about the break-up of the Iraqi State. (121)

Also, the war clearly showed the importance of a coast-line for the country's independence. Iraq has been deprived of a long coast-line on the Gulf; this has made it a hostage to its neighbours and affected its political and economical position very badly. At any rate, as far as Saddam was concerned, both the negative and positive outcome of the war encouraged him to undertake another adventure and another disaster for the Iraqi nation and the area at large.

## Conclusion

From an analysis of this Chapter, it is clear that the Iraq-Iran war was an element in the emergency plan that was drafted by Brzezinski, the United States National Security Adviser, in response to the United States-Iran crisis that was threatening American interests in the Gulf. Also, Iraq, according to Saddam's own admission and that of some of his men, was pushed into the war, in the hope that he would become the policeman of the Gulf, in place of the Shah.

From the actual development of events, there is an indication that Saddam plunged into the war because of this false hope. He was used as a tool with no gains for Iraq or its people. In many of his speeches, he said that he sacrificed his people and his army in the cause of the defence of the Arab Nations and, in particular, the Gulf States, while, in fact, the Gulf States were no more than American bases.

Saddam obviously tried to use the international support that he received during the war to achieve the expansionist plans that he was unable to achieve during the war. He emerged from the Iraq-Iran war with massive military capabilities that the United States and its allies in the area, particularly Israel, could not accept. He did not benefit from the Shah's experience, and so he repeated the Sahah's mistakes; thus Iraq became a threat to the

stability that was required to defend United States interests in the Gulf and the security of Israel.

United States strategy was primarily based on the recommendations of the fact-finding mission, headed by Senator Bradley, that was sent to the Gulf area on 2 January 1981 to survey the area and to gather as much real information as possible about political, economic and military factors in the Middle East, particularly the Gulf, and the effect of these on oil and on the consolidation of United States interests in the area. This meant, as far as the Iraq-Iran war was concerned, that neither side should be allowed to achieve a victory. The United States worked hard to achieve this objective, by supplying both sides with weapons. This helped the American economy with billions of dollars while destroying the capabilities of the two strongest powers in the area economically, militarily and demographically. Irangate and Iraqgate were proofs of this policy.

When the military situation tilted in Iran's favour, and Iran began to win, despite the huge support that was received by Iraq and despite Iraq's use of chemical weapons which were internationally banned, the United States began to be actively involved against Iran. This helped to force Iran to submit, after both countries had experienced great destruction.

Iraq actually achieved military victory, but this was



less than Saddam's media claimed. Iraq was able to push the Iranians out of Iraqi territory, to destroy much of Iran's military machine and to emerge with a huge military machine of its own much larger than what remained in Iran's possession. However, the borders and the situation in the Shaṭṭ al-Arab remained as they were. Saddam even declared that he would be ready to pay compensation to Iran, if it would ignore his responsibility for the aggression. Thus, Saddam achieved none of the objectives of his war with Iran, and became responsible for the death and destruction that was experienced during the eight years of the war. A major element of United States' strategy after the Iraq-Iran war was to destroy Iraq's military power and to smash Saddam's ambitions. The United States began to plan its strategy for that major objective immediately after the war.

This is affirmed by General Schwarzkopf in his memoirs. He refers to the pressures and the provocation applied by the United States and its allies, in order to drag Saddam once again into a new war, this time with the United States, so as to destroy Iraq and its military power as well as Saddam's ambitions. This is proved by subsequent events, which will be the subject of the next chapter, that is psychological warfare between the first and second Gulf wars.

## NOTES

- 1- See Robert Drivos's articles in *Akcikiotio Intelligence Review*, London, 20 February 1979, 8 May 1979.
- 2- The United States, during the Nixon administration, with Kissinger as Secretary of State, granted the Shah "open permission" to buy all kinds of weapons, excluding nuclear, so as to strengthen his regime and his control over the area, in accordance with Nixon's policy of "strengthening America's friends so as to enable them to defend themselves." This was a serious turn in American Policy; see *Military Balance*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1975-76.
- 3- The agreement between Iran and the Ruler of Sharjah on the joint administration of the islands was achieved by force owing to Iranian pressures and blatant threats that Iran would occupy the islands if no solution agreeable to Iran was found. Neither Britain nor America manifested any objection to Iran's threats and pressures. At the time, both desired an Iranian domination over the area, for they considered the Shah as the best guarantor of their interests in the region. International law considered this agreement invalid since it was made under pressure and was in conflict with the United

Nations' Charter. See Vienna Convention of the Law of Treaties, 23 May 1969, British Treaty Series, *Miscellaneous* No. 31, 1969, Commd, 4140. It should be noted that UN documents held in the British Public Record Office confirmed, when the restriction on these secret documents was lifted, the absolute ownership of these islands by the Sheikhs al-Qāsim in Rās al-Khaymah and Sharjah since 1750. J.G. Lorimer points out this in *The Persian Gulf Gazetteer*, Oman and Central Arabia Official publication of the Government of India, Calcutta, Vol. 1, 1915, p. 745.

4- The rise in oil prices in 1973 was instigated by the US, so as to provide money to the oil-rich countries to buy weapons, through which the American economy would improve. America was known to OPEC as the state really responsible for the oil price rise. For further information on this subject, see Nicholas Sarkis, Oil, the Only and the Last Chance for the Middle East, translated into Arabic by Arslām Thābit Ṣlāydī, 1984, pp. 52-56, 59-81.

5- The Shah's interview with Jan Occoues, *New York Times*, 30 September 1975.

6- Brzezinski, Zbigniew, Power and Principle, London, G. Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1983, London, 1983, p.



448. Brzezinski was US National Security Adviser from 1971-1974.

7- The Shah tried to fulfill his dream of recreating the glory of the Persian empire established two thousand years earlier and held sumptuous celebrations to impress foreign guests and dignitaries.

8- This might have led the Soviet Union to arm Iraq \_ despite Saddam's repression of the Kurds during the mid-1970s, which caused international criticism of the Ba'th's savage campaign at the time \_ with a view to curbing the Shah's policy of interference in Iraq's internal affairs and enabling Iraq to stand up to and counter the Shah.

9- After Khomeini's return to Iran and his famous declaration, "neither Western nor Eastern", this Radio station began broadcasts encouraging minorities in Iran to rise up against the Islamic Revolution. For more details on this point see, Michael, Leidia and Louis William, America's Failure in Iran, Paris, 1981, p. 138.

10- Brzezinski, *ibid.*, p. 383.

11- Michael and William, *ibid.*, pp. 148-216.

- 12- Huwaydā, Farahdūn, The Fall of the Shah, ibid, chapter 4.
- 13- Ibid., p. 337, footnote 23.
- 14- *Le Monde*, 1 February 1980.
- 15- *Le Monde*, 14 February 1980.
- 16- Brzezinski, ibid., p. 426.
- 17- President Jimmy Carter announced in an interview on 21 April 1980: " ... What's right for our nation and its interest and principles, on the one hand, and the safety of the hostages. I have never had to face any difference between those two and I try in my own mind to keep them compatible and I think every action that I've taken so far and every action that I would contemplate in the future would not be to abandon either one of these commitments of mine, on the one hand, and the hostages lives, safety and freedom, on the other."
- 18- Ayatollah Khomeini and the Iranian people thought that their triumph over the Shah was due to their strong religious faith. This bred among them arrogance and a systematic tendency to overlook the fact that their so-called miracle victory was due,

in great measure, to the great powers tolerating the Islamic regime temporarily and till the time they were ready to remove it. However, when these great powers failed to do away with the Islamic regime, they prepared a more active alternative to overthrow Khomeini and his regime, but without any direct intervention on their part. It is only at a later stage that Khomeini and the Iranians realised this.

- 19- An organisation for military and economic co-operation formed in 1959 by Britain, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey as a successor to the Baghdad Pact.
- 20- The important strategic reason behind al-Asad move was the belief that Israel presented real dangers to his regime and that he, to that extent, needed an ally as strong as Iran. Al-Asad belongs to the Alawite sect, a Shi'a sub-sect.
- 21- Khomeini, Ayatollah Ruhollah, Islam and Revolution, translated into English by H. Algar, Berkeley, 1981, pp. 31, 48.
- 22- *Le Monde*, 13 September 1980.
- 23- Michael and William, *ibid.*, p. 138.
- 24- Zamzamī, `Abd al-Majīd, al-Ḥarb al-`Irāqīyyah al-



- Irāniyyah (al-Islām wa al-Qawmiyyah) (Iraq-Iran War, Islam and Nationalism), Paris, p. 241.
- 25- *Guardian*, 28 February 1979.
- 26- *Le Monde*, 2 May 1980, 19 August 1980.
- 27- *Le Monde*, 14 February 1980.
- 28- Reprinted in the *Guardian*, 9 October 1980.
- 29- Bullock, J. and H. Morris, Saddam's War, London, 1991, pp. 75-76.
- 30- Brzezinski, *ibid.*, p. 430.
- 31- Brzezinski, *ibid.*, p. 504.
- 32- Abū Sa'd, Nizār, The Iraq-Iran War, a Political and Military Study,
- 33- Klieman, Aaron S., Israel's Global Reach: Arms Sales as Diplomacy, New York and Oxford, 1985, p. 158. See also Benjamin Bet- Hallahmi, The Israeli Connection, London, 1988, pp. 9-12.
- 34- Nakdimon, Shlomo, Tammūz in Flames, (in Hebrew), Jerusalem, 1986, pp. 83-100.

- 35- The Gulf States, however, had very little enthusiasm for Saddam's protection by foreign powers, sensing that he was exploiting the political dilemma and the ideological threat from Iran to create a new role for Baghdad in the Gulf and to establish Iraq's primacy. Neither America and its allies, nor the Gulf states, liked that but had, at least until the time they were ready to destroy him, no other alternative to save the critical situation. Thus, once his war with Iran was over, they led him into another war, the Second Gulf war, with the calculated aim of destroying him completely.
- 36- Maṭar, Fu'ād, Saddam Hussein, the Man, the Cause, the Future, Third World Centre, London, 1981, p. 179. This was not much to the liking of the Americans and their allies and, so as to impede Saddam's ambitions, they led him down the war path.
- 37- CARDRI, Committee against Repression and for Democratic Rights in Iraq, p. 167.
- 38- Henderson, Simon, Saddam Hussein's Ambition for Iraq, San Francisco, 1991, p. 104. Henderson presents the most probable reasons for the Iraq-Iran war as the dispute between the two countries about territory and Tehran's call for the Iraqi

Shi`ites to overthrow Saddam.

- 39- *Sunday Times*, London, 30 November 1980.
- 40- In his speech at Mosul at the Regional Festival of Popular Arab Poetry, on 5 April 1980, Saddam openly defined the conflict with Iran as one between Arabs and Persians.
- 41- Kanovsky, E., "Economic Implications for the Region and the World Oil Market", in Karsh, E., (ed.), The Iran-Iraq War: Impact and Implications, London and New York, 1989, p. 236.
- 42- Ibid., pp. 231-232.
- 43- See Timmerman, Kenneth, The Death Lobby: How the West Armed Iraq, London, 1992, chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5, for further information about Saddam's war machine in the period 1975 - 1980.
- 44- Abū Sa`d, Nizār, The Iraq-Iran War, ibid, p. 14.
- 45- Ibid., p. 11.
- 46- Saddam paid many visits to army units to convey to them the message that these facilities and advantages were a return for their duty to sacrifice themselves for the Party and the



Revolution in resisting potential aggression in the near future. He alluded indirectly to Iran. These meetings with army units were tape-recorded and widely circulated among the armed forces and the Ba`th Party. By means of this "guns and butter" policy, maintained for the eight years of war with Iran, Saddam was able to win over the armed forces, with its majority of Shi`ites.

- 47- See the report in the *International Journal of the Armed Forces*, November, 1980.
- 48- See the report in the *Guardian*, 6 January 1984.
- 49- Iraqi News Agency (INA), 31 December 1979. This, it seems, represents the same feeling of megalomania that the Shah of Iran had shown earlier when dreaming of re-establishing the great Persian Empire under his leadership and of being the master of a regime which competed with the Super-Powers. The latter did not accept this from the Shah and, evidently, would not accept it from Saddam either.
- 50- See Maţar, Fu'ād, *ibid.*, pp. 89-91, for the text of Saddam's speech.
- 51- *Guardian*, 11 April 1979.
- 52- Saddam's biographer, Maţar, admits that this was

the role Saddam was seeking, despite the fact that the great powers would not accept it. He wrote: "... It is unacceptable to the Super-Powers, since they both have an interest in preventing Iraq from moving outside the sphere that they have had allotted to it. President Saddam is well aware of this and he will wait for an auspicious moment before he attempts to break through this barrier." See Maṭar, *ibid.*, p. 127 (English text). It is true that the Super-Powers did not allow anyone, not even Saddam, to break through the red light, but would accept Saddam's doing so temporarily until he had brought their plans to fruition, and, once he had done so, as all indications showed, they would diminish him and contain his ambition.

- 53- According to Patrick Seale's account, 'Ubaysī had close ties with Israel, dating back to the Shah's period. Saddam was led to invade Iran because of the false information about Iranian weakness which 'Ubaysi fed him. This was a move to which Israel looked forward with great expectancy. See Seale, Patrick, Asad, the Struggle for the Middle East, University of California Press, 1989., p. 361.

In an interview in London on 12 September 1986, cited in Patrick Seale, *ibid.*, pp. 361-362, Aḥmad

al-Khaṭīb, the Kuwaiti opposition leader, said that Saddam sent word to the Ruler of Kuwait that General Ghulām `Alī `Ubaysī could be in Tehran within days. This is very plausible because all the post-war statements of his top officials indicate that Saddam's appreciation of the situation in Iran was based on this information.

- 54- INA, Baghdad, 29 June 1979.
  
- 55- *Guardian*, 3 April 1980; *Financial Times*, 2 April 1980; *Daily Telegraph*, 9 April 1980; *International Herald Tribune*, 10 April 1980.
  
- 56- For more details, see Dilip Hiro, Iran Under the Ayatollahs, London, 1985, p. 165. See also Amnesty International Report of an Amnesty International Mission to the Government of Iraq, 22 - 28 January 1983, London 1983.
  
- 57- During the previous eight months of the war, eighty skirmishes had been reported up and down the frontier; see Ofra Bengio, "Iraq", in Legum et al., (eds.), Middle East Contemporary Survey, IV, 1979 - 80, pp. 518-21.
  
- 58- Press release from the Embassy of the Republic of Iraq, London, 17 September 1980.



- 59- Cited in Chubin, S. and C. Tripp, Iraq at War, London, 1988. From this statement of guilt, we can assume that Saddam was convinced to go to war on basis of false information about the total chaos in Iran.
- 60- *al-Thawrah*, 14 January 1982.
- 61- The Iranian air force concentrated on Iraq's major cities and the oil installations highly protected by anti-aircraft fire. This caused severe damage to the Iranian air force, which already suffered from shortages in aircraft and pilots due to the highly strained relations between the Iranian government and the United States, "the supplier of its spare parts". Thus, the Iranian air force was pulled out of the conflict at the beginning of the war, allowing the Iraqi air force to establish superiority throughout the course of the war.
- 62- Saddam was never deterred from a humiliating move, whatever it was, when it suited his need and secured his political survival. On this account, the interpretation by many sources of his involvement with the Israeli invasion of south Lebanon in 1982 as one of Saddam's tactics to save himself and an Iraqi army nearing total collapse in the war, seems very plausible. See E. Karsh and I. Rautsi, Saddam Hussein: a Political Biography,

London, 1991, p. 165.

- 63- Chubin, S. and C. Tripp, *ibid.*, pp. 140-142.
- 64- King Husayn's speech on Amman Television on 4 October 1980, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 6 October 1980.
- 65- Hiro, Dilip, "Chronicle of the Gulf War," *Merip Reports*, No. 125/126, July/September 1984.
- 66- The Iraq-Iran war opened an opportunity for Israel to restore its relations with Iran which suffered a setback after the revolution. It exploited the desperate Iranian need for spare parts which Iran could no longer obtain from the United States. See, on this point, Klieman, *ibid.*, p. 159. Israel's arms deal with Iran was suspended during the Carter administration on account of the American hostages held in Tehran. After Reagan's election, Israel's arms sales resumed and Israel obtained permission to continue with the deal. See the *Washington Post*, 29 November 1986, and the *National Security Archive, the Chronology*, New York 1987, pp. 3-6.
- 67- Michael and William, *ibid.*, p. 138.
- 68- Timmerman, Kenneth R., *ibid.*, chapter 2.

- 69- Zamzamī, *ibid.*, pp. 112-122 offers more details on the Iranian counter-offensive.
- 70- *International Herald Tribune*, 22 October 1980, gives an on-the-spot report by John Kifine, one of the commanders whose troops were engaged in building a highway across the desert outside Ahwāz. When pressed by journalists, he simply did not know why he was doing this and finally blurted out, "we are following the plan of the political leadership".
- 71- Staudermaier, William O., "Military Policy and Strategy in the Gulf War", in *Journal of the United Army War College*, 12, No. 2, p. 28.
- 72- Samīr al-Khalīl, Republic of Fear, Hutchinson Radius, London, 1989, p. 34.
- 73- *The Economist*, 288, 29 January 1983, p. 46. See also QER, Iraq, 1983, No. 4: 12. The most serious one occurred in July 1982, when his motorcade was attacked in al-Dujayl, a mixed Sunni/Shi'ite rural area. The attackers missed Saddam's car and, in retaliation, the village was then attacked by helicopters and the houses were bulldozed and turned into agricultural land.



- 74- FBIS, 29 June 1982, pp. 1-2.
- 75- Karsh and Rautsi, *ibid.*, p. 166.
- 76- INA, 27 April 1983; *BBC Weekly Economic Reports*, 10 May 1983.
- 77- Karsh, E., "Soviet Army Transfers to the Middle East during the 1970s", *HCSS Paper*, No. 22, Tel Aviv University, 1983, p. 18.
- 78- *International Herald Tribune*, 27 November and 5 December 1984. He went further than just supporting the pro-western Arab demand for peace negotiations between the Arabs and Israel. He stated that: "... **no Arab Leader looks forward to the destruction of Israel**" and suggested that any solution to the Arabo-Israel conflict should require "... **the existence of a secure State for the Israelis.**"
- 79- Saddam indicated clearly by this policy that a high price had to be paid for having him and his army to launch this war, especially when Khomeini asked for Saddam to be punished personally and held him responsible for starting the war.
- 80- OER, Iraq, 1984, No 4: 12. Jordan provided routes to transport Iraqi oil to Aqabah on the Red Sea. As

for Turkey, "the pillar of NATO", it was policing the Kurds along the Iraqi northern frontier at the time when Iraqi troops were engaged with Iran.

81- American strategy towards the war obviously required neither an Iraqi nor an Iranian victory. It seems likely that America fanned the flames of the war, in order to prolong the conflict between the two countries.

82- K.R. Timmerman, *ibid.*, provides more details about Saddam's military machine and how the East and West armed him and built up his military industry.

83- Drew Middleton reported in the *New York Times*, 18 February 1984, based on a US intelligence estimate, that the Iranians lost a hundred thousand men and boys in these two attempts.

84- *Quarterly Economic Review*, Iraq, 1983, No. 2: 5.

85- *New York Times*, 30 March 1984.

86- One of the reasons that led Saddam to grant his military commanders some authority, such as that of executing on the battlefield anyone who sought to run over to the Iranian side, was the embarrassment caused to his regime by the high numbers of Iraqi prisoners-of-war in the hands of Iran.

- 87- Bullock, Alan, *ibid.*, Chapter 18. It was Hitler's policy not to name military commanders in order to conceal their role on the battlefield and to prevent the emergence of any individual hero within the armed forces.
- 88- *Guardian*, 28 June 1983.
- 89- *The Times*, 1 March 1985, provides information about the missing Kurds. The Abu Ghurayb Massacre was described in a press release issued by Ann Clwyd, MP, on 14 March 1986.
- 90- Because the two Kurdish resistance groups, Mas'ūd al-Barazānī's KDP and Jalāl al-Talabānī's PUK, are often hostile to each other, the regime is able to exploit their hostility and pit them against each other for its own advantage. Thus, a catastrophically misguided policy on the part of the two branches of the Kurdish political opposition was behind the disaster that struck the Iraqi Kurdish nation.
- 91- *Wall Street Journal*, 3 October 1983.
- 92- In an interview on 24 May 1982, with the Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Siyāsah*, Saddam said: "...**Arab solidarity would never be the same without**



Egypt; it is simply too large and important to be left outside the Arab camp." It was, however, Saddam and no other who took the lead in ostracising Egypt because of its peace treaty with Israel. These conflicting stances indicate that Saddam was absolutely undeterred from any move, whatever its implications, when it suited his needs.

- 93- OER, Iraq, 1983, No. 4, p. 11.
- 94- *Daily Telegraph*, 24 March 1986; *HaDashot* (Tel Aviv), 13, 15 November 1987; *Davar* (Tel Aviv), 12 November 1987.
- 95- *Sunday Times*, 26 February and 4 March 1984 reports on the Battle of the Marshes, north of Basrah.
- 96- In an interview with Lebanese Television in March 1995, Khayr al-Dīn Ḥasīb, former Iraqi Minister, admitted that the United States had approached him about becoming Saddam's alternative in power. The full details of the interview are cited in the *Iraqi File, Documentary and Political Review*, No. 40, London, April 1995.
- 97- Karsh and Rautsi, *ibid.*, p. 161.
- 98- Dilip, Hiro, The Longest War: Iraq-Iran War,

London, 1989, pp. 213-215.

- 99- Karsh, E., The Iran-Iraq War: Impact and Implications, London and New York, 1989, pp. 28-30. The Tanker War was launched by Saddam in early 1984, in an attempt to shift the focus of war from land to sea. Saddam's attacks on Iranian merchant shipping caused serious damage to and perturbation of the Kharj Island traffic. See also Cordesman and Wagner, The Lessons of Modern War, ?, pp. 530-591.
- 100- *Tehran Domestic Service*, 17 May 1984.
- 101- *New York Times*, 24 May 1984.
- 102- Jabir, Harding and Hazelton, *ibid.*, p. 234.
- 103- A report presented by General Norman Schwarzkopf, the Commander of the Central Command in the Gulf region, on 20 April 1989 to the Senate Armed Services Committee - the first report on the area by the Central Command after the Gulf War - mentions a detail of the operation previously held back, namely, that the naval force of the Central Command in the Gulf destroyed an Iranian oil platform and sank four Iranian naval vassels on 18 April 1988.
- 104- For Iranian casualties resulting from Saddam's war

campaign against Iranian cities, see the *Washington Post*, 28 January 1987. For Iraqi casualties, see Facts about the Persian aggression against the civilian cities in Iraq, Ministry of Information and Culture, Iraq.

- 105- Simpson, J., From the House of War, London, 1991, pp. 43 - 44. Washington put pressure on its allies and friends to stop supplying Iran with weapons; on the other hand, it pushed them to increase the supply of sophisticated and upgraded weapon technology to Saddam.
- 106- Bengio, Ofra, Iraq, in Colin Legum, et al. (eds.), Middle East Contemporary Survey, Vol 4, 1979 - 1980.
- 107- Dilip, Hiro, *ibid.*, p. 239.
- 108- Since this crime, and despite the UN Secretary General's recognition of Saddam's use of chemical weapons in the war with Iran, no real action has been taken, either by the Super Powers or the UN, to put an end to his violation of International Law and Human Rights.
- 109- The Fao Peninsula was recaptured in April 1988, Shalamacheh in May 1988, and a month later, Iraq dislodged the Iranians from the Majnūn Islands. By



early July, all Iranian forces had been driven out of North of Iraq.

- 110- *New York Times*, 23 September 1985, report by D. Middleton based on estimates made in NATO capitals.
- 111- "Iraq: Special Report", in MEED, 26 October 1982. Work-forces at factories and government offices diminished by 40% - 45%, and many of the men who left for the front were replaced by women.
- 112- Abū Sa`d, Nizār, *ibid.*, pp. 136-139.
- 113- *Ibid.*
- 114- The Report of the Ninth Regional Congress of the Ba`th Party in June 1982 states that: **"....Saddam Hussein is a symbol of freedom, independence, pride, integrity and a hope for a better future for Iraq and the Arab Nation, and this fact urges us to continue to march behind the banner which he is raising with all possible devotion, self-denial and courage."** Quoted in MECS, 1981-1982, p. 582. See also Rubin, B., Modern Dictators, New York, 1987, p. 229; Hilāl `Abd al-Riḍā al-Dajalī and Sa`d `Abd al-Wahhāb al-Samarrā'ī, Ṣaḍḍām Ḥusayn: Baṭal al-Naṣr wa al-Salām (Saddam Husayn, Hero of Victory and Peace), Baghdad, 1989, p. 83.

- 115- Iraq had become the world's leading importer of arms. An estimate by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) indicates that Iraq had spent some \$80 billion during the period 1980 - 1990. Iraq's official study puts the figure for the first eight years of the war at \$105 billion.
- 116- Friedman, Alan, The Spider's Web, London, 1993, researches the total documented picture of how the west armed Saddam. See also Adel Darwish and Gregory Alexander, Unholy Babylon, (Part II), The Making of the War Machine, London, 1991.
- 117- Saddam's thwarting of the Iranian threat and the protection of international interests in the region at the root of the United Nations' hesitation in adopting a critical stance against him and its failure to take any real action against his regime. The Iranian threat and international interests were considered the most pressing priorities by the West and even the Eastern Bloc, which raised socialist slogans in defence of tyrannised nations against imperialism. This left Saddam somewhat free to abuse human rights and violate national and international laws.
- 118- The *Shu'ubiyyah* was a movement which appeared under

the Abbasid Empire and was centred largely among the Persian-speaking subjects of that Empire. It was mainly a literary and cultural movement which challenged the Arabs' claim to primacy within the Islamic dispensation and championed the cause of non-Arab, and especially Persian, culture.

- 119- Report by Amir Taheri in *International Herald Tribune*, 10 October 1980.
- 120- "Oil and the Outcome of the Iraq-Iran War" in the *Merip Report*, No. 125 - 126, July/September 1984, pp. 40-42.
- 121- Despite Saddam's ruthlessness, the war caused the Kurds and some Shi'ite religious groups to take the Iranian side against the Iraqi State. This short-sighted attitude paved the way for regional and foreign powers to use the Kurdish and Shi'ite issue as a trump card for their own purposes. The Kurds had failed to learn from previous incidents in which Saddam attacked them, using chemical weapons as a retaliatory measure. Moreover, some Kurdish opposition groups proved hypocritical attitudes by co-operating, at times, with Saddam, and, at other times, with Iran or Turkey, in pursuit of immediate personal benefits.



## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

**THE SECONED GULF WAR  
THE IRAQI COALITION WAR**

## The Roots of the Crisis

In the wake of the Iraq-Iran war, it is clear that there were many events marking the steps to the invasion of Kuwait. It is not known if these events were manufactured by Saddam and America together, or if they happened by accident. This will only be revealed when the documents concerning this period are published by the countries concerned.

From late 1989, until Saddam sent his troops and equipment towards the Kuwaiti border, a series of events punctuated by accusations, threats and warnings characterised relations between America and Saddam's regime. It seems that they changed from being associates to enemies. Britain and Israel were also involved in this cold war, which developed into a war of nerves, as the following chronology of the events reveals.

- (1) In October 1989, Tāriq `Azīz, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, visited the US Secretary of State, James Baker, in Washington and voiced his Government's concern about America's involvement in Israeli and Kuwaiti plots to assassinate Saddam Husayn and change the Iraqi regime.(1) Saddam had faced several attempts on his life throughout the post-war era. It is unknown whether these attempts were planned by America and its allies or merely by some Iraqi opposition groups. Saddam was extremely isolated from the Iraqi

population and ruled them by the most extreme forms of repression and terror. In addition, he put great pressure on them because of the war with Iran, and despite his domestic propaganda efforts to disguise the fact that his country was crippled and that its economy had been destroyed by the war.(2)

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European regimes, and the end of the Cold War, made Saddam increasingly conscious about the nature of the new world order under US supremacy. He realised that these new developments would allow America to impose its control on the Middle East and would thwart his ambition to be the regional super power. Thus, in his speech in November 1989 he explained the reason behind his desire to build up Iraqi power, which was to display his ability to challenge any American attempt to demolish him:

".... our answer to this is that we want this big army so that no one can come and tweak our moustaches or pull our beards, and so that we can cut off the hand that tries to do this. This is all we want; we do not want to attack anybody, and we do not have ambitions outside Iraq. This army is for defending Iraq and the Arab whose moustache is tweaked and the Arab who wants us to support him and who we believe has a rightful claim to that support."



This theme was repeated by the Iraqi regime. On 7 December Iraq's Minister for Military Industries, Brigadier Ḥusayn Kāmil, announced that Iraq had launched its first space rocket. The missile was named *Tammūz* and was a three-stage, forty-eight ton rocket, twenty-five metres in length. He added that Iraq had also developed a second, long-range, surface-to-surface missile called *al-'Abbās*, which had a range of 1,243 miles (2,000 kilometres).

- (2) In January 1990 Saddam warned Israel that any attack or Iraq's scientific or military installations:

**".... would be confronted by us with a precise reaction, using the means available to us according to the legitimate right to self-defence." (3)**

Saddam's threat followed some incidents of sabotage that took place in Iraq. They were aimed at Saddam's super weapons projects, such as the mysterious explosion in the *al-Qa'qā'* State Establishment between Laṭifiyyah and Iskandariyyah near al-Ḥillah, south of Baghdad, which took place on 17 August 1989. (4)

Following the scandal at the Atlanta branch of the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro (BNL) in the second

half of 1989, many reports revealed Saddam's complex procurement network around the world, which was acquiring components for Saddam's chemical, biological, nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. Iraqi intelligence was directly involved in the activities of the companies involved, such as Matrix Churchill, a company owned by Iraq in Britain. It was said to have exported military equipment worth millions of pounds to Iraq with illegal BNL loans.(5)

It seems that the western intelligence services, the CIA and MI6, with the help of the Israeli intelligence service, Mossad, used the BNL affair to launch a widespread campaign to speak out about Saddam's ambitious programme of non-conventional weapons, in order to destroy it. The western governments concealed the information of these secret illegal deals from their Parliaments, owing to their commercial and political interests with Saddam's regime.(6)

- (3) Part of the campaign which was waged against Saddam's regime was a wave of human rights criticism. There was a call for a Western ban on all weapons delivered to Saddam, after his ruthless campaign in August 1988 to eliminate any remnants of Kurdish national aspirations.(7) The world had, however, turned a blind eye to his continued violations of human rights ever since he had come to power. America expressed its

attitude to these human-rights issues in the following ways:

- (a) John Kelly, the US Assistant Secretary of State, visited Saddam on 11 February 1990 and delivered to him the State Department's warning about his violation of human rights in Iraq, in particular against the Kurds. (8)
- (b) The US Congress condemned Iraq and called for sanctions against Saddam's regime, but was prevented by the Bush Administration, which merely warned Saddam not to use chemical weapons in the future. (9)
- (c) The Arabic service of the radio station, the Voice of America, attacked Saddam's violation of human rights in Iraq. (10)
- (d) The State Department published a report on 21 February, more harshly criticising Saddam's violations of human rights in Iraq. It appears that Saddam was surprised and disturbed by the unusual international response and the change of America's attitude toward his regime. Thus, on 24 February 1990, at the first celebration of the anniversary of the Arab Co-operation Council (ACC) a meeting took place in Amman, where Saddam demanded the withdrawal of US warships from the



Gulf, (11) forgetting that he was responsible for the presence of the US navy in the region because of his war with Iran.

- (4) On 9 March, Farzad Bazoft, an exiled Iranian journalist, working for the Observer in London, was sentenced to death, after he had been arrested in Baghdad by the Iraqi security services, charged with spying for Britain and Israel. (12) After Bazoft's execution on 15 March, Saddam was subjected to unprecedented international criticism, and the Bazoft affair became an excuse to attack Saddam's barbaric rule and its threat to the stability of the region. Saddam hanged Bazoft in spite of pleas for clemency from the West, in order to challenge it, and to send a message that he would not tolerate any traitors.

However, whether Bazoft was innocent and just a journalist looking for a scoop, or a spy (the evidence against him is quite strong, as it was unusual for such an important British newspaper to employ someone with a criminal record), who, in the guise of a journalist, made repeated visits to Iraq, investigating a military installation, with a British nurse, where a major explosion was reported to have occurred, Bazoft was a victim of Saddam's political manoeuvres. He was looking for a means to build up a wave of public opinion against the west, particularly America, Britain and Israel, which were identified as

enemies for the Arab populace. He sought to rally the Iraqis, and the other Arabs, behind his regime, in order to combat this international pressure.

Saddam skilfully used press coverage to heighten Iraqi and Arab tension against the west. A huge counter-campaign was mounted in the Iraqi press and in large sections of the Arab press, financed by Saddam, to support his regime and to warn against the "imperialist-sponsored Zionist aggression against Iraq".

- (5) On 22 March, a Canadian artillery expert, Dr Gerald Bull, was murdered in Brussels. Dr Bull was a specialist in very large-calibre guns. He had been working on a super-gun project called *Babylon*, for Saddam's regime. The Iraqis were familiar with Bull's technology from the later stages of the war with Iran, when they were under severe pressure from Iranian forces, and missile technology was putting an end to the war. Mossad was suspected of murdering Bull, to prevent him from continuing to help Saddam's regime to develop the long-range weapons systems which posed a serious threat to Israel's national security, and, at the same time, to set an example to other scientists around the world who were collaborating with the Iraqi weapons programmes.

- (6) Soon after Dr Bull's murder, the British customs confiscated in Teesport some super-gun parts, manufactured by a Sheffield company. They were identified as part of the Babylon super-gun. A few weeks later other parts of the super-gun were intercepted in Greece and Turkey. (13)
- (7) The British customs intercepted on 28 March 1990 a packet of electronic switches, claiming they that were to be used for a nuclear bomb, purchased in the United States for shipment to Iraq via London on an Iraqi aircraft. (14)
- (8) On 31 March, the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, declared openly that Israel would attack Iraq if it developed a nuclear capability. Accordingly, Saddam replied on 2 April with his well-known threat that he would burn half of Israel with chemical weapons if it attacked Iraq. (15)
- (9) After the US Senate passed a resolution to accept that Jerusalem was the historical capital of Israel, the Israeli Prime Minister announced on 14 April that Israel was free to destroy sites where they suspected Iraqi missiles might be based. Saddam's response to this new threat was tough. On 18 April he warned Israel again that any Israeli attack would trigger a war which would not end until all the occupied territories had been liberated. He then made the



matter worse by announcing that Iraq was using a super-computer in its missile programmes.

According to official Iraqi statements, it appears that Saddam was far more frightened of Israel than Israel was of him. This was particularly true after the massive influx of Soviet Jews into Israel which probably increased Israeli self confidence, and made it ready for military adventure.(16) Saddam also revealed his concern to the American Ambassador, Richard Murphy, former American Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, when he visited Baghdad, about, an Israeli attack on his arms industry, similar to that in 1981, on his Osirak reactor at the *Tūwaythā* research centre. The same message was delivered to the British Charge d'Affaires in Baghdad by the then Iraqi Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Nizār Ḥamdūn. (17)

Saddam was probably frightened of the Israelis because he knew that they possessed nuclear warheads and delivery systems and would not hesitate to use them against any threat to their national security, Thus, he understood very well, as one of his close followers declared, that he would never be allowed to catch up with Israel.(18)

Saddam's threat to Israel was taken at face value, even though, it was probably it intended just for internal consumption. At the very time that he was threatening Israel with chemical weapons, he communicated with Israel

via a Harvard University Professor(19) and with President Bush, via Prince Bandar Bin Sultān, the Saudi Ambassador to the US, to inform them that his threat was an empty one.(20) Saddam's unbalanced policy reveals his inability to think clearly. He gave Israel the opportunity to arouse international opinion against the Arabs and Iraq in particular. Thus Iraq was prevented from possessing those advanced technological weapons it needed to safeguard its national security, as future events proved.

As a result of the ceaseless press campaign against Saddam's military technology, partly caused by his adding fuel to the fire, he claimed that he faced an Imperialist-Zionist plot to de stabilise Iraq, and to deprive it of the chance of at least attaining military parity with Israel. Iraq was the only military force which could confront Israel after the neutralisation of Egypt. Of course this power was not just built up to protect the Arabs, as Saddam pretended.

In this highly tense atmosphere, Saddam escalated the situation still further, probably in response to the behaviour of some of the Gulf States, particularly Kuwait. According to Saddam, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates had increased their OPEC quota, forcing down the price of oil, which Saddam perceived as economic warfare against Iraq.

Some observers indicate also that Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates intended deliberately to put more pressure on Saddam, in addition to his international and domestic plight, in order to push him into making some foolish move. This suggestion seems near to the truth, because when Iraq asked Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates to reduce their OPEC quotas and make room for the Iraqis to recover their quota, which had been halved during the war, their only response was to exceed their quotas.

At the OPEC meeting in January 1989, Kuwait's Oil Minister, Ali Khalifah al-Şabāh, demanded a 30% increase in his country's quota and refused all pressure to reduce it, stating that Kuwait neither accepts nor would abide by its assigned quota. At the next OPEC meeting, in November 1989, Iraq issued a strong warning to the Kuwaitis, but Kuwait's overproduction continued; this resulted in the price of oil falling to below \$18 a barrel in the spring of 1990. Saddam was astonished at the arrogant policy of the Kuwaitis and regarded it as a challenge, lacking appreciation for Iraq's service in protecting the Gulf States from the Iranian threat.

Kuwait's explanation for its behaviour was that it was in desperate need of money to repair its oil installations after the Iranian attacks and to pay for Western and Eastern super power protection for its shipments. The degree of suffering that the Kuwaitis experienced during the Iraq-Iran war, and the damage which was inflicted on



its economy, was very small compared with what Iraq had suffered. So Kuwait's excuses did not satisfy Saddam.

Accordingly, in May 1990, Saddam called for a summit in Baghdad, to discuss the emigration of Russian Jews. However, he used the summit to focus on his impending aggression in the Gulf:

".... sometimes, war is launched through economic means. To those who do not mean to wage war against Iraq, I say that this is a kind of war against Iraq".

The tension that mounted for months between Iraq and Kuwait came fully into the open in July. In his speech on the twenty-second anniversary of the 17 July coup, Saddam accused some Arab countries, without mentioning names, of openly conspiring with imperialism and Zionism against Iraq, threatening to use force if they did not cease their overproduction of oil, and denouncing their policy as a declaration of economic war against Iraq. He added:

"....they will never forgive us our victory...our technological achievements...what we are facing now is a loss of \$14 billion a year in oil revenue. This is a conspiracy to starve us...this is an American policy, and there are Arabs who are mobilised in the service of that policy...I feel sorry to talk

about those Arabs, I feel tormented...but we have to stand up to those who have come with a poisoned dagger and thrust it into our backs. Iraq is not going to accept that".(21)

On the following day Iraq wrote an open letter to the Arab League, demanding the following:

- (1) Compensation of \$2.4 billion, for oil that had been stolen from the Iraqi Sector of the Rūmailah oil field, which lay on disputed border territory between the two countries.
- (2) Cash payment of \$10 Billion to meet pressing needs, since Iraq had not been properly rewarded for its long struggle against Iran, guarding the eastern flank of the Arab world with the blood of the Iraqi People.
- (3) The Writing-off of all war-time debts.(22)
- (4) The raising of Oil Prices to over \$25 a barrel.
- (5) The formation of an Arab plan, similar to the Marshall Plan, to compensate Iraq for its losses during the war.(23)

Subsequently, Iraqi troops began moving towards the Kuwaiti border. The Kuwaitis did not try to alleviate the situation, in spite of the alleged mediation of some Arab

leaders. On the contrary, the Kuwaitis were more defiant, particularly at a meeting in Jeddah at the end of July, even though Saddam had delivered more than one warning, through the American Ambassador in Baghdad and the leading Arab mediators, that he would use force.(24)

Therefore, in the early hours of 2 August 1990, Saddam's tanks flowed into Kuwait. It is probable that America and its allies in fact expected this and were not taken by surprise as they claimed. The course of events suggests that America was responsible for the scenario of the crisis. This will be the focus of the next sections.



## The Factors behind the decision for the invasion

In the last section, we assessed the political situation which confronted Saddam's regime prior to the invasion. In this section we will discuss the important factors, external and internal, which together created this crucial decision and led Saddam to invade Kuwait.

Some sources indicated that Saddam's action, as were the actions of previous Iraqi Governments, was due to Iraq's long-standing hesitancy to accept Kuwait's independence, claiming that Kuwait had been historically part of Iraq. But this reason, whatever substance there may be to it, was not the vital factor behind Saddam's move.

According to the Iraqi account, the Kuwaiti file was opened a few months before the invasion. The troops were sent to the border to show Iraq's military capability, in order to intimidate the Kuwaitis, following their provocation of the Iraqi regime, and possibly to secure the two islands of Warbah and Bubiya and the Rumailah oil field. They were also keen to discover America's reaction to this move. (25)

This probably reveals what was in Saddam's mind at the beginning of the crisis, because his difficult circumstances made it impracticable for him at that time to invade Kuwait. He had just finished eight years of bitter war with Iran, which had left his nation crippled and his

economy devastated. Furthermore, he would not make any move which would jeopardise his political survival, without first testing America's attitude towards his move. He wished to dominate the Gulf States, but at the appropriate time. US confirms the earlier movement towards the Kuwaiti border. (26)

Some sources suggest that Saddam invaded Kuwait because he needed access to the Gulf, which would allow him to have a prominent role in the region. Undoubtedly, he always sought to have a wide sea frontage on the Gulf. This was one of the reasons for the Iraq-Iran war, so the Iraqi regime claimed. But Saddam would probably have been satisfied to get the two Islands of Warbah and Bubiya which opened the Iraqi route to the Gulf from its port of Umm Qasr and the Rumailah oil field, as mentioned above. This would have been less risky and more effective internationally than to invade the whole of Kuwait. All the American decision-makers, the US and other western intelligence agencies, the Soviet intelligence service, the Egyptian intelligence service, the British Ambassador in Baghdad and the US Ambassador in Baghdad, Miss April Glaspie, all expected that Saddam would take some of the disputed northern part of Kuwait, and predicted that his build-up on the border was unlikely to end in a total invasion. (27) They did not appreciate that a person like Saddam would not stop at half measures, especially when he had US and international support for his adventure. So, it was not Iraq's access to Gulf waters that pushed Saddam to



invade Kuwait, it was more likely that it was the encouraging international atmosphere which persuaded Saddam to make this crucial move.

Some observers believe that the most urgent factor which pushed Saddam to invade Kuwait was his economic destruction after the war with Iran. It is obvious that the post-war economic crisis was one of the most important factors which challenged Saddam's regime. There was public discontent at the difficulties of everyday life. Many creditors were beginning to press for payment and Iraq could not get fresh credits from foreign countries to alleviate the desperate economic need. Saddam did not only want money to rebuild his shattered economy, his priority was to maintain his chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. He was involved in illegal activities with the US and British Administrations and other western countries in using some of the Banks' credits to procure machinery parts to build his military machine. Thus, after these illegal deals were revealed, following the BNL Atlanta scandal, the US changed its mind about supplying Iraq with the \$1 billion credit for food, and many other western and eastern countries did the same.(28) So, there is no doubt that Kuwait's wealth and its investments abroad tempted Saddam to fill his empty treasury. In addition, he would control 20% of the world oil reserves. Thus, the first action for the Bush administration after the invasion, was to work on a plan to freeze Kuwaiti assets.(29)



According to an Iraqi statement, Saddam appeared to play the role, in competition with the US, as well with the Soviet Union, of protector of the Arabs. He felt he had proved his ability for this role by holding off the threat of Iran, protecting the region from the Iranian revolution for eight years. He, therefore, felt more entitled to do this job than America.(30) In his meeting with Miss April Glaspie, he gave a clear hint of this motive when he said:

**"....had the Iranians overrun the region, American troops could not have stopped them unless they used nuclear weapons. I do not want to belittle you but I believe that...yours is a society which cannot accept ten thousand dead in one battle".(31)**

Obviously, the Americans understood very well what was in Saddam's mind; he wanted the leading role in controlling the Gulf's oil resources, which would make him a super power, able to challenge the Americans and the whole world. America could never tolerate such strategic competition, which would affect its interests increasingly. The US Secretary of State, James Baker, admitted in his report that one of the important results of the Gulf war was to prevent Saddam from filling the seat vacated by the Soviet Union in the region.(32)

Those observers who believed that Iraq's military achievements would allow it to threaten any country in the

region, including Israel, are almost certainly correct. These achievements include advanced technology weapons, weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, biological and chemical and missile technology, which was developed in Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war, with the help of Egypt. These achievements worried America and Israel increasingly, particularly as Saddam had become very interested in the post-war era in accurate long-range missiles, such as the Babylon supergun project, which was designed by Dr Bull. Saddam was always looking for a leading role by using the Palestinian issue, acting as a Arab hero and a credible liberator, who would win back the rights of the Palestinian people with his anti-imperialism and anti-Zionism slogans and would not hesitate to use any weapon if he had the opportunity to do so. Thus, these weapons made Saddam an international threat. This was, no doubt, one of the most pressing factors, in America's apparent indifference to the prospect of his invading Kuwait, and it enabled America and its allies to enter the region with justification to destroy Saddam's dangerous, non-conventional weapons.

However, the power of the Iraqis, which was built and sustained to the last bullet and mine by the super powers and their allies, could be crushed very easily by the technologically-superior arms suppliers. The Americans and their allies managed to achieve many other dreamed-for goals when Saddam invaded Kuwait.

## Responsibility for the Gulf Crisis

Political analysts have advanced many arguments and views, which are usually at variance with one another, about the responsibility and the real motive for the Gulf crisis. There are those that argue that it was a plot hatched by some Arab rulers in co-operation with the US and its allies to destroy Saddam's growing power. Others put the blame on Saddam alone and consider him responsible for the adventure, because he was trying to build an Iraqi empire under his leadership to assume the position of regional super power, which was obviously Saddam's dream.(34) He did not turn Iraq into a massive military storage system, with help from the west and the east and their allies, just to achieve this aim. We can assume that the decision to invade Kuwait was his alone and that nobody, not even a member of his inner circle, dared to gainsay him even if he thought his plans might end in disaster.

Nevertheless, evidence points to the existence of more than one party outside Iraq, that bears some responsibility for the invasion of Kuwait:

**The US:** During the Iraq-Iran war the US supplied Saddam with intelligence data and also encouraged third parties to supply him with weapons. The US also provided him with loans and assistance directly and indirectly. Saddam's



relation with America were later affected adversely by the Irangate scandal which was exposed in 1986. The US, through George Bush, who was then Vice- president, apologised and assured Saddam that there was no shift in the US position toward him.(35) Bush was on the pro-Saddam team in the American administration.(36)

With the end of the Iraq-Iran war, with Saddam as the victor, US interests were secured from the Iranian threat. That much was acknowledged by Iraq and the US.(37) However, the end of the Iranian threat also meant the end of the reason for US support of Saddam. Conservative US policy-makers did not agree with continuing US support for Saddam, but Bush and other members of the Reagan administration who were pro-Iraq thought that it was in the US interest to continue a pro-Iraq policy on the grounds that such a policy would help contain Saddam and might even incline him to moderation through financial assistance and diplomatic courtesy. Bush and like-minded colleagues argued that such a policy was in line with Iraq's importance, particularly in view of Iraq's economic importance as the country with the second largest (after Saudi Arabia) oil resources in the world. The Thatcher government followed the US's friendly policy which was shown by turning a blind eye to Saddam's gross violation of human rights and the use of chemical weapons against civilians during the Iraq-Iran war.

Through commercial relations with the US and Britain, Saddam was able to transform Iraq into the second largest military power in the Middle East after Israel. he was able partially to use US agricultural loans to buy weapons. Some of the deals were clandestine to the extent that the US and the British Governments concealed the details from the Congress and the British Parliament respectively. This was due to the strong desire of the US and British governments to maintain strong links with Saddam's regime.(38) Later on, however, Mossad, in co-operation with the CIA and M16, launched an anti-Saddam campaign motivated primarily by the increased Israeli unease about Iraq's growing military strength.(39) The campaign stopped when Saddam sent his troops to the Kuwaiti border.

On 11 April 1990, when the western campaign had reached a peak a US Congress delegation visited Saddam. The delegation assured Saddam of Bush's desire to establish the strongest possible relations with his regime, and assured him that they did not support the anti-Saddam campaigns.(40) The US ambassador to Baghdad, Miss April Glaspie, also assured Saddam, when she met him eight days before the invasion, that she had direct instructions from Bush to work for the best possible and the deepest relations with Iraq, because Iraq had made a historic contribution to the peace and prosperity of the region.(41)

Saddam thought that America's attitude towards him had not changed and believed Miss Glaspie when she told him



that US concerns about his weapons were only related to the threat or use of these weapons against Israel and its allies in the Gulf. As a step to reassure the US, instead of confronting her, Saddam concluded a non-aggression pact with Saudi Arabia. He followed this with a verbal message to the US, delivered by the Saudi Ambassador to Washington, Prince Bandār Bin Şultān, to assure the it that his threat to burn half of Israel was simply for public consumption and that he would not have made such a threat if it was not for his belief that Israel might launch another attack on Iraq similar to that in 1981.(42)

**Egypt:** President Mubārak of Egypt played a key role in the Kuwait crisis that preceded Saddam's invasion. It was Mubaārak who arranged for the US Congressional delegation to visit Saddam during April 1990 in an attempt to clear the air between the US and Iraq.(43) The efforts made by Mubārak, King Ḥusayn of Jordan and the PLO chairman, Yāsser `Arafāt, gave Kuwait the wrong signal as did America, namely that Saddam would not use force against it. This led the Kuwaitis to believe that Saddam's troops massing on the border were a show of force to frighten and blackmail them. This caused the Kuwaitis to take an uncompromising stand during the Jeddā negotiations. Egyptian strategy could not be different from that of the US since Egypt was the third most important regional ally to the US after Israel and Saudi Arabia. Egyptian diplomacy, in effect, made Saddam's invasion of Kuwait inevitable. Obviously, in exchange for this attitude, Egypt was hoping to receive financial and



political support for its economic and political decline; it wished to play a leading role within the new political forum that appeared to be being formed between the US and its allies in the region. This might well explain why the US wrote off Egypt's military debts to the US.

**Kuwait:** The Kuwaiti government cannot be considered blameless during the crisis. The Kuwaiti oil policy which led to over-production resulted in lower oil prices, which magnified the economic plight of Saddam's regime. Kuwait also refused to write off Iraqi debts or agree to the new demarcation of the borders. When they also ignored Saddam's threats, he felt justified in begin his troop build-up. The Kuwaiti delegation, particularly the Kuwaiti Prime Minister, took a tough stand, which Saddam saw as a challenge to him and ungrateful in view of the fact that Kuwait had been sheltered from Iran by Iraq for eight years. The Kuwaiti stand surprised many Arab officials and observers, including members of the then Kuwaiti opposition, who expressed the feeling that Kuwaiti diplomacy could have avoided the invasion and saved the area from the catastrophe of war.(44)

Shaykh Jābir al-Ṣabāḥ sent a note to his Crown Prince, asking him to stand firm against the Iraqis at the Jeddā meeting, which was discovered by the Iraqis after the occupation.(45) We may surmise that the Kuwaitis could not have had taken such an anti-Iraqi position if it had not been for US support. The US was the protector of Kuwait and

was responsible for its decision. It was also directly concerned with the issue of oil prices. It seems that the US had all the cards in the crisis.(46) The Kuwaiti military attaché in Baghdad, Colonel Sa'Id Maṭar, sent intelligence data to his Government three months before the invasion, informing them about the Iraqi military operation against Kuwait. On 25 July he assured his government that the Iraqis would make their move on 2 August.(47)

Saddam's warning to Kuwait and the US was made clear to Miss Glaspie:

"....if we do not get what we want from the Kuwaiti during our next meetings with them in Jeddah, then it is natural that we shall not accept that we should let Iraq die."

Miss Glaspie's reply was that the US had no opinion on Arab-Arab conflicts, particularly border problems of the kind Iraq had with Kuwait. In addition, Miss Glaspie's comments on the impending invasion of Kuwait were:

"....I received an instruction to ask you, in the spirit of friendship and not confrontation, about your intention. I say this is a simple description of the concern of my government. I do not mean that the situation is simple. But the concern is simple".(48)

It was this declaration that Saddam took as the famous green light for him to advance into Kuwait, which was totally in contradiction to the attitude that the US took after Saddam's invasion. The testimony of the American Ambassador to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in March 1991 was different from the Iraqi account of her meeting with Saddam, as she said that she warned Saddam several times that Washington would not allow military aggression against Kuwait.

There were other American signals which led Saddam to believe that his invasion of Kuwait would not be confronted by America. These signals were:

- (1) On 24 July, State Department spokesperson Margaret Tutweiller said,

**"....we do not have any security commitments to Kuwait." (49)**

- (2) Lee Hamilton, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in the US Congress asked John Kelly, the Assistant Secretary of State, on 31 July 1990, if there was a US commitment to come to Kuwait's defence if it was attacked. John Kelly informed him that the US did not have a defence treaty with any Gulf country which compelled the US to defend Kuwait.(50)



(3) Following the receipt by the US State Department of a report about Miss Glaspie's meeting with Saddam, an official programme on The Voice of America was cancelled. This programme was meant to assure Kuwait that the US would support it in the face of an Iraqi threat. The programme also attacked Saddam strongly. Saddam expressed his condemnation to Miss Glaspie about a statement made by Richard Powertcher on 19 July 1990, that the US would defend its friends in the area. Saddam considered this an anti-Iraqi stand by the US; the cancellation of the Voice of America programme was thus a measure meant to reassure Saddam that America was not showing hostility.(51)

(4) Saddam received no warning from the US or its allies about massing his troops on the border with Kuwait. The US never warned Saddam that it would use force until the very hour of his invasion.(52) This led to doubts, even among America's closest friends.(53) This lack of warning to Saddam was in spite of American intelligence and satellite photograph information, which informed the White House and the State Department that an invasion was imminent.(54)

Saddam was led to believe that the US was preparing him to play the role of policeman of the Gulf, because US policy, as in the case of the Shah of Iran, was based on strengthening one power to play the role of the protector of the area. Hence, Saddam thought that America could not

find a better player than he. Saddam naturally thought that to play such a role he would need a coastline, which meant that Kuwait might give him such a coastline. This was probably the real reason behind the firm instruction that was given by Saddam to `Izzat Ibrāhim, to see through the Jeddah meeting.(55)

To reassure Bush about his desire to curb oil prices, Saddam told Miss Glaspie,

"....We do not want high oil prices. During 1974 I dictated an article which appeared under the name of Ṭāriq `Azīz, which was against high oil prices. It was the first article by an Arab in that direction".

However, Saddam did not appear to understand the real US intentions or objectives. US strategy was based on the principle, "Create the appropriate conditions so that we can interfere". This was the basis of US relations with Saddam. All those conditions that the US created were to enable it to enter the area in full strength, so as to implement its design of total control over oil resources. This was particularly so after the demise of the communist bloc and the end of the Cold War, which meant that Europe did not need to depend on the US any more. Europe indeed had the potential, with Japan, to become a greater economic power than the US.(56) In such a new world order Saddam began to exercise power in competition with the US, just as

the Soviet Union had.(57) This made it imperative for the US to control Gulf oil resources, which would put it in the leading role in the new world order. In addition, the US through Saddam's misadventure, achieved other goals, which were later acknowledged by the top White House officials.(58)

Some analysts, judging from the sequence of events before and after Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, claim that Saddam was not ignorant of the real US objectives. In fact, these analysts think that there was an understanding between Saddam and the US to manufacture the Kuwait crisis. One may say that, whether Saddam was ignorant of the real US objectives and was led once again into a US trap or whether he was, in fact, a willing partner of the US in its strategy, the result was the same, he helped the US to achieve its objectives in the area. Saddam has proved to be the best servant of US interests, since he provided it with the excuse to control the area, and enabled it to make Iraq a test case for its new world order. This represented a neo-colonialism, similar to the old one, controlling the Third World, but with different means and with limited casualties. The Iraqi nation had to pay a heavy price for this, while the US reaped all the benefits since the Gulf States, Germany, and Japan paid for its protection. This might explain why Saddam is still in power years after his defeat in the Gulf War, and why the US rejected any other alternative ruler in Iraq. Major General Martin Bradwater, a Pentagon official said,



"....It's far easier to deal with a tame Saddam than with an unknown quantity." (59)

## The Invasion of Kuwait

At 2 am on 2 August 1989, Iraqi forces crossed the border and quickly gained control of the whole of Kuwait. Iraq first claimed that it had been invited to help Kuwaiti revolutionaries who were attempting to overthrow the al-Şabāḥ Government in Kuwait, a traitorous regime which was involved in Zionist and imperialist schemes, to establish a new Kuwaiti provisional free government. The Iraqis claimed as well that their troops would leave Kuwait as soon as the new government was in place.(60)

Within hours of the invasion, President Bush condemned the Iraqi aggression; he froze Iraqi and Kuwaiti assets in the US and sent extra warships from the Indian Ocean to the Gulf region.(61) The British Government froze Kuwaiti assets in Britain as well, which were worth thousands of millions of dollars.

On the day of the invasion the UN Security Council met and approved Resolution 660, condemning the aggression and calling for Iraq's immediate withdrawal.(62) The US imposed a trade and a travel ban on Iraq. Europe and Japan followed the US and imposed economic sanctions against Iraq. The Soviet Union and China suspended all arms sales to Iraq.(63)

On 6 August, the economic sanctions against Iraq were further tightened, as the Security Council passed Resolution 661, which involved wide-ranging sections against Iraq, including a complete trade boycott.(64) The following day, on 7 August, Saudi Arabia closed down the Yanbu` pipeline. Turkey closed down the pipeline running through its territory to the Mediterranean. The United States and the Soviet Union issued a joint condemnation of the invasion in an extraordinary display of solidarity.(65)

The rapid international response within twenty-four hours was due to President Bush's personal diplomatic activity with other heads of state.(66) Saddam had not expected such a reaction.

Saddam felt surrounded. He regarded the invasion as a natural, but desperate reaction to the Kuwaiti economic conspiracy against his regime after he had tried everything to avoid it. Moreover, all indications he had received before the invasion suggested to him that Kuwait was going to be easy to target.

Saddam's political history indicates that whenever he was faced with a critical situation, he preferred to allay the situation, rather than to confront it and reduce tensions rather than escalating them. Thus, his response to this unexpected crisis would be not different from his usual manoeuvres. Accordingly, Saddam announced that his troops would be withdrawn as soon as the situation of the



new government settled down in Kuwait.(67) The Americans knew Saddam's character very well, and knew what kind of tactics, he might employ when he was in a tight corner. President Bush responded quickly.

Many sources indicate that most of the Arab leaders appeared after the first day of the invasion with only one subject on the agenda, to seek a solution through compromise. King Ḥusayn of Jordan and Yāsser `Arafāt were working together on, to persuade King Fahd and Saddam to meet face to face in a mini-summit, in order to solve the problem without any outside interference. Saddam was also keen to keep the crisis in Arab hands, especially after the massive international response as a result of American pressure. However, all the Arab mediations were sabotaged, owing to pressure from President Bush on the Arabs to thwart any attempt by them to solve the crisis, as follows:

- (1) He took great pains to persuade King Fahd, through Prince Bandār (the Saudi Ambassador to the US), to accept the American deployment, sending a high-level team with satellite pictures of Iraqi forces to show that the Kingdom faced a serious threat from the Iraqis.(68) This made it difficult for the king to reject the American offer.

One of Bush's manoeuvres to get the King to permit an American presence in the Kingdom was to point out to him that there would be an Arab and Islamic cover for that presence. To calm the worries expressed by the King about the deployment, James Baker assured the Saudis that the American soldiers would leave the Kingdom when they had finished their mission, and that they were only there to bolster the Gulf States against Iraqi aggression.

Thus, when the King went to Cairo for the Arab summit, his aim was to get the Arab to condemn the invasion, and to find an Arab and Islamic cover for the American troops in his land, rather than to find a solution for the crisis.

- (2) He phoned King Ḥasan of Morocco to ask him to accept the Saudi request for Arab cover. King Ḥasan could not reject the American request, since he owed his throne to the CIA. (69)
- (3) He maintained contact with President Mubārak from the first hours of the invasion. At the time, King Ḥusayn of Jordan made an arrangement with Mubārak to hold a mini-summit in August with Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen and Saudi Arabia, to devise an Arab solution, Egypt however, condemned the invasion on 3 August, before the meeting of the Arab Secretaries of State in Cairo. The US Secretary of State, James Baker, announced to

reporters on 6 August that he had already agreed with President Mubārak to send troops to Saudi Arabia, even though Mubārak had asked the Americans not to reveal this information before the Cairo summit.

Clearly America's aim from action was to thwart any Arab compromise. Owing to extreme US pressure, the emergency Arab Summit in Cairo marked the collapse of the Arab League. The Arabs divided into two camps: the anti-Iraq one, consisting of Egypt, Syria, Morocco and the Gulf States, which took a hard line against the invasion and called for unconditional withdrawal; the other camp consisting of Jordan, Yemen, PLO, Libya, Algeria and Sudan, which took the Iraqi side, not because they supported the invasion, even though Kuwait was unpopular among most of the poor Arab states, but because they did not approve of the American role in the crisis, as being too domineering.

It was suspected that the Arab League summit was held to give legitimacy to the American deployment of troops for the destruction of Iraq's military potential, rather than to find an Arab solution. Throughout the preparation for the summit the Iraqis tried to get the Arab radicals to undermine the pro-western camp. But all their effort had little effect, and the resolution of the Arab summit went in favour of America and its Arab allies.(70)



Some Arab leaders and diplomats claimed that the summit conference in Cairo was part of an imperialist conspiracy against the Arab nation. Iran also viewed it as an American attempt to dominate the Middle East region. (71)

Bush's decision to subvert Saddam's ambitions was arranged gradually. His first plan centred on the defence of Saudi Arabia from the possibility of Iraqi aggression, despite the fact that Saddam's plan to attack Saudi Arabia at that time was very remote, because after Kuwait was taken, all the Iraqi forces were in defensive positions, and avoided any sort of provocative gestures towards the Saudis that might be misunderstood as an Iraqi signal to invade them.

It seems that all the evidence about Iraqi plans to invade Saudi Arabia was manufactured by President Bush to encourage the Saudis to agree to the US military deployment in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, it seems that President Bush did not give a clear explanation to the American people, not even to some of his top officials, who did not want to use force to solve the crisis.

Obviously, President Bush tried very hard to arouse fear of Saddam. He claimed that he would undoubtedly use force, or the threat of force, to keep any country in the

Gulf region in line, at that time or in the future, controlling the oil in the region and monopolising the oil market. He thus, would hold America, and the whole world, at his mercy, if he was not stopped in Kuwait.

President Bush's tactic in declaring in more than one statement that the American mission was defensive only, (72) concealed the real aims behind the deployment due to the following reasons:

- (1) The king was reluctant to accept the presence of US forces in Saudi Arabia when Bush needed to deploy them there. According to an American intelligence report, the Saudis preferred to deal with Saddam in their own way, by pushing him away with money, rather than allowing the Americans to intervene. (73)
- (2) Bush did not want to give Saddam a signal which might push him to attack before they had time to get their equipment on the ground ready. This is why Bush refused clearly to express his reactions at the beginning of the invasion, and told reporters that America did not contemplate any military intervention. (74) The American military experts and top military staff were very concerned about the first unit which was sent to Saudi Arabia which consisted only light forces which could easily have been attacked by Saddam. (75)

(3) Bush wanted to give Saddam a chance to change his mind about his announcement that he would withdraw from Kuwait, following the massive political and economic pressure by the international community. Saddam demonstrated to Arab leaders his desire to negotiate; he desired some form of compromise or face-saving formula, which would allow him to take his forces out of Kuwait without being subjected to total defeat.

There is evidence that he sent for the American chargé d'affaire in Baghdad, Mr Wilson, on 6 August. In his meeting with him he offered assurances that he did not want any confrontation with the United States. He expressed his disappointment about American attempts to sabotage relations with him and make an enemy of Iraq. He said that America had made a horrible mistakes when it weakened its friends, i.e. the Shah of Iran, and he hoped that it would not repeat the same mistake with him. He said that America could safeguard its interests only with strong allies, not with weak.(76) The American chargé d'affaire, assured him that President Bush was most concerned about Saudi Arabia and that the US President wanted an assurance that the Saudis would not be attacked. Saddam said:

"....you can take that assurance to your President and to the Saudis and to everybody in the Middle East. Those who do not attack us, we are not going to attack, those who do not hurt us, we are not going to hurt, those who seek



our friendship, we will rush after them and beg for their friendship." (77)

It appears that the American and British Governments, after initially giving Saddam the signal to invade Kuwait, then gave him another signal, to stay in Kuwait. The second signal which made Saddam decide not to pull out of Kuwait, was Mrs Thatcher's suggestion that sanctions on Iraq might continue, whether Saddam withdrew from Kuwait or not. (78)

Accordingly, on 8 August, Saddam formally annexed Kuwait. (79) On 10 August, he asked all diplomatic missions in Kuwait to relocate to Baghdad by 24 August, justifying this action by saying that Kuwait had become an Iraqi province. The border between Jordan and Iraq was also closed to Westerners trying to leave Iraq.

It seems highly likely that the situation which developed, directed by America, left Saddam feeling that America wanted to deepen the crisis in order to finish him off, without allowing him the option of withdrawing:

- (1) The speed of the American military preparations and the massive forces which moved into Saudi Arabia, together with the British and French, gave the impression that their role was not simply defensive.
- (2) President Bush, in his speech on 8 August, to the American people to whip up support for his decision to

send US forces to the Arabian peninsula, sent a signal to Saddam that the US forces were directed at him:

**"....This will not stand." (80)**

- (3) Again, on 9 August, in a press conference, President Bush uttered the famous words:

**"....I have drawn a line in the sand."**

This statement sent a message, not only to Saddam, but to many other Arabs -even those who had accepted the US claim that their forces were for defensive purposes only- and they feared the consequences. (81)

- (4) President Mubārak also gave an indication in a speech on 8 August that the situation in the region was serious. He sent a message to Saddam, advising him to pull out from Kuwait in such a way that he could save face. It was so expressed, however, that Saddam regarded it as a deliberate humiliation by the Egyptian president.

On the one hand it seemed that Mubārak was working to avoid a catastrophe, by his calling for an emergency summit, pretending that the Arabs still had the opportunity for an Arab solution, while, on the other, he had already given permission for the nuclear aircraft carrier US

Eisenhower to pass through the Suez Canal, and had agreed to Bush's request to send troops to Saudi Arabia.(82)

The whole course of the Cairo Summit, its announcement, its organisation, to its result, gave the Iraqis and many other delegates the impression that the Summit had been planned by America and its allies.(83) The Iraqis were provoked to the extent that, before the Summit was finished, Saddam was broadcasting a message to the people of Egypt, Najd and Ḥejāz to revolt against their governments, which had allowed the imperialists to enter the region again.(84) These unexpected impacts of the Cairo Summit worried both the Americans and the British about the possibility of their Arab allies retreating, thus dismantling the coalition.(85) This was particularly so after Saddam's massive campaign against the Saudi ruling family, following King Fahd's open condemnation of his invasion, on 8 August. From Baghdad Radio and from a station called Radio Holy Mecca, broadcasting from Iraq, King Fahd was described as a traitor for inviting foreign forces into the holy land.(86)

The following measures were taken by Saddam to face American pressure after the Arab League summit in Cairo:

- (1) He employed his tired technique in the media, declaring a large scale campaign to mass the Iraqis behind him. He built up a wave of public enmity towards America and its lackeys; the latter were the



new enemy, replacing the Persians. It was an easy task for him, as America, the supporter of Israel, was unpopular with most Arab populations.

In one of his speeches to the Iraqis, to strengthen their fighting spirit, he said:

**"....the Iraqis are ready to eat the soil and not bow their heads to the aggressive invader."**

(87)

On the other hand, the international siege gave Saddam the opportunity to put the blame on the imperialist West and its allies for the Iraqi economic destruction which prevented him from working for economic reconstruction.(88)

- (2) In a radio message, on 10 August, Saddam called upon the Arab masses and all Muslims to take up arms for a Jihad, to liberate the Muslim shrines in Saudi Arabia, which were in the hands of the Americans and the Zionists. Accordingly, in the West Bank, Jordan and Maghrib States, there were large demonstrations supporting Saddam.(89)
- (3) On the Arab front, in an attempt to link the question of Kuwait with other Arab issues, on 12 August, Saddam suggested that Iraq would accept Resolution 660 and withdraw from Kuwait, if Israel withdrew from the

occupied territories, and Syria and Israel pulled their forces out of Lebanon.(90) Saddam was playing his trump card, and sought to build an image of an Arab leader who was ready to face Israel. So, he became deeper involved in the crisis. The Americans and British responded to his manoeuvre, by imposing a naval blockade of Iraq on 13 August without any UN sanction for this.

- (4) For the second time, after the Algiers Agreement of 1975, Saddam made the most far-reaching concession possible to ensure his political survival, by offering the Iranians what the Iraqis had fought for eight years of bloody war. On 15 August Saddam accepted in full the terms of the 1975 Algiers Agreement, which he had cancelled eight years earlier.(91) From this humiliating move, Saddam seemed to be trying to ally himself with his larger eastern neighbour, in order to fight the Americans and the coalition in the South.
- (5) Saddam then played the hostage card, in an attempt to bargain with the west. He announced on 17 August that he would detain westerners in Kuwait at civil and military installations. The next day forty British and more than twenty American, German and French citizens were moved to Iraq. In a radio interview, `Abd al-Razzāq al-Hashīmī, the Iraqi Ambassador to Paris, implied that the fate of the foreign nationals in Iraq and Kuwait would depend on the behaviour of their

respective governments.(92) Meanwhile, Saddam made an offer that he would free all foreigners in Kuwait and Iraq in exchange for the withdrawal of US troops and an end to the naval blockade,(93) but neither the Americans, nor their allies were willing to accept this offer.

Over the first two weeks of November, against the political uproar in the American press over the difference between the American decision-makers about the administration's Gulf policy and the demands for more deployment to the Gulf, Secretary of State James Baker's visit to Europe and the Middle East gave Saddam the impression that the Americans were moving from a defensive to an offensive plan. However, Primakov had informed him of this shift of attitude earlier in October, on his second mission that month to Baghdad, after he had met President Bush and Mrs Thatcher, and knew that their determination was for the war option and that room for negotiation was gone.(94) Saddam was assured of this after the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 678 on 29 November, authorising the use of force to dislodge the Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

Saddam was, by now, concentrating on containing the international coalition which was confronting him, using his favourite strategy of stick and carrot, which had served him well during his long political career, to contain the coalition. He had offered financial incentives



by supplying Iraqi oil free of charge.(95) At the same time, he threatened the coalition with terrorist activities. He expressed his readiness to hit the allies' targets throughout the world if Iraq were attacked. This Iraqi overture was expressed by Ṭāriq `Azīz in an interview with the French News Agency on 31 August,(96) and confirmed by Abū Abbās, the Head of the Palestine Liberation Front, a constituent organisation of the PLO, in a press conference in Baghdad.(97)

When Saddam noticed that his tactic of using hostages as a human shield was ignored by the western governments, he tried to appeal to western public opinion and win international sympathy, which might put pressure on these governments to deter them from making military strikes against Iraq. On 23 August he was televised meeting a group of British and American hostages to show the western audience his good will and to improve his image by showing that he was not hiding behind women and children. Then, on 28 August, Saddam ordered the release of all women and children but continued to detain the men at strategic locations throughout Iraq.(98) In addition, some western politicians, acting as mediators, visited Iraq, and Saddam released some of their countrymen in another attempt to influence western public opinion. It appears that he made the release of hostages a weapon to punish certain governments and reward others for their attitude towards him.

From Saddam's point of view, the hostages' presence at strategic sites made the coalition's bombing of these locations less likely. But, Sir Edward Heath (Former British Prime Minister), who met Saddam on 21 October to ask for the release of the British hostages, said that Mrs Thatcher would not stop bombing the Iraqi strategic sites even if her citizens were being held hostage there.(99) President Mitterrand's analysis in the middle of November was just the same as Sir Edward Heath's. He said that if Saddam released the hostages unconditionally, he was willing to negotiate. The hostage release would be regarded as the first phase in resolving the crisis. (100)

Thus, it seemed to Saddam, which later proved to be incorrect,(101) that the west's anger over the hostages, particularly in America and Britain made them keener to go to war than to negotiate with him. Accordingly, on 6 November, Saddam decided to release all the foreign hostages held in Baghdad and Kuwait.(102) Saddam probably took this move when President Bush revealed his suddenly positive attitude through in his 30 November offer for direct talks with him. President Bush suggested that his Secretary of State, James Baker, should visit Baghdad between 20 December 1990 and 3 January 1991 and that he should receive the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Ṭāriq `Azīz, in Washington after 10 December.(103)

To make sure of the credibility of the new American attitude, Saddam tried to play for time by postponing his



meeting with Secretary of State Baker to the last possible moment and refused to meet Baker before 12 January 1991, three days before the deadline set by Resolution 678. At a press conference on 9 January, James Baker described the Iraqi insistence on the 12 January meeting as an obvious effort to avoid the deadline of 15 January. The Americans suspected, which seems probable, that the Iraqi President was trying to spin out the talking until the holy month of Ramaḍān had begun, in order to embarrass the Arab members of the coalition about fighting during the holy month. When the hot weather started after Ramaḍān, conditions would not be in favour of the western troops. President Bush understood Saddam's manoeuvre and cancelled 'Azīz's visit to Washington and Baker's visit to Baghdad. Meanwhile, the Iraqi refusal to agree about timing strengthened President Bush and enabled him to increase his demands, which, in addition to Iraq's unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait, now included the elimination of Iraq's missile and nuclear facilities, together with compensation for losses and damage to Kuwait.

Saddam reached a final decision after this failed attempt at talks, which he saw as another signal that the new American initiative was just a tactic so that Bush could assure his voters that he had done all he could to avoid war, freeing the hostages while giving nothing in return. Saddam was convinced that President Bush's aim was not to defend the Saudis or to liberate Kuwait but to destroy his non-conventional arms. It appeared to him that



President Bush wanted to create the crisis and develop it, in order to thwart Saddam's ambitions.

Thus, unconditional withdrawal would not avert war and the use of force against Iraq appeared inevitable. Bowing to the Americans could only affect his personal prestige, and he would be in great danger. His economic plight had been increased because of the sanctions imposed as a result of his invasion of Kuwait. Any retreat now, would make him more, rather than less, vulnerable to an American attack. If he withdrew without some concession in return -which the west refused to give-, his regime's existence would be in question.

Thus, Saddam tried to play the last card in his hand to save his personal position. He announced his decision to fight to the end, rather than to suffer humiliation from the Americans. He hoped that the loss of Kuwait in the war with the allies would make him a hero. He would be lauded by the Arab masses as a new Nasir, a leader who defied world imperialism and survived. He gave his war a fatalistic shape to arouse the Iraqi spirit to fight:

**"....if it is God Almighty's will that we fight this battle to cleanse the Arab homeland of all this rottenness, so be it".(104)**

From his dealings with Saddam, Bush was sure that Saddam would never shift his strategy and withdraw from

Kuwait empty-handed. The aim which he had worked so hard to achieve had at last succeeded. Thus it seems likely that his suggestion for direct talks with Saddam and his desire for a peaceful solution to the Gulf crisis were to conceal his manipulative role in the crisis, when the matter was questioned by Congress, the media and the American people.

Once again President Bush had been able to lead Saddam into a trap by getting him to free the hostages unconditionally. This appeared clear from his statement which was issued on 21 December, saying that the release of the hostages had relieved him of a heavy moral burden and gave him a free hand to act as necessary.(105) Thus, both President Bush and Saddam sent their Secretaries of State to Geneva on 9 January 1991, knowing that the meeting would be a fiasco, because each one would offer nothing to the other, since the minds of the two Presidents were already set on war.

Despite the Secretary of State's announcement of the failure of his mission, because of the hard-line attitude of the Iraqis and their rejection of any diplomatic solution whatsoever,(106) President Bush again pressed the United Nations' Secretary General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, to attempt another peace mission to Baghdad, to show the international audience that he had given peace every chance and that Saddam was the one who was insisting on war.

As the UN Secretary General admitted his failure on 13 January, France tried one last time to avoid war, on 14 January. The proposals were explicitly linked with Iraqi withdrawal and the holding of an international conference on wider Middle East issues. The French Foreign Minister, Ronald Dummies, was to go to Baghdad to present Saddam with the plan, (107) but the US opposed the trip, probably from fear of an unexpected change in Saddam's attitude.

Thus, after this last chance for peace, which was aborted by the Americans, Iraq braced itself for the war, which became an inevitable consequence, by reason of Saddam's and Bush's intransigence and their determination to achieve their own interests, which were for Saddam to save his political skin and for President Bush to win the next election.



## Operation Desert Storm and the Mother of all Battles

In the early hours of 17 January 1991, the coalition attacked, under US leadership. The Iraqis only knew that the war had begun when the bombs began falling on their capital, because the Americans had deployed their latest high technology military products to attack Iraq, such as the F-117 fighter, which was invisible to Iraqi radar because of its angular shape and was known as *Shabāḥ* (ghost). It was armed with laser-guided bombs to hit vital targets with accuracy.(108)

The initial coalition attacks were on the Iraqi early warning stations, air force headquarters, radar, communication bases and the microwave towers. They disabled Saddam's defence system, weakened his resistance to the coalition air offence, and put the Iraqi air force at a serious disadvantage. Thus, one day after the outbreak of the air campaign the coalition's air forces achieved complete mastery of the air and put Iraq at their mercy. This enabled them to paralyse Iraq's ability to command and to control its forces and destroyed their ability to fight.

Then the coalition began its extensive attack on vital targets such as oil refineries, air fields, chemical weapons complexes, power plants, the Presidential Palace, the headquarters of the Ba'th Party and the Ministry of

Defence. The Americans and their allies claimed that their main motive for the massive air offensive was to weaken Iraq's offensive military capabilities. Eventually their targets widened and serious damage was caused to the electrical, water, telephone networks, petrol refining capacity, the main bridges, and many principal roads.

Air Vice Marshal W.J. Wratten, Deputy Commander of the British Forces, said that the key Iraqi targets were hit seriously in the first three days of the air campaign and that Iraqi air force could not be used in any offensive role.(109) Nevertheless, the booming campaign on subsidiary targets continued for a further thirty-eight days.

Two military analysts claim that the coalition's aim in this ferocious air offensive, of which the world had never seen the like, was to destroy the Iraqi nation, rather than to destroy Saddam's regime and his war machine.(110) Some credence is given to these claims by the statement of the former American Chief of Staff, General Colin Powell, admitting in his memoirs, that the Americans' desire was not to end Saddam's regime or to destroy his military capability totally. He also stated that some of his military capability was left to him to enable him to defend his regime internally and to contain the continuing Iranian threat to America's interests in the region.(111)

From the following reports and statements we can determine the real aim behind America's strategy in the war:

(1) Prince Sadr al-Din Aga Khān, the leader of the team appointed by the UN Secretary General Señor Perez de Cuellar to study Iraq's humanitarian needs after the war submitted a sad picture in his report about the civilian targets struck by the coalition air forces and the serious damage which was caused to public health. This was far removed from the declared aims of the War.(112)

(2) An investigation carried out by a Harvard University study group after the war indicated that the damage by the allies to the civilian infrastructure would cause acute consequences to public health and serious malnutrition for most of the civilian population.(113)

(3) At a press conference on 23 January 1991, General Colin Powell said:

**"....Our strategy for dealing with this Iraqi army is very simple. First we are going to cut it off and then we are going to kill it."(114)**

The first Iraqi response came two hours after the outbreak of the allied offensive. A Presidential statement,



broadcast by Radio Baghdad, informed the Iraqi Nation that the mother of all battles had started.(115) The second day of the fighting Saddam called for a holy war between pious Islam and the evil forces of the infidels. He accused the coalition of attacking the holy Shrines in Kerbalā' and Najaf and accused the Saudis of defiling the holy land by allowing Christian forces to use it as a base to attack an Arab Muslim country.(116)

On 18 January, Saddam carried out his threat to Israel, which he had issued earlier, that he would strike at the heart of the Israeli State if he was attacked by the allies. His Scud missile campaign against Israel continued for two weeks in order to create an Arab-Israeli conflict. The Israeli government's patience was at breaking point, as it had never failed to respond in all its history since the Israeli State was declared in 1948 to any Arab attack on its territory. Israeli public opinion was clamouring for retaliation against Iraq, but Israel was requested not to do so by the Americans and some members of the coalition, particularly the Arabs and Muslims, who would be criticised or in danger of a national uprising if they were seen supporting Israel against an Arab and Muslim country.

Obviously, the Americans knew that Saddam's attack on Israel was imminent, so they had already obtained the Israeli's reassurance that they would not retaliate. At the meeting between President Bush and the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, which took place in Washington in

October 1990, Shamir assured the American President that he would not attack Iraq, in return for massive military aid and many other promises in Israel's favour.(117)

However, Saddam failed to trigger an Israeli response, although, from the course of events it seems that he achieved some success through his Scud missile campaign. America made the search for Scud launching bases its top priority because of its psychological effect on civilian morale, which was greater, in fact, than its military threat. It disrupted the American war strategy, as they had to make great efforts to search for the Scuds to prevent Israeli retaliation, which would have jeopardised the coalition.

Saddam's other response was towards the environment. On 22 January, he set fire to the oil installations in Kuwait, causing vast fires and smoke in the area. He then ordered the crude oil from the Kuwaiti tanker terminal of Minā' al-Ahmadī to be pumped into the Gulf, causing an ecological disaster to the environment. This act was described as environmental terrorism by President Bush. Saddam's aims in this move were:

- (1) To complicate the allies' task;
- (2) To hide his failure to make any kind of military impression on the coalition;

(3) To create a crisis for the world oil market which, he hoped, might somehow bring about a quick ending to the war;

In an attempt to force the coalition to stop their attacks, Saddam put their captured pilots under strong psychological and physical pressure, which was clear their appearance on Iraqi television, threatening to deploy them alongside economic and military targets.(118) Again, his strategy for using prisoners of war as a human shield failed, as it increased the contempt that western public opinion felt for him, and he received a strong warning from the coalition. (119)

At midnight on 29 January, hundreds of Iraqi troops took the coalition by surprise and drove toward the desert Saudi border town of Khāfjī. It was an attempt supervised personally by Saddam, as Baghdad Radio announced. After two days of occupation, the coalition was able to dislodge the Iraqis after heavy street fighting between the two sides. The US lost its first casualties on the ground at Khāfjī. Twelve marines died and two were injured. Another seven marines died from friendly fire. On the Iraqi side the losses were a great deal higher in both men and equipment.(120)

It seems that Saddam wanted to achieve a propaganda gain, rather than any military objective.(121) The western allies commented that it was an indication of his



desperation to lure the allies into a ground war, of which the Iraqis had great experience in their eight year war with Iran. He hoped to impose substantial casualties on the coalition and claim a political victory before his defences around Kuwait were over-run, resulting in his losing his freedom of manoeuvre and forcing him to withdraw unconditionally from Kuwait without any guarantee that the departing force would not be attacked. This attack had indeed formed part of Saddam's war strategy since the war began, but President Bush prevented it from being fulfilled when he announced that the land offensive would be launched if and when the time was right.(122)

Saddam responded to the American President's statement by allowing the world media back into the country. He wanted to mass the Iraqis, the Arabs, the Muslims and the world audience on his side by allowing western journalists televise scenes to show indiscriminate bombings on Iraqi civilian targets, particularly the attack on *al-`Amiriyyah* shelter during an allied air raid, in which three hundred civilians were killed, most of them women and children.(123) He tried to strengthen the peace party among the coalition. His move this time was effective. Massive demonstrations took place in support of Saddam throughout the Arab world. Mounting waves of anger, even in Egypt, Syria and Morocco, broke against the allies. Anti-war demonstrations occurred throughout the Arab world, particularly in the Maghreb States.(124)

By mid-February, as the fighting continued, the Soviet Union again tried to take a more leading role. Primakov was sent to Baghdad by the Soviet President a third time to persuade Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait unconditionally. Accordingly, the RCC announced, on 15 February, for the first time since the crisis began, their readiness to comply with Resolution 660, (125) which called for unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait. However, it made a number of conditions:

- (1) Israel should withdraw from Palestine and other Arab territories, and if it refused the UN should impose sanctions on it in the same way as on Iraq;
- (2) All the American and allied troops should withdraw from the Gulf;
- (3) All the UN Resolutions against Iraq since the crisis began should be cancelled;
- (4) The Iraqi foreign debt, which was estimated to be about \$80 billion should be cancelled;
- (5) International guarantees should be given for Iraqi historical rights on land and sea;
- (6) Iraqi losses caused by the coalition air attacks should be made good;

The Americans saw that the Iraqis had not dropped any of their conditions but, on the contrary, had increased them. President Bush rejected all the Iraqi demands and, in addition, he called for Saddam's downfall.(126) Saddam's response to this threat to his political position resulted in his giving warning that he would use chemical weapons. Instead of carrying out this threat, however, he sent his Foreign Secretary, Ṭāriq `Azīz, to Moscow to inform the Soviets that he accepted their proposal, which was an unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait. He dropped his earlier demands and he set the time for his troops to withdraw at twenty-one days. He left the Soviets to resolve the Palestinian issue. This means that Saddam actually accepted the American terms.

Nevertheless, the Americans regarded Saddam's acceptance of the Soviet plan as a trick, resulting from his growing desperation. In a press interview on 21 February, President Bush gave Saddam until 8 p.m. Iraqi time, on Saturday 23 February, to withdraw unconditionally from Kuwait.(127) Saddam's comment on President Bush's statement came in his speech on 22 February:

"....the Soviet leadership told us that if Iraq agreed to withdraw then the war would end and negotiations would start. Iraq said it would withdraw, but what did Bush say? He said it was a trick and the war would continue. The



**Americans never considered what we said, never studied it carefully".(128)**

Saddam also proclaimed a glorious Iraqi victory over the coalition and he tried to justify his concessions by telling the Iraqi people and the Iraqi forces that the inevitable withdrawal from Kuwait was an act in their favour.(129) But the Americans seemed determined to thwart all Saddam's attempts to pull out from Kuwait with some face -saving formula. President Bush demanded a farther concession from Saddam:

**".... we must hear publicly and authoritatively of his acceptance of these terms".(130)**

He confirmed that the withdrawal should be complete by the time the deadline expired, otherwise the ground offensive would go ahead.

Obviously, Saddam could not accept the Americans' demand, which meant a public admission of fault. It would have posed a serious threat to his political survival; he would have accepted the destruction of the whole of Iraq, provided that he could have preserved his regime.

Once again, after he had failed to get the desired result from his many attempts, he began to mass his forces for the ground offensive and to raise the morale of his battered troops. He said:

"....when the battle becomes comprehensive with all types of weapons, the deaths on the allied side will be increased with God's help, when the flag of Allah Akbar will fly over the mother of all battles".(131)

President Bush's response to Saddam's resistance and his roundabout policy, came in the early morning of 24 February, as the ground war started to dislodge the Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Saddam was looking forward to the ground war, but, after two days, his forces were defeated and the allied forces moved rapidly into Iraq. The coalition attacked the Iraqi position from the rear, while the Iraqis were expecting a frontal attack and had built a strong protective line around their position to prevent the expected coalition advance.

When the army was close to defeat in Kuwait, Baghdad Radio announced, in the early morning of February 26, that Saddam had ordered his troops to withdraw from Kuwait. The Statement said:

"....the Iraqi leadership had stressed its acceptance of withdrawal in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolutions, when it agreed to the Soviet peace proposal, and it applauds Iraq's victories as it faced the whole world."(132)

President Bush regarded this statement again as one of Saddam's tactics to turn his defeat into victory in order to gain some political advantage. He announced that, because Saddam had not acknowledged his retreat, his order for withdrawal was to save the remnants of his army and regroup them again for another fight later. He decided that the war should continue until Saddam's military power was diminished.(133) This statement was followed by massive military action which destroyed many of the Iraqi troops who had fled Kuwait to save their lives.(134)

Next day, on 28 February, after the slaughter of the Iraqi troops, President Bush rapidly ordered the end of the desert operation, which appeared to have gone well beyond its aims as set out by the UN. He called a cease-fire and announced that the war was over before the coalition had finished their job of destroying the Iraqi leader; they had left him free without punishment. Indeed, in spite of all the crimes he had committed, he was left with enough of his military capability intact to defend his regime internally, as was later discovered.(135)



## The Impact of the Gulf War

As soon as the war ended, the huge scale of the destruction of life, the environment, property and production facilities, particularly in Iraq, were almost never mentioned by the Western media, and, more importantly, it seemed that the massive campaign against the Iraqi dictator, who was responsible for these disasters, had stopped. On the contrary, he was backed by the coalition to repress the Iraqi uprising in a massive brutal operation, when President Bush called on the people to revolt.(136)

So the high-principled talk of democracy, freedom, civil rights, stability and peace, with which America and its allies embarked on the desert operation against Iraq, concealed aims and objectives that later became evident in the aftermath of the war, including:

- (1) To destroy the civilian infrastructure of Iraq. More than 110,000 air attacks were launched and around 90,000 tons of bombs were dropped. This ferocious air campaign caused severe damage to the civilian support structure, (water supplies, fuel supplies, food stocks, sewage systems, garbage disposal systems, transportation systems, Baghdad television and Radio broadcasting systems, energy generation and distribution, oil production, bridges, strategically

important buildings, and the public health system) in every major settlement in Iraq. Mass starvation and serious disease were unavoidable in Iraq because of the air raids on the above civilian facilities, and the sanctions, which were later imposed on the Iraqis. The international aid organisations, which supplied medical supplies to the Iraqis, were able to serve less than 10% of the country's needs. According to American estimates, more than 70,000 people died after the end of the war for lack of food and medicine.

Some independent observers, like the UN task force, reported after their visit to Baghdad, in mid-March 1991, that the scale of destruction to the civilian facilities was neither coincidental nor accidental. In addition, the US air force admitted that 70% of the bombs that were dropped in the war, missed their intended targets. According to the estimates of a Green Peace study, based on American military figures, about 110,000 to 140,000 were killed in allied air attacks, several hundred thousand people were wounded and many others were forced to flee. Thus, it was far from the truth that the aims of the war and sanctions were to destroy Saddam's future potential ambitions.

- (2) To impose sanctions against Iraq, through America's influence in the UN, until Saddam's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction had been neutralised. These

sanctions have continued to the present day, because of Saddam's intransigence; they have seriously affected the Iraqi nation, but they have continued with them for the following reasons:

- (a) To force Saddam's regime to make further concessions, with the promise of eventually removing the sanctions and helping the Iraqi nation.
  - (b) To put Iraq and the whole region under scrutiny with the justification of watching and checking Saddam's regime.
  - (c) To keep Iraqi oil off the market so that the Saudi and Kuwaiti could take over the Iraqi oil quota. This would help to restore the Saudi and Kuwaiti economies, which had suffered because of the war.
- (3) To provoke a campaign of denigration, led by the Kuwaitis, against the whole of the Iraqi nation, its history, culture and civilisation, instead of against the regime, which, in fact, has inflicted more harm on its own country than any one else. Kuwait's attitude will result in negative consequences in the long term. Iraqi reaction will eventually make itself felt, to the detriment of the Kuwaitis. This has recently been recognised by the Kuwaitis, and it seems that they



have started to modify their antagonistic attitude towards the Iraqi nation.(137)

- (4) To the domination of the Middle East by the American through acquiescent and autocratic regimes.

Throughout the crisis the allies claimed that Saddam was a dictator with an appalling record on human rights and an adventuirs foreign policy, possessing alarming military power, and that this justified them in attacking and removing him by any means, in order to save the region and the world from his threat. They ignored the fact that he was their old ally, who was supported and armed by them for eight years against the Iranians. At the end of the war, instead of removing him, he was once again permitted by the same allies to suppress the uprisings across the country.

It was claimed by the American decision-makers that the fall of Saddam might lead to more instability than had been experienced to date because the Shi'ite Islamic forces, the most powerful of the opposition movements, were backed by Iran and could control Iraq and threaten the rest of the Gulf States, imposing a problem for US hegemony in the Gulf. Thus, it was better for the allies, after Saddam had been knocked down by the coalition, to keep him as a straw man for the following purposes:

- (a) To face the Iranian threat as Saddam was already well experienced in this.(138)
  - (b) To encourage Saddam's neighbours to increase their arms purchases, in order to protect themselves from a future threat from him. These purchases would boost western economies, which were in recession at the time.
  - (c) To enable them to establish military bases and to maintain a permanent presence in the Gulf. This had been previously refused by the Saudis, the Kuwaitis and other Gulf States. This presence would allow them to dominate the region and to secure oil supplies, under the pretext of preventing the emergence of a future threat by Saddam or any uprising resulting from his continuing policy of repression. Immediately after the end of the war the US administration asked Congress to sell arms worth \$18 billion to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey.(139)
- (5) The economic aspects of the war were vital to America and its allies, as James Baker explained in his speech to NATO on 13 August:

".... Since 1949, every American President has said that the Gulf is a vital US and Western interest and that we could not allow any hostile power to gain a stranglehold over its energy resources. Now Saddam Husayn poses just such a threat. Given the central importance of Gulf oil to the global economy, all of us share an interest in thwarting this dictator's ambitions. We all have a critical stake in this".(140)

The most significant aspects were:

- (a) The Americans had full control of Gulf oil and the oil market, which was worth a great price and provided the US with opportunities which were to have far-reaching consequences for the whole region.
- (b) America was able to dominate international affairs in a bid to stop its serious industrial and financial decline. The Gulf War fulfilled the US's desire to enter the area in full strength and implement its control over Gulf oil resources. It thus obtained the key to controlling Europe and Japan, who depended on Gulf oil, and put itself in the leading role of the new world order. It was able to implement



this policy successfully because of the following:

- The defeat of the Soviet Union which had been a counter-balance to the US domination of the world, which was strongly supported by the old imperialist powers, France and Britain.
- The weakness of the UN and its inability to confront the Americans effectively allowed the Americans to control decisions about security.

(c) The American Strategy caused economic difficulties in the Middle Eastern States. These in turn, led to a crisis of political legitimacy in the Region, accompanied by failures in human development. Some of the countries of the Middle East have fared poorly in this respect, because the Americans allowed the Gulf Monarchies to change their policy of subsidising poorer Arab countries and the PLO from their surplus oil revenue and to finance their own budget deficits instead. (141)

(d) The American were awarded major reconstruction projects in Kuwait after the War. There was a lack of competition between the joint multinational force countries but the Americans

and British got the lion's share, owing to their political influence in the Gulf.

- (e) The British took part in the war because of their close relationship with America and because they wanted to have some political and military role in the Middle East region in the declining years of the British Empire. (142)
  - (f) Arab countries like Syria and Egypt, that aligned themselves with the coalition, did so in order to receive American and Gulf aid, as well as from other political motives.
  - (g) Turkey supported the coalition against Iraq in order to gain admission to the European Community (EC). (143)
- (6) Both during and after the war, there were popular protests and demonstrations in a number of Arab countries, whose governments had supported the coalition. These manifestations were a source of concern to the governments involved, but no serious upheavals occurred. The Arab liberation movements appear to be more or less quiescent, at least for the moment. (144)

This means that there will be no real social pressure on the regimes to reform their tyrannical policies or comply with their subjects' political and democratic aspirations. There has been deep disappointment among the masses, which has resulted in a rise in religious fundamentalism, which has become one of the most characteristic features of the post-war period in the Arab world.(145)

- (7) The Gulf crisis and the war opened up a great split in the Arab world, casting doubt on one of the key principles of Arab politics since World War 2, that the Arabs formed a single family whatever their quarrels. The crisis shattered this ideal, introducing into inter-Arab relations unprecedented hostility and mistrust, which have deepened the divisions between Arab states. In the face of this, there have been initial moves for a new collective security arrangement among the Arabs of the coalition for a new order for the eastern Arabs.(146)

Many other countries around the world, as well as many Arab countries, supported the legitimacy of the Gulf war because they considered Saddam to be a new Hitler. However, exception may be taken to this characterisation of Saddam. The Second World War was a battle against fascism while the coalition attack on Iraq was based on the desire to destroy the civilian infrastructure of Iraq.(147)



- (8) The crisis and the war, which have caused Arab political fragmentation, have also shown the Arab states military capability to be inadequate compared with that of a super power.
- (9) The above indicates that no Arab state can withstand the strength of the US and thus cannot put pressure on it to formulate a settlement in favour of the Palestinian people. Politically, the Palestinian cause lost its credibility in the Arab World, and its international standing, when its leadership supported Saddam. The Palestinians' justification for supporting Saddam was that they were extremely frustrated after forty years of dispersal and a denial of basic human and national rights, even though Saddam had previously revealed his treachery to their cause, during the Black September massacre of 1970.

The Palestinian cause was affected more financially than politically by their leaders' support for Saddam. The Palestinian community that lived in Kuwait was one of the most flourishing Palestinian communities in the Arab world. Its wealth played a vital role in the Palestinian economy. Hundreds of Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories, in Jordan and elsewhere all over the Middle East were supported by their working relatives in Kuwait. So the invasion of Kuwait and the PLO's policy of supporting

Saddam smashed all this, not only in Kuwait, but in the GCC countries as well.

(10) By their rapid decisive military victory over a Third World Country, the Americans got rid of the "Vietnam syndrome". (148)

(11) The war has also indirectly affected those countries who supplied migrant workers to the Gulf States. In many cases, particularly in Kuwait, their jobs have been taken by Turks. (149)

(12) Another consequence of the Gulf War has been its ecological impact. The War caused unprecedented damage to natural habitats and the environment, both by the oil spills and the burning of the oil wells by Saddam and by the massive deployment of forces and the new technology of warfare employed by the Americans in the region. (150)

It is almost certain that the coming decades will witness a greater level of instability, which will lead to further wars and will bring about US dictatorship and hegemony over the entire world. It has started to police the world by interfering directly in any area it sees fit.

Revolution against all the US's client regimes that have implemented its policies in the Middle East must take place, to save the world from US's tyranny. This applies

particularly to the Ba`th Party, which has successfully been implementing US Strategy in the Middle East for the past three decades.



## Conclusion

America has been able to apply its new world order, after the collapse of the communist bloc, and to demonstrate its advanced technology weapon capability, which has been building up since the Second World War, in competition with the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. It has had a number of failures: in Vietnam, in Lebanon, where President Reagan withdrew all US forces, after the bomb attack on the US Embassy in Beirut on 23 October 1983, which caused the deaths of two hundred and forty-one American Marines; in Iran, where the Americans failed to use force, when it was repeatedly challenged between 1979 and 80. America had its revenge in April 1988, when its navy sank half of the Iranian fleet in the Gulf.

In order to achieve its objectives, America militarised the Middle East and created artificial nationalist regimes, which ostensibly built up massive strength to ensure Arab independence from the world of Imperialism and Zionism. Thus, the Americans would be justified in entering the region to save its alleged stability from Saddam and the others like him. Saddam knew that America was determined to destroy Iraq, as he frequently revealed before the beginning of the crisis and his invasion of Kuwait. It became very clear, from the first stage of the crisis, that America was monopolising it, in the following ways:

- (1) From the first, America blocked an Arab solution to the crisis in persuading Saddam to leave Kuwait.
- (2) America rejected all European options for saving the situation, in particular the French initiative.
- (3) America persuaded a number of states, both eastern and western to join it in its war against Iraq, either militarily, by deploying troops, or financially, by paying the bills for the operation against Iraq.
- (4) By dominating the United Nations, America obtained legitimacy for its war with Iraq. The UN was clearly a tool in the hands of the Americans.
- (5) America also persuaded the Arab league to give a broader legitimacy to its operation than that provided by its clients shaykdoms and Saudi Arabia.
- (6) America also raised Islamic cover for its operation, in order to protect the Islamic position for its clients states, which might otherwise have been called in question.

In addition, Saddam had discovered, in the course of the supposed American initiative in Geneva, to avoid the war, that America was ready to use nuclear weapons if he used any of his non-conventional weapons. Thus, half of his

military power was negated before the war started. However, this did not make him withdraw from Kuwait, thus fulfilling America's wish by paving the way for President Bush to achieve his objective. He heard America's threat and did not use chemical weapons against the coalition, despite the fact that he had never hesitated to use them against the Iranians and his own nation, in order to secure his political survival. He made Iraq as a guinea-pig for American high technology weapons, which devastated.



## NOTES

- 1- al-Bazzāz, Sa`d, Harb Talid Ukhra (One War Generates One Other War), London, 1994, p.150-152.
- 2- Saddam had survived several attempts on his life after the war with Iran, with the first attempt taking place as early as November 1988. A second attempt took place in Northern Iraq in early 1989, a third was foiled in September 1989 at the National Cultural Festival in Babylon and a fourth took place in January 1990 when an army officer tried to assassinate him while driving in a motorcade. For more information on these various assassination attempts, see *Economist* (London), February 11th 1989, *The Times* (London), September 11th 1989 and the *International Herald Tribune*, February 3rd 1989.
- 3- *Baghdad Domestic Service*, January 5, 1990.
- 4- For more information on al-Qāqā explosion, see *The Independent* (London), September 16, 1989 and Simon Henderson, Saddam Hussein's Ambition for Iraq, Mercury House, San Francisco, California, 1991, chapter 18. .
- 5- Regarding the BNL affair, see Darwish, Adel and Gregory Alexander, Unholy Babylon, Victor Gollancz,

- London, 1991, p.173-177. See also Henderson, *ibid.*, chapter 13.
- 6- See Friedman, Alan, Spider's Web, Faber & Faber, London, 1993.
- 7- For information on the Iraqi campaign against the Kurds, see *The Independent*, November 9, 1988, February 3, March 16, 1990 and the *International Herald Tribune*, September 14, 16, 1988.
- 8- al-Bazzāz, *ibid.*, p. 158.
- 9- *Financial Times*, London, March 16, 1989.
- 10- al-Bazzāz, *ibid.*, p. 159.
- 11- *Ibid.*
- 12- On the Bazoft affair, see Henderson, *ibid.*, chapter 18.
- 13- On the 'Supergun affair' see *The Times*, April 14, 1990, *The Independent*, April 16, 1990, *Financial Times*, April 17, 1990 and *International Herald Tribune*, April 22, May 26, 1990.
- 14- *Financial Times*, March 30, 1990.

- 15- *Baghdad Domestic Service*, April 2, 1990.
- 16- *al-Jumhūriyyah* (Baghdad), February 20th, 1990 and *al-Qādiyyah* (Baghdad), March 6th, 1990.
- 17- *Iraq News Agency* (INA), March 29, 1990.
- 18- Interview with Ṭāha Yāsin Ramaḍān, *al-Ahālī* (Cairo), May 16th, 1990.
- 19- See President Mubarak's speech, printed in full in *al-Ahrām* (Cairo), 5 October, 1990.
- 20- See Woodward, Robert, *The Commanders*, London, 1992. p. 201.
- 21- *Baghdad Domestic Service*, July 17, 1990.
- 22- For information on the Iraqi debts, see *Economist* (London), September 30, 1989, August 4, 1990 and *The Independent*, March 16th 1990.
- 23- *Baghdad Domestic Service*, July 18, 1990.
- 24- Record of meeting between Saddam Hussein and the U.S Ambassador, April Glaspie, on July 25, 1990. A transcript in Arabic of the meeting was released by the Iraqi Government in September 1990 and a translation of the Arabic text was made by NBS and



passed on to the *New York Times* (International) which published excerpts from it on Sunday 23 September, 1991.

- 25- al-Bazzāz, *ibid.*, p. 24. This is a clear admission that, if Saddam's regime were not facing American retaliation towards his gathering of troops on the Kuwaiti border, he would have chosen the military option.
- 26- See Woodward, *ibid.*, p. 207.
- 27- *New York Times*, September, 1990; *International Herald Tribune*, 20 September, 1990; *The Guardian*, October 19, 1991, p.19.
- 28- See Friedman's Spider's Web, *ibid.*
- .
- 29- Woodward, *ibid.*, p. 223.
- 30- Al-Bazzāz, *ibid.*, p.136.
- 31- See note 24 above.
- 32- See al-Siyāsah's report on James Baker's statement at the Centre for Arab studies in Georgetown University, 10/4/1994.

- 33- Timmerman, Kenneth R., The Death Lobby, How the West Armed Iraq, Bantam Books, London 1992, p. 492.
- 34- al-Bazzāz, *ibid.*, p. 136-137.
- 35- See note 25 above.
- 36- Lesley Gielb in *The Herald Tribune* 25 May 1992. See also Friedman, *ibid.*
- 37- Such an acknowledgement features in most of Saddam's speeches. It was also made during the meeting with April Glaspie. The U.S's acknowledgement came from Richard Murphy. See Timmerman, *ibid.*, p. 179.
- 38- Friedman, *ibid.*
- 39- *Ibid.*
- 40- Haykal, Moḥammad Ḥasanayn, Illusions of Triumph: An Arab View of the Gulf War, Harper Collins, London, 1992. pp. 165-166.
- 41- See 2 above.
- 42- Woodward, *ibid.*, pp. 20-24.
- 43- Haykal, *ibid.*, p. 242.

- 44-     *The Middle East*, October, 1990.
  
- 45-     Haykal, *ibid.*, pp. 230-231.
  
- 46-     Fiorest, Milton, 'Palaces from Sands, London, 1994.'
  
- 47-     Report by William Clairborne of the *Washington Post*  
          in the *Herald Tribune*, pp.7, 8, March 1991.
  
- 48-     See 2 above.
  
- 49-     Cited in Haim Bresheeth and Nira Yuval-Davis, The  
          Gulf War and the New World Order, 2nd Book Ltd,  
          London, 1991, p. 285.
  
- 50-     Front page of *Herald Tribune*, 20 September 1990.
  
- 51-     Tubrānī, Ghābī, Shitā' al-Ghaḍab fi al-Khalīj (Winter  
          of Anger in the Gulf), Second Edition, Beirut, 1991,  
          p. 124.
  
- 52-     See Roger Morris, a National Security staff member in  
          the Johnson and Nixon administration, *New York Times*,  
          p. 4, January 10, 1991.
  
- 53-     Khālīd Bin Sultān, A Warrior from the Desert, Harper  
          Collins, London, 1995, p. 162.
  
- 54-     Woodward, *ibid.*, p. 222.



- 55- Haykal, p. 231.
- 56- See, for instance, "The times, they are a-changing, and so are opinions", *Moscow News*, 8, 1991, p. 10.
- 57- See *al-Siyāsah*'s report on James Baker's statement at the centre for Arab studies in Georgetown University, 10/4/1994.
- 58- Report of Dick Cheney, U.S defence secretary, February 1992. See also Henry Kissinger in the *Herald Tribune*, 3 August 1992.
- 59- *Herald Tribune*, 11 March 1991, p. 3.
- 60- *Voice of the Masses*, Baghdad, August 2, 1990. It was widely believed that those alleged Kuwaiti revolutionaries were in fact Iraqi officers in Kuwaiti dress.
- 61- Woodward, *ibid.*, p. 223.
- 62- *Economist* , August 4, 1990.
- 63- E. Karsh & I. Rautsi, Saddam Hussein, *ibid*, p. 218.
- 64- For the text of Resolution 661 see *The Times*, August 7, 1990.

- 65- Karsh & Rantsi, Saddam Hussein, *ibid.*, p. 218
- 66- Woodward, *ibid.*, p. 255 and p. 260.
- 67- INA, August 3, 1990.
- 68- On the high level of pressure put on the Saudis by President Bush, see Woodward, *ibid.*, chapter 8.
- 69- Woodward, *ibid.*, p. 276.
- 70- Haykal, *ibid.*, p.283-289.
- 71- Bulloch, John and Harvey Morris, Saddam's War, *ibid.*, p. 173.
- 72- Woodward, *ibid.*, p. 231.
- 73- *Ibid.*, p. 253.
- 74- Haykal, *ibid.*, p. 256.
- 75- Woodward, *ibid.*, p. 282.
- 76- See a transcript of the meeting in al-Bazzāz, *ibid.*, pp.178-185. The meeting was recorded by the Iraqis and the transcript of such a meeting was not challenged by the US State Department.

- 77- Ibid.
- 78- Bulloch and Morris, *ibid.*, pp. 174-175.
- 79- *Baghdad Domestic Service*, August 8, 1990.
- 80- Woodward, R., p. 277.
- 81- Haykal, *ibid.*, p. 288.
- 82- *Ibid*, p. 279.
- 83- For more details on the Arab Summit in Cairo, see Haykal, *ibid.*, pp. 282-285.
- 84- *Baghdad Domestic Service*, August 9, 1990.
- 85- Simon O'Dwyer Russell in *Sunday Telegraph*, August 12, 1990.
- 86- *Summary of World Broadcasts, Middle East (SWB ME)* 0841, August 13, 1990; *Radio Baghdad*, August 21, 1990, quoted in SWB ME 0842, August 14, 1990.
- 87- INA, August 28, 1990.



- 88- See his address to Iraqi women, urging them to minister to the family's economic life, Baghdad Domestic Service, August 12, 1990.
- 89- *Baghdad Domestic Service*, August 10, 11, 1990. *Summary of World Broadcasts, Middle East (SWB ME)* 0839, August 10, 1990.
- 90- *Baghdad Domestic Service*, August 12, 1990.
- 91- For the Iraqi-Iranian correspondences over the Political Settlement, refer to *Baghdad Domestic Service*, August 15, 1990 and *Kayhan International* (Tehran), September 29, October 13, 1990.
- 92- *Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic* (Paris), August 14, 1990.
- 93- *Baghdad Domestic Service*, August 19, 1990; INA, August 21, 1990.
- 94- Yevgeni Primakov in *Time Magazine*, March 4, 1991.
- 95- For this overture toward the Coalition, see *Baghdad Domestic Service*, September 5, 8, 1990; INA, September 6, 1990; *The Times*, November 12, 23, 1990.
- 96- See AFP (Paris), August 31, 1990.
- 97- *The Times*, September 23, 1990; INA, August 21, 1990.

- 98- INA, August 28, 1990.
- 99- Haykal, *ibid.*, p.340.
- 100- *Ibid*, p.349
- 101- The Joint Forces Commander of the Gulf War, Prince Khālīd Bin Sultān, admits that if Saddam had not released the hostages and continued holding them in the Iraqi Strategic Sites, the war might have taken a different turn, because it might have been politically difficult to launch the strategic air campaign which had played a crucial role in the whole desert operation. See Khālīd Bin Sultān, *ibid.*, p. 399. The same admission was made by Sir Peter de La Billière, the General Commander of the British Forces in the Gulf War, in his personal account of the Gulf War, Storm Command, A Personal Account of the Gulf War, Harper Collins, London, 1992, p. 76.
- 102- *Baghdad Domestic Service*, December 6, 1990.
- 103- *The Times*, December, 1990.
- 104- INA, December 13, 1990.
- 105- Haykal, *ibid.*, p. 365.

- 106- *The Independent*, January 10, 1991
- 107- See Noam Avram Chomsky, "The U.S in the Gulf Crisis", cited in Haim Bresheeth and Nira Yuval-Davis, *ibid.*, pp. 16-17.
- 108- Peter de la Billiere, *ibid.*, p. 205.
- 109- *Ibid.*
- 110- *Washington Post*, November 23, 1991.
- 111- See Colin Powell's memoirs, *A Soldier's Way*, New York, 1995 p. 29.
- 112- The UN had contributed this report in July 17, 1991 as one of its official documents.
- 113- Haykal, *ibid.*, p.380.
- 114- *Ibid.*
- 115- *Baghdad Domestic service*, January 18, 1991.
- 116- *Ibid*, January 18, 1991.
- 117- For the massive military aid supplied to Israel in the aftermath of Saddam's Scud missile attacks, see Karash and Rautsi, *ibid.*, p. 250.



- 118- Baghdad Domestic Service, January 17, 19, 23, 1991.
- 119- *The Independent* (London), January 23, 1991.
- 120- *The Times* (London), February 1, 1991.
- 121- *Baghdad Domestic Service*, January 31, 1991.
- 122- *The Times*, February 2, 1991.
- 123- The Americans blamed Saddam for this tragedy and claimed that he deliberately placed and held civilians near military targets and on military sites (which might in fact well be one of Saddam's tactics) in his attempt to challenge the Coalition and gain world sympathy. See *The Times*, February 14, 1991.
- 124- See David Seddon, "Politics and the Gulf Crisis", cited in Haim Bresheeth and Nira Yuval-Davis, *ibid.*, p. 104.
- 125- *Baghdad Domestic Service*, February 15, 1991.
- 126- *The Times*, February 16, 1991.
- 127- *Ibid*, February 23, 1991.
- 128- *Baghdad Domestic Service*, February 22, 1991.

- 129- *New York Times*, February, 1991.
- 130- According to the former US Secretary of State James Baker, President Bush was keen to launch the Land war and did not grant any chance for the Soviet initiative to succeed. See James Baker's memoirs, The Politics of Diplomacy, Putnam Pub. Group, 1995.
- 131- *Baghdad Domestic Service*.
- 132- Ibid., February 26, 1991.
- 133- *The Times*, February 27, 1991.
- 134- See James Baker, *ibid*.
- 135- Ibid. and see also General Colin Powell's memoirs, A Soldier's Way, New York, 1995.
- 136- Bush on CNN television, 28 March 1991.
- 137- See Sa'ūd al-Samakah in *al-Qudus* (Kuwait), November 13, 1995.
- 138- See James Baker, *ibid*.

- 139- See Alan Freeman, *the Economic*, "Background and the Consequences of the Gulf War," cited in Haim Bresheeth and Nira Yuval-Davis, *ibid.*, p. 162.
- 140- Quoted by Susan Willett in her Economic Implications of the Gulf Crisis, London, Centre for Defence Studies, Kings College, London, .
- 141- *International Business Week*, 18 February 1991, p.20.
- 142- See Peter de la Billie's memoirs, Storm Command, A Personal Account of the Gulf War, Harper Collins, London, 1992, pp. 100-101, 142.
- 143- See Dario Navaro, "Turkey and the Gulf War", cited in Haim Bresheeth and Nira Yuval-Davis, *ibid.*, p. 80.
- 144- See David Seddom, "Politics and the Gulf Crisis" and Sāmī Yūsif, "The Iraqi-US War: a Conspiracy Theory", both cited in Haim Bresheeth and Nira Yuval-Davis, *ibid.*, pp. 66, 116.
- 145- For a discussion of a new Eastern Arab Order, See T. Niblock, "The need for a new Eastern Arab Order," *Middle East International*, October 12, 1990, pp. 17-18.
- 146- See, for example, *Marxism Today*, October, 1990.



- 147- See Henry Kissinger, *Herald Tribune*, August 3, 1992.
- 148- See James Baker's memoirs. Once the War was over, the Coalition proceeded to celebrate its victory over Iraq in the same way the allies celebrated after their victory in the Second World War. Indeed, the Coalition's rejoicing was somewhat overstated as a victory over what is by the admission of all an unequal rival could not be compared with the Allied victory over Germany, Italy and Japan.
- 149- The Economic impact of the Gulf Crisis on the Third World Countries, memorandum to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, jointly submitted by CAFOD, Christian Aid, CIIR, OXFAM, Save the children Fund and World 16. *World Oil Trend*, 1989.
- 150- See Joni Seager, "Operation Desert Disaster, Environment Costs of the War", cited in Haim Bresheeth and Nira Yuval-Davis, *ibid*.

## Conclusion

It is clear from the history of the Arab Ba`th Socialist Party, with all its turmoil and ambiguities, ideologically, politically and structurally, since its foundation in the late 1940s and its two seizures of power in `Iraq, that the west gambled on it, as they did not find any alternative ready to implement their plans in the area. This is indicated in many official documents including those of the Ba`th Party itself.(1)

The Ba`th regime has proved, by its everyday routine activities, as acknowledged by western policy makers, that it is one of the most cruel and violent regimes of modern times.(2) It has proved, by its skill and ability in disseminating propaganda and in deceiving the people whom it seeks to subvert, that, on the one hand, it can talk about the national interest and its struggle against imperialism and Zionism, while, on the other hand, events have shown that it was their best servant. It acted as their tool to suppress left-wing forces during the cold war. (3) Then, led by Saddam, it was their tool to attack the Islamic revolution in Iran.(4) Finally, in its name Saddam invaded Kuwait, gave the land of Iraq to America to test its latest weapons and enabled it to launch its new world order and to attain objectives it could not previously attain.(5) Saddam and his Ba`th regime are still a strategic investment for the West, which explains his remaining in power despite all his political disasters.

Because of the advantages that America and its allies have gained from the Ba`th regime, particularly since Saddam took power in 1979, America has decided that any change in Iraq must come from within.(6) The character of Saddam himself, who, according to all the available biographical documents, is boundlessly ambitious and ruthless, may be summarised as follows:

- (1) He has monopolised power through the Ba`th Party, through intrigue and the physical extermination of opponents, using the same methods employed by Stalin in the 1930s and 1940s;
- (2) His power has been strengthened through the use of other political movements (communist and Kurdish) with whom he has tactically allied himself.
- (3) He has constructed a huge security and intelligence machine, using billions of oil dollars, through his control of the oil industry and with the help of the Soviet Union and East Germany.(7)
- (4) He has taken control of, and developed, the military establishment, both in manpower and in ordnance.
- (5) He has disseminated his influence throughout the Arab World, so as to establish himself as the strongest Arab leader, and as a spokesman on Arab rights, using the Palestinian cause to achieve this objective.



(6) He has attempted to control the Gulf States and their oil wealth so as to make Iraq a super power.

Saddam has been able to achieve most of his objectives, particularly after the shake-up of the balance of power in the Middle East, caused by the overthrow of the Shah of Iran and the emergence of a power vacuum, which Saddam has used as an excuse to promote himself as the policeman of the area. He was successful in stemming the Islamic wave brought about by the Islamic revolution in Iran and forced it to remain within the Iranian borders. He used Iraq's manpower and economic and military power to combat Iran so as to serve regional and international interests to which the Iranian revolution posed a mortal danger. His regime was supported regionally and internationally, enabling him to strengthen his military machine, in the belief that the next objective which he would achieve would be the building of his Arab empire. Owing to his political ignorance, he did not realise that he would be prevented from becoming a strategic player in the regional and international balance of power in this strategic area of the world, where some of the west's greatest interests lie. Saddam's military capabilities became greater than America could allow, since they posed a threat to America's strategic interest.(8)

America's strategy after the Iraq-Iran war was:

- (1) The destruction of Iraq and the containment of Saddam by stripping him of all his military and economic power. (9)
- (2) The protection of oil wells in the Gulf area by the establishment of permanent American military bases rather than dependence on local allies.
- (3) Solving the Arab-Israeli conflict in a way that would guarantee the interests of America, of its western allies and of Israel, which is the strategic ally of the West in the area.
- (4) Placing restrictions on the development of non-conventional weapons which some countries in the area, including Iraq, were developing.

America could not have achieved all the above objectives, according to its Defence Minister, (10) without a definite means of obtaining them. Accordingly, together with its Western, as well as its regional, allies, it began to put pressure on Iraq. This began with a psychological and media war. Then came economic pressure because of the lowering of oil prices and the increase of production in Kuwait and the UAE. These constituted a major challenge to Iraq, which was suffering from an economic crisis, owing to its war with Iran. Following the American declaration of non-involvement in inter-Arab conflicts, which was delivered to Saddam by the American Ambassador in Baghdad,

he became increasingly convinced that America had chosen him to protect its interests in the area, and he saw the intransigent Kuwaiti position as working to his advantage, because he was certain that America was the one that had made the Kuwaiti political decision. Thus Saddam thought that if America was against his invasion, it would have made every effort to prevent it. A senior Bush administration official, General Brent Scowcroft, who advised Bush on national security, admitted that the administration did not warn Iraq of the consequences of invading Kuwait. Scowcroft said:

**"....we could not do that because we had spent all our time building support for us internationally until 'Iraq actually invaded. If we had warned him it would have been very difficult massing the American people's support and the support of our Arab friends." (12)**

So the American decision to attack 'Iraq was taken before Saddam invaded Kuwait. The Bush administration proved this when it rejected all attempts to solve the crisis peacefully.(13) Saddam, in his turn, declared that America would attack and destroy Iraq whether it withdrew from Kuwait or not.(14) He did not withdraw from Kuwait and thus helped America to achieve its objective, which is acknowledged by America's decision makers. This means that Saddam either participated directly in the American game, in exchange for remaining in power, or was led into the



American trap because of his political ignorance. In either case he was trapped into decisions and policies that undoubtedly served the interests of America and its allies at the expense of Iraq and its future. These decisions and policies resulted in catastrophic consequences for Iraq, specifically:

- (1) The elimination of Iraq's sovereignty, as a consequence of signing the Ṣafwān agreement following military defeat;
- (2) The expropriation of Iraq's independence politically, financially and militarily, through a complex set of UN resolutions, which will remain in force even after Saddam has gone; (15)
- (3) The total destruction of Iraq's infrastructure; (16)
- (4) The total destruction of Iraq's economy by UN sanctions;
- (5) The death of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis during the Gulf War and subsequently, because of UN sanctions.

In addition to the above consequences, one can add the destruction of Arab solidarity and the destruction of Iraq's relations with its neighbours and the rest of the

world. This has been beneficial to Israel, since the balance of power has moved in its favour.

As a consequence of political developments since the Gulf War, it seems that those who took the decision to go to war want to rearrange the balance of political power in the area.(17)

There are indications (listed below) to market the idea of dividing the Arab states into smaller entities that are weak and in conflict with each other, so as to make it easier for Israel to achieve absolute domination. This idea looks like being applied to Iraq. The division of Iraq would then become a pattern for the rest of the Arab world. This would allow, according to the wishes of the planners of the so-called 'New World Order', total Israeli domination.

- (1) White House experts, such as Graham Fuller, Martin Andayck (dual containment policy), Anthony Leak and Anthony Kaudsman think that Iraq is a web of several ethnic groups and sects who are in conflict, which makes it liable to partition.(18)

Iraqi social conditions, from the establishment of the state of Iraq in 1921 until the Ba`th Party came to power, have not indicated serious ethnic or sectarian divisions, despite bad monarchic and republican governments. If there were some Kurdish and

Shi'ite parties, they were small and weak and were of no significance. However, the ethnic and sectarian policies of the Ba'th inflamed ethnic and sectarian feelings to the extent that they have become part of reality in Iraq today, particularly after Saddam came to power in 1979, when he played a major role in inflaming them. Following Iraq's defeat in the Gulf War, Arab and western media began to look at Iraq from the angle of its ethnic and sectarian composition, stressing that Saddam was persecuting the Kurds in the north and the Shi'ites in the south. The existence of Kurdish, Shi'ite and even Sunni parties has given credence to this claim, since Saddam persecuted all Iraqis, whatever their ethnic or sectarian situation.

- (2) The creation of air-exclusion zones north of the 36 parallel and south of the 32 parallel, with the name of 'safe havens', for the Kurds in the north and the Shi'ites in the south, under allied protection, is nothing but a preliminary step to partitioning Iraq. According to officials in the American administration, it puts a pressure on the Iraqi military establishment and the Ba'th leadership, indicating to them that the continuation of Saddam in power carries with it the danger of territorial division.(19)
- (3) The Rand Organisation, which is affiliated to the US Ministry of Defence, published in 1993 a study under the title, "Does Iraq remain united, or will it be



partitioned by the year 2002". This study concluded that Iraq will be partitioned within the next nine years. (20)

- (4) There are hints from Bill Clinton, after winning the Presidential election, that what matters to him is stability and respect for human and civil rights in Iraq, without mention of the necessity of safeguarding Iraq's unity, implying that there is an American objective in perpetuating the de facto partitioning of Iraq.

Clinton's administration is trying to prevent Iran from increasing its influence in the absence of a strong regional power, due to the destruction and partitioning of Iraq. America has implemented its policy against Iraq through the economic boycott and the encouragement of Turkey to play a bigger Islamic role, so as to balance Iran's. (21) In addition, America exaggerates its description of the Iranian threat and Iran's support for terrorism and the extreme fundamental Islamic wave (22).

The reasons for choosing Iraq as the first candidate for partition are:

- (1) Its important geographical and strategic position;
- (2) Its historical importance as the home of ancient civilisations and the cradle of Semitic religions;

- (3) Its richness in natural resources, such as water, oil and minerals;
- (4) The strict Shi`ite ideology of the majority of its inhabitants;
- (5) The character of the its people, known for religious defiance, confrontation and steadfastness in the face of pressure and challenges, and known throughout their history for having suffered repression and injustice, partly owing to foreign occupation (Turkish, Persian and British);
- (6) Iraq represents a strategic buffer between Iran and the rest of Arab World and Israel. Although at present Iraq's strategic importance is diminished, because of Saddam's regime, it is possible that in the future a revitalised Iraq might mobilise its power against Iran, the Gulf States and Israel, particularly the latter. The western mind is troubled by the possibility, however remote, of Iraq reasserting its historical role;
- (7) The most important factor in providing the favourable conditions for partitioning Iraq is the continuance of the Ba`th Party in power and Saddam at its head;

So Saddam's regime, the Ba`th Party, the west and their allies are all bound together in the realisation of each others' disparate interests, despite their protestations that Saddam and the Ba`th Party, on the one hand, and the west and their allies, on the other, are hostile to each other. A careful study of events and documents indicates that:

(1) Through the Ba`th Party, Saddam was able to seize power and then monopolise it with the consequent expropriation of the liberties of the Iraqi people and the cancellation of human rights in Iraq, as well as the physical liquidation of his political opponents by murder, execution and exile. According to Saddam's laws, which he considers to be patriotic and revolutionary contributions to the service of Iraq and its people, any opposition, even the most peaceful, to his regime and the Ba`th Party, is considered to be treason. Hence the destruction of all the opponents of his regime is a patriotic and revolutionary duty. Through his wars, Saddam has killed hundreds of thousands of young Iraqi men who were the real force in Iraq, about which the West and its agents were apprehensive. So, through his policies, Saddam has been able to achieve the destruction of this force, which was the real objective of West and Israel.

(2) He has made wide use of ethnic discrimination. The Ba`th Party hoists the banner of pan-Arabism. This



banner was approved of by the west, in order to suppress non-Arabs who lived in Arab countries. The Ba`th Party succeeded three decades ago, owing to its campaign of forcing non-Arab Iraqis to take up membership, although it was an Arab Party, demanding the establishment of one united Arab state. This had the objective of wiping out the ethnic identity of non-Arabs, but it has led them, in their turn, to demand partition. This endangers the unity of Iraq, and serves none but foreign interests. Saddam went even further in using a policy of discrimination, even among the Arabs of Iraq. He discriminated against the Shi`ites and against certain Arab tribes and localities, in favour of his own home town, Tikrīt, and, later on, in favour of his own family which claimed Iraq as its backyard. Thus, he made most Iraqis feel alien and subject to injustice. During the war with Iran, he was forced to modify his discriminatory policy, in order to exploit the basic patriotism of all Iraqis. He succeeded in his appeal to the Shi`ites, who, as the majority of the population, necessarily constituted the majority of the army; he failed with the Kurds, against whom he launched retaliatory attacks during the war.

- (3) Saddam used sectarian discrimination and exploited divisions within the various Islamic schools of thought and interpretation, hoping to provoke rivalries and conflicts between them, which would

distract their attention from his reprehensible activities, in particular from his foreign adventures. Saddam persecuted all religious sects in Iraq; he denied them their religious rights and so pushed them towards even greater opposition to his regime. Some of these sects looked for support from neighbouring countries, which however, proved to care only about their own interests.

(4) Saddam managed to create from his followers, relatives and other Ba`thists a bourgeoisie which controlled the wealth of Iraq and made huge profits at the expense of the vast majority of Iraqis. This led to conflict between this class and the rest of the Iraqis. As the latter are uneducated politically, they easily fall victim to extremist ideas, such as communism and religious fundamentalism, particularly when confronted by the unfair distribution of wealth that they saw both in Iraq and other Arab countries, notably the Gulf countries. This, in turn, leads to internal conflicts, which threaten the unity of Iraq.

(5) Saddam managed, through the Ba`th Party, to create conflicts in many nearby countries by interfering in their internal affairs and using his spies and agents to create havoc in them. Again this served western interests, as the West wants these countries to remain weak.

- (6) Saddam has created bad relationships between Iraq and its neighbours, which will remain for decades to come, thus bringing about favourable conditions for future conflicts.
- (7) By invading Kuwait, Saddam caused a deep and serious split between Arab countries, to the extent that they cannot now agree on anything. As a result, the Arab League is now no more than a dead letter, as is also the idea of collective Arab security.
- (8) By invading Kuwait, Saddam gave the Gulf countries a good excuse to allow America to station military forces in the Gulf - something which they were hesitant to do before.
- (9) Because of the destruction of Iraq, and the subsequent domination by America of the Arab countries, the Arab-Israeli conflict is being solved to the satisfaction of Israel and America.
- (10) Panic buying of arms, caused by Saddam's war, which has depleted Arab wealth, has benefited the western arms manufacturers.
- (11) Through his ill-advised policies, particularly that of initiating the Gulf War, Saddam helped the USA to achieve an unprecedented position in the Middle East and the world at large. The US used the UN to issue



draconian resolutions against Iraq, which would be enforced not only while Saddam was still in power, but also after he had gone. Such resolutions may well be in breach of all international law, in imposing collective punishment on the entire Iraqi nation.

America has attained all its objectives, while Saddam has remained in power with his opportunities for internal oppression unaffected. America prefers Saddam to remain in power for the following reasons:

- (1) It is easier for America to disarm Iraq and impose a long term system of monitoring its military capabilities.
- (2) America can use him as a bogey-man to frighten the Gulf states and to force them into America's arms. (26)
- (3) Saddam can confront the Islamic wave that is coming from Iran. He has proved his credentials against it and is the best person to confront it. America can still count on him to act against Iran if and when it becomes necessary. (27)
- (4) The US can constrict Syria by sustaining a hostile neighbouring regime, thus forcing it to conclude a peace treaty with Israel.

(5) America can use Saddam as a pretext for the boycott of Iraq. America justifies the boycott on the grounds that it will help overthrow Saddam.

America rejected a boycott as a tool to force Saddam out of Kuwait.(28,29) It now professes to think that a boycott will force Saddam out of power. For years it has claimed that there is no viable alternative to Saddam, and so justifies to itself the continuance of its policy of boycott and containment. This is now the preferred course of action for America and its allies.(30) It is unfortunate for Iraq's future that some of the so-called 'Iraqi opposition groups in exile', such as the Iraqi National Congress (INC), repeat America's claims and have become America's puppets. (31) America's course of action against Iraq is the one of least cost militarily and financially, in addition to its helping to achieve its true objective, which is the permanent debilitation of Iraq as a state and a society. Despite the political and military defeat that America was able to inflict on Saddam's regime, he is still eager to offer his services to America and its puppets in the Gulf, playing on their fears of the spread of the Islamic wave in the area.(32) In fact Saddam still serves America by providing it with justification for the boycott. He seems to play his role as if he were in prior agreement with America. One may infer this from his dealings with the UN disarmament commission and from his ill-advised massing of troops on the Kuwaiti border in October 1994. This gave America further excuses to proclaim that Saddam was still a

threat to their interests and still in possession of a military force capable of making good that threat.(33)

With regard to the neighbouring countries, each in its own way sees the continuation of Saddam and his regime as what best serves its interests. They see that a weak and paralysed Iraq is what is best for them. Iran wants a weak Iraq, which cannot threaten it and, at the same time, gives it an excuse for interfering in Iraqi internal affairs, under the pretext of helping the Shi`ah. This actually happened during the uprising in the south;(34) Iranian interference gave America an excellent excuse to help Saddam crush it (35).

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the other Gulf states still prefer Saddam to other alternatives for the following reasons:

- (1) As he is in a tight corner and under the boycott, he cannot export oil which will compete with their oil, which is now exported by the Gulf countries cheaply to America and the West so as to pay for arms purchases and to reimburse America and Britain for the cost of their campaign.(36) Britain, for example, received £500 million from the UAE for its role in the Gulf War. The Prince of Wales declared in a television interview that he wanted to establish a British volunteer force to be used in the Gulf, in exchange



for money from the Gulf countries, i.e. a British mercenary force.

(2) Kuwait was able to gain strategic advantages by the defeat of Saddam, in the redrawing of the border in its favour by a UN committee - something the UN has never done before. The British and Americans assigned to Kuwait most of the Iraqi port of Umm Qaşr, so as to give Kuwait the capability of strangling Iraq - something the British have always encouraged their Kuwaiti puppets to do. Through American and British hostility to Iraq, it was deprived of its only remaining outlet to the sea. Before America and Britain, Iran did the same with the Shaţţ al-`Arab. The Iraqi people will never accept the transfer by America and Britain of Umm Qaşr to Kuwait, as they never accepted Saddam's giving the Shaţţ al-`Arab to Iran. What America and Britain did will almost certainly lead to a war with Kuwait in the future, as happened with Iran. (37)

(3) The possible alternative to Saddam is the Shi`ite Islamic parties, which means to Saudi Arabia that Iraq would fall under Iranian control. Iran is in conflict with Saudi Arabia, as it sees itself as the centre of Shi`ah Islam, which is in competition with Sunni Islam, of which Saudi Arabia considers itself the heart. (38)

If Saddam ever tried his luck again, the presence of American forces in the Gulf would be used swiftly to destroy Iraq again, or to destroy what was not destroyed in 1991. Thus, Saddam is the best alternative available to America and to all neighbouring countries. Turkey, for example, does not find any alternative that is better than Saddam, because it, like Saddam, represses the Kurds. In addition, the continuation of Saddam's regime, in its present weak and isolated state, offers Turkey the potential opportunity to interfere in Iraq, under the pretext of combating Kurdish separatists in Turkey by seizing northern Iraq, particularly the oil-rich cities of Mosul and Kirkūk, long the subject of Turkish expansionist dreams, (39) For Syria, Saddam's regime is the best possible alternative, on the grounds that post-Saddam Iraq will be pro-American and pro-Israel, thus increasing its own isolation. The latest Jordanian interference in Iraq, with King Ḥusayn's proposal for its future, may be seen as part of American and Israeli attempts to pressurise Syria into concluding a deal with Israel, as the US and Israel have let it be known that they are strong supporters of King Ḥusayn. Thus, it was expected that Syria would be against King Ḥusayn's proposal. Israel, in its turn, prefers Saddam to other alternatives that would be friendly with Syria. Israel has always worked hard to maintain the conflict between Iraq and Syria. The two Ba`thist regimes have helped Israel achieve that objective.

Jordan now relies entirely on Iraq for its oil supplies and also profits from Iraq's trade through it. In fact it can be argued that Jordan has benefited a great deal over the years from Saddam's regime, particularly during the Iraq-Iran war. Jordan hopes that while Iraq is weak and isolated, it can benefit even more. It needs Iraq's support, whether it is during Saddam's regime or afterwards, to cement its relations with Israel. This explains Jordan's desire to shape the future of Iraq in a way that is advantageous to itself, with the option of dividing Iraq into several federal states in confederation with Jordan. This would give Jordan the balance of power between the dismembered parts of Iraq. (40)

The only ones who are really against Saddam and the Ba'th Party and want to see them destroyed are the Iraqi people, in their entirety, because Saddam and the Ba'th Party have destroyed Iraq. The mere existence of Saddam with his Ba'th Party is against the basic interest of the Iraqi people. This rejection of Saddam and the Ba'th Party was clearly displayed during the great popular uprising, which challenged him and managed to occupy and to seize control of fourteen out of the eighteen Iraqi governorates. Saddam employed brutal methods to suppress the uprising, supported by America, which allowed him to use helicopters to murder the Iraqi people. The reason for the failure of the uprising, in addition to Saddam's severe methods of repression, was the lack of proper organisation and



effective leadership inside Iraq, because he had long since liquidated any possible leaders of such an uprising.

The Iraqi opposition in exile dates from the return to power of the Ba`th Party in 1968, and expanded when Saddam took sole control because of his violent repression and foreign aggression. Although it shares the same principle, i.e. the overthrow of Saddam's regime, and while all its documents and literature declare that it is a democratic opposition, it has failed to agree on a programme for post-Saddam Iraq. It has also been effectively contained by America, Britain and the neighbouring countries i.e. Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and, recently, Jordan. The Iraqi opposition in exile is characterised by:

- (1) The perpetuation of division and conflict within the opposition itself and, hence, its inability to agree on a unified political programme for the future.
- (2) The support by America for elements within it that are known for being corrupt or criminal, while America has used others as spies. The neighbouring countries, i.e. Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia, have used most of the rest as spies and puppets in their service. Thus, a political movement has been debased; it had the patriotic duty of liberating Iraq from Saddam and of defending its sovereignty and independence.(41)

## The present situation in Iraq

The logic of the actual situation on the ground and the web of international and regional factors are still working to the advantage of Saddam's regime through the following:

- (1) The insistence of America, supported by Britain, on the continuation of the economic boycott on the Iraqi people. Despite the failure of the boycott in producing a change of regime, a catastrophe which endangers the very existence of the Iraqi people has been created. The international community was persuaded by America and Britain to support the boycott strategy, despite the fact that such a strategy had never succeeded in the past in producing positive results. On the contrary, the actual situation indicates that Saddam is now more powerful than ever in his methods of suppressing the Iraqi people.(42) This confirms the suspicion that the real aim of the boycott is the destruction of Iraq and its people.(43)
- (2) The repeated canards about the division of Iraq and the possible civil war which threatens the unity of Iraq and its national sovereignty.
- (3) The serious decline in the efforts of the Iraqi opposition in exile on the level of actual work, to

bring down Saddam, from the level they reached in 1990-1991. This opposition has now become simply a "political", in fact, a "commercial" shop, with no interest other than getting money from any source, while the Iraqi people lose all hope. They think that, if America and all its allies could not topple Saddam after an intensive war and if the uprising of fourteen Iraqi governorates could not topple him, then nobody can. The Iraqi people are now hungry, impotent and divided. This is not exactly a recipe for a people's taking matters into their own hands.

- (4) The overthrow of Saddam by an army mutiny or a coup is a limited possibility, because, since the times of Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr, the previous President, Saddam has had effective control over the army. Even if the military establishment managed to overthrow Saddam and to seize power, the subsequent regime would not be likely to solve Iraq's ethnic and sectarian problems; the type of government and its ethnic and sectarian composition would not differ much from that of Saddam, unless some members of it were to be drawn from the Iraqi opposition in exile, or a general election were held immediately.

- (5) The possibility of toppling Saddam through a palace coup is only slight, because his intelligence and security agencies are powerful and effective and have managed to foil several coup attempts, the last of



which was in August 1993, when it was exposed before zero hour. America was accused by some Iraqis in exile of complicity in informing Saddam, since American officials had met some of the plotters in London. (44)

America will not want Saddam to be ousted unless he again directly threatens its interests. Even then, America has insisted that the post-Saddam regime will have to implement all the UN resolutions, which are draconian in their treatment of Iraq and its people. Some of America's strategic planners, such as Martin Andayck and Warren Christopher, have indicated that the UN resolutions imposed on Iraq during the Gulf war must be implemented by Saddam, or anybody else who might follow him, and that America and its allies will not forgo these resolutions. (45) Thus America has already decided what kind of regime will follow Saddam and that post-Saddam Iraq will be completely under America's thumb.

## NOTES

- 1- Released British government official documents point out Britain's role in the ascent to power of the Ba`th Party in February 1963 and, most particularly, the role of British intelligence authorities in overthrowing General Qasim and his communist supporters, in pursuit of an increase of British government's influence with the Ba`thist regime and the isolation of Iraq from the Soviet Union. Britain, it transpired, supplied a squadron of eighteen Hawker Hunter jet fighters in the summer of 1963.
- 2- See *al-Qabas*, 2 February 1994. See also Graham Fuller, Middle East Policy, Part II, No. 3, 1992.
- 3- Because of its bloody history when it first came to power in 1963, the Ba`th Party, on returning to power in 1968, painted a false picture of itself through half-hearted attempts at reconciliation with other political forces, particularly the communists, the predominant force in Iraqi politics then. The Ba`th Party then nationalised foreign oil companies, the real motive being not to benefit the Iraqi people but increase the financial resources that Saddam would have at his disposal to eliminate all his opponents, particularly the communists, at the time the largest communist Party in the Middle East. For more on this

subject, see the third part of the fifth chapter of this research.

- 4- There are many statements by American strategy analysts and planners confirming this fact. See the seventh chapter of this research.
- 5- Many studies and reports evaluating the Gulf war were published by American strategy planners; see the eighth chapter of this research.
- 6- See the CIA report, published in the Iraqi File, No. 42, 1995, p. 10.
- 7- See section three of the fourth chapter of this research.
- 8- See General Norman Schwarzkopf's memoirs, "It doesn't take a hero" New York, 1993, in which he indicates that he was appointed in 1988 to lead America's central forces, usually known as the Rapid Deployment Force. He was requested to evaluate the potential threats that might face America in the Middle East. By the end of 1989, after several visits to many countries in the area and studying CIA, Pentagon and National Security Council documents, his conclusion was that the main threat facing America in the Middle East was Iraq.



- 9- See the *Washington Post* of 23 July 1990, i.e., eight days before Saddam invaded Kuwait.
- 10- See *al-Qabas*, in its edition of 9 January 1995, which contains a statement by William Perry, US Secretary of Defence, about America's strategy in the Gulf.
- 11- Viores, Milton, Sand Castles: The Arab in Search of the Modern World, London, 1994. Viores concludes that the level of oil production by Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates at a time when Iraq was suffering from a severe financial crisis was on the instigation of the USA.
- 12- A talk by Brent Scowcroft with media and businessmen at a public lecture in Washington on 12 June 1995 under the title, "Lessons of the Gulf War", Iraqi File, No. 43, July 1995, p. 42.
- 13- Danrenther, Roland, "The Gulf Conflict: A Political and Strategic Analysis". This study, published on 16 January 1992, is based on secret meetings between military officials from the allied countries held in London during April 1991. It indicates that the then US Secretary of State, James Baker, called for a compromise in return for Saddam's withdrawal from Kuwait, but that Brent Scowcroft, the national security advisor, and President Bush were against such a compromise. See the *Guardian*, 17 January 1992.

- 14- See al-Bazzāz, Sa`d, Harb Talid Ukhrā (One War Generates One Other War). London, 1994.
- 15- See the statement by the US Secretary of Defence.
- 16- See the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)*, No. 303, 3 August 1991, which includes a report about the consequences of the destruction of the Iraqi infrastructure for the health of the civilian population.
- 17- See Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 11, p. 454 for the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1915-1916) which divided the Arab countries between Britain and France after the First World War.
- 18- See Fuller, Graham, "Iraq in the next decade: Will Iraq survive until 2002?", a study prepared by the Rand Organisation for the Defence Advisory Group at the Defence Research Institute and translated by the Centre for Iraqi Studies, London, 1993. See also Anthony Lake, "Confronting the Backlash States", *Foreign Affairs Report*, London, March - April 1994.
- 19- See *Newsweek*, 21 September, 1992.
- 20- See Fuller, *ibid*.

- 21- See *al-Hayat*, London, 2 January, 1992.
- 22- See an article by Gary Sick, an US National Security Adviser on Iranian affairs during the 1976-1981 period, in the *Washington Post* of 4 April 1993.
- 23- See the evaluation by Richard Hass, a National Security Council assistant, during a study group held by the society of graduates on "Middle East, the Gulf and Islam", in which Hass declared that if no change took place in the Iraqi character and culture, then Iraq would remain a threat and would not be a good neighbour. Hass postulated that such a change is highly unlikely. The Iraqi File, No. 38, February 1995, p. 20.
- 24- See Fuller, *ibid*. During the annual conference of Iback, the Israeli lobby in America, Yitzhak Rabin, the late Israeli Prime Minister, warned in the presence of President Clinton that religious fundamentalism, continuously spreading throughout the Middle East, is a greater threat than Nazism and Communism. See the Iraqi File, No. 42, June 1995. The continuation of Saddam was viewed as a necessity to combat such a threat or, at least, contain it.
- 25- See the memoirs of General Colin Powell, A Soldier's Way, which was outlined in the *Herald Tribune* of 21 September 1992.



- 26- See Lake, *ibid.* He states that the Gulf states, following the Gulf war, do not feel embarrassed about entering into a security arrangement with Washington. This has provided America with the opportunity to station forces in the Gulf to confront any threat from Saddam.
- 27- See Powell in 25 above.
- 28- Baf, William in the *Herald Tribune*, 27 July 1992.
- 29- See the memoirs of James Baker, The Politics of Diplomacy, Putnam Pub. Group. 1995.
- 30- See the report on Iraq in the *Economist*, No. 8 - 14, 1995.
- 31- See a statement by Ronald Newman, in charge of the Office for the Northern Gulf in the US State Department, during a meeting in the Meridian Centre in Washington on 27 January 1994, in which he declared that the US supported the INC as it represented Iraqi opposition groups; the Iraqi File, No. 27, March 1994, p. 6.
- 32- See Carol Murphy, a correspondent for the *Washington Post*, in an interview with Ṭāriq `Azīz, 11 June 1993.

33- See the report prepared by the CIA Director, which he read in the Washington Institute for Middle Eastern Policy on 23 September 1994, and which stresses that Saddam will not change his aims of developing weapons of mass destruction and threatening his neighbours. This report was published by the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) on 2 October 1994. See also the report of the US Department of Defence, US Security Strategy in the Middle East, read in a press conference on 19 May 1995. The report stressed that Saddam still possessed capabilities to threaten the US and its allies, which it displayed by troop movements on the Kuwaiti border in October 1994 and that Saddam was still trying to develop weapons of mass destruction, which would cause regional instability and adversely affect US capabilities to defend the security of the Gulf area. In his book, The Future of Iraqi Military Power, published in 1993 by the Washington Institute for Middle Eastern Policy, Michael Eisenstadt stressed that Iraq is still a regional power, is still insisting on developing nuclear weapons and still possesses chemical and biological weapons. In an article published in the *Readers Digest*, May 1994, under the title, "Will Saddam Strike Again?", Tom Lantos, a member of the US Congress and Chairman of the Committee for National Security, stressed the continuous threat to America's interest posed by Saddam.

34- See a statement by the assistant to the Iranian spiritual leader, Ali Khamenei, in *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, on 23 November 1994. The Badr Brigade, which is nominally under the control of the Higher Council for the Islamic revolution in Iraq, is in reality under Iranian government control as Bāqir al-Ḥakīm, who resides in Iran, operates under strict Iranian orders. The Badr Brigade entered Iraqi territory during the uprising of 1991 and began to indiscriminately slaughter all who failed to join it and hoist the Iranian flag with pictures of Khomeini, Khamenei and Rafsanjani. Saddam manipulated this flagrant Iranian interference to further his cause and save his regime, using such an event as a reminder to the Iraqi officer corps, the great majority of whom are Sunnis, of their likely fate at the hands of the Iranians and those Iraqis who are puppets of Iran's regime. Saddam, with the help of Iranian expansionist dreams, was thus able to demonstrate to the Iraqi officer corps, that their fate is tied up to his. Iran's interference and its blatant expansionist designs on Iraq caused deep concern in the west as well as Saudi Arabia. This concern was, in effect, one of the main reasons why America and its allies helped Saddam crush the uprising in the south with a ferocity he did not dare display against the Kurds, whom he knew were protected by a West more sympathetic to the Kurds than to the Shi'ites. Hence Iran, in effect, spoiled



the uprising of the Iraqi people and made it possible for Saddam to mass-murder the Iraqis of the south. See Ofra Bengio, "Baghdad between Shias and Kurds", in *Policy Focus*, Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy, Research Memorandum, Washington DC, 1992, p. 8.

- 35- See the memoirs of Powell, Baker and Schwarzkopf, cited above.
- 36- Fadil al-Chalabi, "Embargo of Iraqi Oil and its Effect on the Oil Market and Gulf and Iraqi Security", MEES, 22 October 1994.
- 37- See "The Um-Qasr Time Bomb", *Middle East International*, 8 March 1992.
- 38- See a discussion of Saudi views in "US running out of options in its quest to oust Saddam", in *Middle East Mirror*, 11 March 1992, p. 10.
- 39- In a press conference on 2 May 1995, the Turkish President, Sulayman Demirel, demanded the redrawing of the Iraqi-Turkish border so as, according to him, to prevent Turkish Kurds from infiltrating into Turkey from northern Iraq. He also declared that Mosul still belongs to Turkey as it was not given to Iraq by the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, signed by Turkey and on account of which Turkey relinquished its

claims to any part of Iraq. Demirel claimed that in 1924, Mosul was still part of the Turkish national territory and that it was not given up until 1925, following the Kurdish uprising in Turkey. However, the facts are that the Turkish occupation of Iraq ended with the surrender of Turkey in 1918. See the Iraqi File, no 42, June 1995, page 35.

40- See the Foreign Report, March 1994

41- The Americans' claim that they do not favour one or other of the Iraqi opposition groups is blatantly contradicted by America's actual and declared position. See an article by Richard Murphy, a former Assistant Secretary of State, in *al-Sharq al-Awsat* on 5 August 1992, entitled "Support of the opposition is not misleading them", which shows America's preference for a certain opposition group, the INC, and its desire to impose this group on the Iraqi people, even though the INC clique has been rejected almost totally by the Iraqis, both inside and outside of Iraq. The INC, in fact, has split the Iraqi opposition, unwittingly serving America's real objective. See also the statement of David Mack, a former Under-Secretary of State, during an Iraqi opposition gathering in Crystal City, Virginia, 2 August 1991.

- 42- See a report by Karl Murphy and Geoffrey South, Washington Post, 11 June, 1993.
- 43- See the excellent report by Eric Rouleau, in *Foreign Report and Affairs*, January - February 1995.
- 44- See the details of 1993 coup attempt in *al-Wasat* magazine, London, 27 September 1993. Sa'd Sālih Jabr, an opposition figure based in London, arranged a meeting between the would-be coup leaders and the CIA in London. After the coup was foiled, Jabr claimed that it was the CIA who had alerted Saddam. It is important to note that Jabr has been one of the closest allies of America since the 1950s. He now claims that it was America who was responsible for the failure of the coup, which resulted in the deaths of scores of leading Iraqi figures.
- 45- See the report of the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Washington, The Iraqi File, no. 5, April 1992, p. 13.



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Interview with Dr Nazīhah al-Dulaymī, a card-carrying communist, leader of the League for the Defence of Women's Rights and Minister of Municipalities in Qasim's government, in London, 14 July 1995.

Conversation with Sa'id Šālih Jābir, an opposition leader, in London, 26 September, 1994.

Interview with Šālih `Umar al-`Ali al-Tikrītī, member of the Ba`th Regional Command, Minister of Guidance from March to July 1970 and a former Chief of Jihāz Hanīn. The interview took place in London on 28 March 1994.

Conversation with Sāmī Faraj `Ali, an Iraqi journalist, in London on 28 June, 1994.

Interview with Shawqī Malāšī Sudānī, a Ba`thist and personal friend of Saddam during the latter's years in Egypt, in London on 7 March 1994.

Conversation with Zīā' al-Falakī, long-time Ba`thist and a member of the Regional Committee reformed after the downfall of the Party on 18 November, 1963.

