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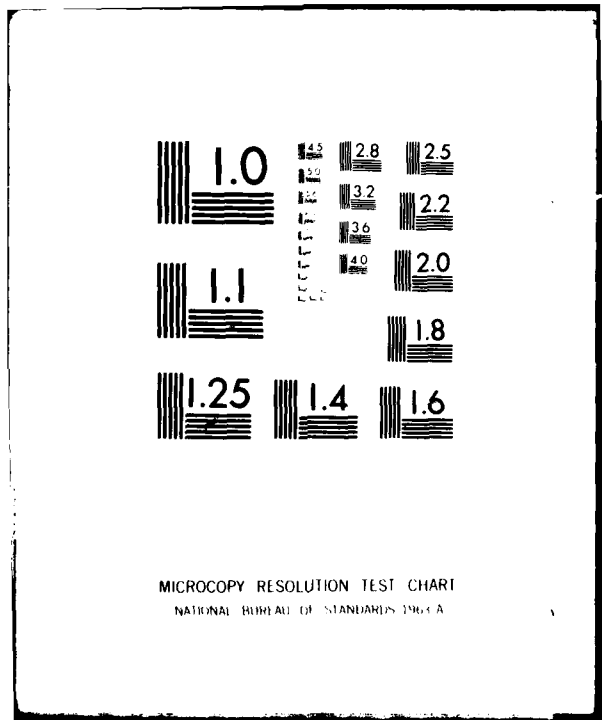
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1968 - 1979**

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**SOVIET POLICY TOWARD BA'ATHIST IRAQ,
1968-1979**

by

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Robert O. Freedman

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Composition of this memorandum was accomplished by Mrs. Pat Bonneau.

FOREWORD

This memorandum evolved from the Military Policy Symposium on "The Soviet Union in the Third World: Success and Failure," which was hosted by the Strategic Studies Institute in the Fall of 1979. During the Symposium, academic and government experts discussed a number of issues concerning this area which will have a continuing impact on US strategy. This memorandum considers one of these issues.

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This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.

DeWitt C. Smith, Jr.

DeWITT C. SMITH, JR.
Major General, USA
Commandant

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

DR. ROBERT O. FREEDMAN is Dean of the Peggy Meyerhoff Pearlstone School of Graduate Studies and Professor of Political Science at the Baltimore Hebrew College. Dr. Freedman received a bachelor's degree in diplomatic history from the University of Pennsylvania. He is a graduate of Columbia University's Russian Institute, and he also earned his master's and doctorate from Columbia University. He has written two books, *Economic Warfare in the Communist Bloc: A Study of Soviet Economic Pressure Against Yugoslavia, Albania, and Communist China* (1970) and *Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970* (1975); the latter book appeared in a revised and expanded edition in December 1978. In addition, he is editor of the book, *World Politics and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (1979). Prior to coming to Baltimore, Dr. Freedman served as Associate Professor of Political Science and Russian and Middle East Area Specialist at Marquette University and, until completion of his Army service in July 1970, he was Assistant Professor of Russian History and Government at the US Military Academy at West Point.

SOVIET POLICY TOWARD BA'ATHIST IRAQ 1968-1979

In order to assess the success or failure of Soviet policy toward Iraq it is first necessary to examine Soviet policy toward the entire Middle East, since Soviet policy toward Iraq is very much a component of its overall policy toward the region. In addition, it is necessary to examine the nature of the Ba'athist regime in Iraq, since many of the successes achieved and problems encountered by the USSR in its dealings with the Iraqis stem from the rather singular nature of the Iraqi regime which has been beset by serious domestic and foreign problems since it came to power. After these two topics are discussed, this study will examine the evolution of the Soviet-Iraqi relationship from the *coup d'etat* which brought the Ba'athists back to power in July 1968 until the present.

SOVIET GOALS AND TACTICS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In order to understand Soviet policy toward Iraq, it is necessary to deal first with the problem of determining Moscow's goals in the Middle East. Observers of Soviet policy in this oil-rich and

strategically located region are generally divided into two schools of thought on this question.¹ While both agree that the Soviet Union wants to be considered a major factor in Middle Eastern affairs, if only because of the USSR's propinquity to the region, they differ on the ultimate Soviet goal in the Middle East. One school of thought sees Soviet Middle Eastern policy as being primarily defensive in nature; that is, as directed toward preventing the region from being used as a base for military attack or political subversion against the USSR. The other school of thought sees Soviet policy as primarily offensive in nature, as aimed at the limitation and ultimate exclusion of Western influence from the region and its replacement by Soviet influence.² It is the opinion of the author that Soviet goals in the Middle East, at least since the mid-1960's, have been primarily offensive in nature, and in the Arab segment of the Middle East, the Soviet Union appears to have been engaged in a zero-sum game competition for influence with the United States.

In its efforts to weaken and ultimately eliminate Western influence from the Middle East and particularly from the Arab world while promoting Soviet influence, the Soviet leadership has employed a number of tactics. First and foremost has been the supply of military aid to its regional clients.³ Next in importance comes economic aid; the Aswan dam in Egypt and the Euphrates dam in Syria are prominent examples of Soviet economic assistance, although each project has had serious problems. In recent years Moscow has also sought to solidify its influence through the conclusion of long-term Friendship and Cooperation Treaties such as the ones concluded with Egypt (1971), Iraq (1972), Somalia (1974), Ethiopia (1978) and Afghanistan (1978). However, the repudiation of the treaties by Egypt (1976) and Somalia (1977) indicate that this has not been too successful a tactic. Moscow has also attempted to exploit both the lingering memories of Western colonialism and Western threats against Arab oil producers. In addition, the Russians have offered the Arabs diplomatic support at such international forums as the United Nations and the Geneva Conference on an Arab-Israeli peace settlement. However, both its diplomatic and military aid to the Arabs against Israel has been limited in scope by the Soviet Union. Moscow continues to support Israel's right to exist, both for fear of unduly alienating the United States at a time when the Russians desire additional SALT agreements and improved trade relations, and also because Israel

serves as a convenient rallying point for potentially anti-Western forces in the Arab world.⁴

While the USSR has used all these tactics, it has also run into serious problems in its quest for influence in the Middle East. The numerous inter-Arab and regional conflicts (Syria-Iraq, North Yemen-South Yemen, Ethiopia-Somalia, Algeria-Morocco) have usually meant that when the USSR has favored one party, it has alienated the other, often driving it toward the West. Secondly, the existence of Arab Communist parties has proven to be a handicap for the Russians, as Communist activities have, on occasion, caused a sharp deterioration in relations between the USSR and the country in which the Arab Communist party has operated. The Communist-supported *coup d'etat* in the Sudan in 1971, and Communist efforts to organize cells in the Iraqi Army in the mid and late 1970's are recent examples of this problem.⁵ Third, the wealth which flowed to the Arab world (or at least to its major oil producers) since the quadrupling of oil prices in late 1973 has enabled the Arabs to buy quality technology from the West and Japan, and this has helped weaken the economic bond between the USSR and a number of Arab states such as Iraq and Syria. Fourth, since 1967 and particularly since the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, Islam has been resurgent throughout the Arab world, and the USSR, identified in the Arab world with atheism, has been hampered as a result. Finally, the United States and to a lesser extent France and China have actively opposed Soviet efforts to achieve predominant influence in the region and this has frequently enabled Middle Eastern states to play the extra-regional powers off against each other and thereby prevent any one of them from securing predominant influence.

Given the problems that the USSR has faced, the Russians have adopted one overall strategy to seek to maximize their influence while weakening that of the West. The strategy had been to try to unite the Arab states (irrespective of their mutual conflicts) together with "progressive" Arab political organizations, such as the Arab Communist parties and the PLO, into a large "anti-imperialist" Arab front directed against what the USSR has termed the linchpin of Western imperialism—Israel—and its Western supporters. Given the heterogeneous composition of the front, the USSR has not had too much success with this strategy, although it appeared to bear fruit during the 1973 war when the Arabs united

against Israel and placed an oil embargo on the West. Unfortunately for Moscow, however, the astute diplomacy of Henry Kissinger and policy changes by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat led to a splintering of this "anti-imperialist Arab unity" and the emergence of a core of pro-Western Arab states in the aftermath of the 1973 war left the USSR in a weak position in the Arab world at the time of the Carter Administration's accession to power in January 1977.⁶ Moscow's position was to improve, however, by the time of the Carter-Sadat-Begin summit at Camp David in September 1978, and it improved still further following the two anti-Egyptian conferences organized by Iraq in Baghdad in November 1978 and March 1979, as it appeared that the pro-Western grouping of Arab states had disintegrated. Nonetheless, the USSR was unable to capitalize on this situation to create its long-sought bloc of pro-Soviet Arab states—a development due at least in part to opposition from its erstwhile ally, Iraq.

THE NATURE OF THE IRAQI BA'ATHIST REGIME

The recent abortive *coup d'etat* in Iraq and the subsequent execution of a large number of high-ranking Ba'athist officials underlines the tenuous hold on power of the elite which has ruled Iraq since July 1968.⁷ Major coup attempts against the regime have occurred in 1970, 1973, and 1979, and the regime has also been faced with an endemic conflict with the autonomy-seeking Kurds who inhabit the northern mountains of Iraq, as well as resentment from the Shiite majority in Iraq over domination by the Sunni Moslem minority regime, most of whose top leaders come from the town of Takrit. Even among the Takriti elite itself there has been conflict as evidenced by the ouster of Hardan al-Takriti from his position as vice-president in 1970, and his subsequent murder (most probably by an Iraqi "hit team") in 1971.

During its period of rule the Iraqi Ba'athists have also been faced with a number of foreign problems. One, a conflict with their fellow Ba'athists who rule in neighboring Syria, appears to have been at least temporarily resolved by the Camp David-induced rapprochement of October 1978, although the abortive July 1979 coup again soured relations. A second major problem concerns the border with Iran, whose population is predominately Shiite Moslem, and which until the fall of the Shah received extensive military support from the United States. While the 1975 treaty

between Iraq and Iran seemed to reduce the tensions between the two countries, the rise to power of Ayatollah Khomeini precipitated a new round of conflict. Foreign problems of a less severe nature facing the Iraqi Ba'ath include a continuing border dispute with Kuwait, strained relations with neighboring Saudi Arabia, and poor relations with Egypt, with whom Iraq has long been competing for leadership in the Arab world.

Given these domestic and foreign difficulties, it is perhaps not surprising that the minority dictatorship which currently rules Iraq has been rather paranoid about threats to its control over the country, whether real or only potential. Out of this situation has arisen a dependency on the USSR, on whom the Iraqis have relied heavily (although not exclusively) for weaponry. At the same time it has fostered a deep suspicion in the minds of the Iraqi leaders about the goals of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), which they see as actual or potential competitors for power. This, in turn, has created occasional conflict in Iraqi-Soviet relations, since the Iraqis see the USSR as a strong supporter of the ICP. This perception persists despite periodic Soviet statements that each Communist party has to achieve power by its own efforts.

The chronically suspicious nature of the Iraqi leadership has also been reflected in its efforts not to become too dependent on any one outside power for assistance. Thus in its early years when the nationalization and development of Iraqi oil were highest priorities of the Ba'athist regime, Iraq called upon France as well as the USSR for assistance. Following the quadrupling of oil prices, when general economic development became a major national priority, Iraq awarded major contracts not only to the USSR but also to firms in France, Japan and even the United States (with whom diplomatic relations remained broken because of Iraq's position on the Arab-Israeli conflict). The Soviet Union thus found itself obtaining a decreasing share of Iraqi trade. Even in the realm of military assistance, the Iraqis have been careful to seek aid from France so as to avoid too great a dependency on the USSR.

Interestingly enough, however, while the Iraqi leadership has sought to avoid too close a dependence on the USSR, it seems to have adopted several aspects of what might be termed the "Soviet model" to enhance its control over Iraqi society. Thus, there is a quasi-commissar system in the Iraqi armed forces both to help prevent a military coup and also to indoctrinate the officers in Ba'athist ideology. In addition the Iraqi leaders have sought to

keep the party and state separate, with the Ba'ath party in a position where it can control government activities by means of a unit of Ba'ath party members in each government department. Similarly the Ba'athists have organized a network of such cells in many factories, trade unions, and other official and unofficial organizations throughout the country.⁸ While this system has not prevented societal disturbances or attempted coups, it has helped, at least so far, to keep the ruling elite in power. Needless to say, however, adoption of such a system, modeled as it may be on the CPSU, does not mean that the Iraqi leadership is any more dependent on the USSR. Indeed, as the next section of this study will seek to demonstrate, the Iraqi leadership reached its high point of dependency on the USSR in the 1973-74 period and has been moving away from its position of dependency ever since.

THE EVOLUTION OF SOVIET-IRAQI RELATIONS, 1968-79

July 1968 - July 1973: The Growth of Dependency

The return of the Ba'ath to power in Iraq in July 1968 may have been greeted with mixed feelings by Moscow. On the one hand, only 5 years before the Ba'athists had slaughtered a large number of Iraqi Communists in their brief 10 month rule over the country. This reign had followed the overthrow of Abdul Qassim, with whom the Russians had established close ties. As a result, Soviet-Iraqi relations had deteriorated sharply. On the other hand, the al-Bakr led Ba'athists were at least professed socialists, albeit moderate ones, which was more than could be said for the regime of Abdul Rahman Aref which they overthrew. Even more important, however, the new regime's internal and external difficulties and the changing situation in the Persian Gulf made it opportune for Moscow to welcome the Iraqi Ba'athist quest for improved relations.

Soon after taking power the al-Bakr regime found itself caught up in an escalating conflict with Iran. On April 19, 1969, Teheran denounced the 1937 Iraqi-Iranian treaty fixing their frontier on the eastern (Iranian) side of the Shaat al-Arab River.⁹ In addition, by professing hostility to Western-oriented Turkey and the monarchies of the Persian Gulf, the Iraqis soon found themselves distrusted by virtually all of their neighbors. To make matters worse they were also beset by internal problems such as the con-

tinuing conflict with the Kurds, extensive overt and covert opposition to their regime, and an abortive *coup d'etat* attempt in January 1970. Thus beset by internal strife and external threats, the new Iraqi regime was in need of assistance.

From the point of view of the USSR, the possibility of exploiting such a situation must have appeared to be most timely indeed. On January 16, 1968, British Prime Minister Harold Wilson had announced that England would maintain its forces in the Persian Gulf only until the end of 1971, and Moscow may have seen the possibility of filling the vacuum of political/military power that would result. Iraq, with its public opposition to the Western-oriented monarchies in the Gulf and to American efforts to forge a Persian Gulf security pact to fill the void left by the departing British, seemed to be an excellent candidate for Soviet assistance.¹⁰

Soviet aid to Iraq was to be both military and economic in nature. Arms sale negotiations began in Baghdad early in 1969 and an agreement was reached when Iraqi military delegates journeyed to Moscow in May of that year.¹¹ (See Table 1 for a description of the subsequent rise in Iraqi military power.) Perhaps almost as important to the Iraqi Ba'athists as Soviet military aid was the Soviet willingness to help Iraq develop its oil industry. The Iraqis had long been locked in conflict with the Western-owned oil companies over such issues as the price Iraq would receive for its oil, and the quantity of oil the Western companies would be willing to pump.¹² Thus Iraq could only welcome the agreement signed between its state oil company, INOC, and the USSR in June 1969 for a \$72 million loan for drilling rigs, survey teams, and other oil field equipment; the loan the following month of an additional \$70 million to help develop Iraq's northern Rumelia oil fields; and a major \$222 million loan in April 1971—the latter two loans to be repaid in oil, a commodity which the USSR was beginning to find in tight supply.¹³ While the USSR and Iraq were able to agree on oil development (although the Iraqis were not always happy with the quality of Soviet equipment), and the Soviet government hailed the autonomy agreement reached on March 11, 1970, between the Iraqi government and the Kurds, differences remained on policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. Iraq opposed both UN Resolution 242 (which the USSR and Egypt had accepted) and the Israeli-Egyptian ceasefire agreement of August 1970. Indeed, *Pravda* on August 1, 1970, called Iraqi opposition to the latter agreement "incomprehensible." Iraqi opposition to these Soviet-backed

TABLE 1

The Rise in Iraqi Military Power, 1969-79

	1969-70	1975-76	1977-78
Army			
Total Strength	70,000	120,000	160,000
Armored divisions	1	3	4
Mechanized divisions	-	-	2
Infantry divisions	3	4	4
Republican guard mechanized brigade	-	1	1
Special forces brigade	-	-	1
Independent infantry brigade	-	-	2
Independent armored brigade	-	-	1
Tanks			
T-62, T-54/55, T-34, Centurion			
Mark Five, AMX	300	1,290	1,420
Light tanks	40	-	100
Armored fighting vehicles	NA	1,300	1,850
Artillery			
Howitzers	NA	700	700
Self-propelled guns	-	90	90
Surface-to-surface missiles (frog, scud)	-	NA	20
Anti-aircraft guns	-	800	800
Navy			
Fast torpedo boats	-	8	12
Torpedo boats	-	13	12
Minesweepers	-	2	2
Small patrol boats	-	3	4
Air Force			
Total combat aircraft	213	247	420*
Bombers	18	7	14
Fighter/ground attack	135	140	235*
Interceptors	60	100	171
Transport	40	30	59*
Helicopters	20	101	185*

*estimated

Sources: The Military Balance 1969-1970, London: Institute for Strategic Studies, 1969, p. 34.
The Military Balance 1975-76, Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1975, p. 34.
The Military Balance 1977-78, London: Institute for Strategic Studies, 1978, p. 36.
SIPRI Yearbook 1979, London: Taylor & Francis Ltd., 1979, pp. 218-220.

agreements helped to undermine the "anti-imperialist" Arab unity the USSR had been endeavoring to achieve. Nevertheless, the Soviet leaders not only did not exert any pressure on the Iraqi leadership (such as limiting economic or military aid), but they went ahead and signed a protocol on trade and economic cooperation with the Iraqis on August 13, 1970, which called for an increase in trade and Soviet assistance, and then granted the Iraqis a \$34 million loan on August 30, 1970.¹⁴ These events indicated not only the limited degree of Soviet influence in Iraq, but also a clear desire by the Russians to maintain good relations with the oil-rich and strategically located nation which, as in the days of Nuri Said and Abdul Qassim, had become Egypt's chief rival in the Arab world.

Moscow's efforts to establish a positive relationship with Iraq took on an added significance as Soviet-Egyptian relations began to cool with the death of Nasser and the advent of Anwar Sadat to Egypt's Presidency. Disagreements over Soviet military assistance to Egypt and Soviet policy toward the Communist-supported *coup d'etat* in the Sudan in July 1971, together with Egyptian gestures toward the United States, led to the deterioration of the Soviet position in Egypt.¹⁵ By contrast, Soviet-Iraqi relations began to improve rapidly. In a major article on July 14, 1971, *Pravda* hailed "positive changes" in Iraq, citing especially the Ba'athists willingness to consider including the ICP in a national front.

Soviet-Iraqi relations grew still warmer following the abortive coup in the Sudan several days later. Faced by a hostile Saudi Arabia and Iran to her south and east, and with her western neighbor Syria having joined an Arab Federation led by Egypt, Iraq was isolated both in the Arab world and in the Middle East as a whole. The Iraqis had probably hoped that, by supporting the military *coup d'etat* against Sudanese President Jaafar Nimeri, they might wean the Sudan away from its ties with Egypt and into a close relationship with Iraq. When the coup failed and Nimeri returned to power, the Soviet Union was the only country that surpassed Iraq in its condemnation of Nimeri's activities—albeit for different reasons.¹⁶

Iraq's isolation grew stronger during the Indo-Pakistani war in December 1971 when its Persian Gulf rival Iran seized control of three strategically placed islands in the Persian Gulf and all Iraqi appeals for assistance went unheeded by her fellow Arab states. At the same time, the truce between the Iraqi government and the

Kurds had broken down, with Kurdish leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani accusing the Iraqi government of not fulfilling the agreement of March 11, 1970, and of trying to assassinate him. The Iraqi government then began arresting a large number of Kurds, while other Kurds returned to Barzani's mountain fortresses to prepare for war. To make matters worse for the narrowly based Ba'athist government, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Khalatbari stated in early December 1971 that Iran would aid the Iraqi Kurds should civil war between the Kurds and the Iraqi government break out again.¹⁷ Meanwhile the Iraqi government continued to have difficulties in negotiations with the Western oil companies as it sought increased control over its oil and increased output by the oil companies. Frustrated and isolated, Iraq turned again to the USSR.

In February 1972 Saddam Hussein, the second most powerful member and heir apparent in the Iraqi regime, journeyed to Moscow in quest of a treaty. For reasons of its own, the Soviet Union was also interested in a treaty arrangement. In the first place it would give the Russians another strong point in the Arab world and make the USSR less dependent on its position in Egypt. Perhaps even more important, a treaty with Iraq would strengthen the Soviet Union's position in the Persian Gulf at a time when politics in the oil-rich region were in a great state of flux. Consequently, less than two months later the Iraqis obtained their treaty during Kosygin's visit to Iraq to inaugurate the Northern Rumelia oil fields.

The treaty bore a number of similarities to the Soviet-Egyptian treaty that had been signed 11 months earlier. Lasting for 15 years, the treaty provided that Iraq and the USSR would contact each other "in the event of the development of situations spelling a danger to the peace of either party or creating a danger to peace." In addition, the two sides agreed not to enter into any alliance aimed against the other. The Soviet commitment on military aid, however, was even more vague than in the case of the Egyptian treaty, stating merely that the two sides "will continue to develop cooperation in the strengthening of their defense capacities."¹⁸

Backed by the treaty, the Iraqi government took a harder position in its negotiations with the Western oil companies. As the confrontation became more intense the Iraqi regime made a gesture to the USSR by taking two ICP members into the cabinet as "a

necessary political requirement for the confrontation.”¹⁹ Then, on June 1, 1972, less than two months after the signing of the treaty, the major Western oil company, the Iraq Petroleum Company, was nationalized. There appears to be little doubt that the USSR actively encouraged the Iraqi nationalization decision. The USSR had long urged the Arab states to nationalize their oil holdings and thus strike a blow at “Western imperialism,” and by February 1972 Soviet spokesmen had begun to point out that unlike the situation at the time of the Arab oil boycott after the June 1967 war, both Western Europe and the United States were now vulnerable to Arab oil pressure.²⁰

Meanwhile, the Western oil companies were steadily retreating in the face of price demands from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and the oil-producing nations were now also demanding an increasing percentage of the companies’ oil for their own use. Accordingly, the Soviet leaders may have seen the IPC nationalization as another major blow to the whole structure of Western oil holdings in the Middle East and a reinforcement of the trend toward full nationalization of Arab oil and the consequent weakening of the Western alliance system headed by the United States. In the meantime, the increasing Soviet involvement in the development of Iraq’s oil industry, highlighted by the Northern Rumelia agreement, was a demonstration to the Arabs that if cut off by the West, they could turn to the USSR as an alternative source of oil development assistance.²¹

Nonetheless, despite their enthusiastic acceptance and encouragement of the Iraqi government’s nationalization decision, this action was not without cost to the Soviet leaders. The day after the nationalization Iraqi Foreign Minister M.S.A. Baki flew to Moscow in quest of economic and technical assistance to help compensate for the expected losses and difficulties resulting from nationalization. Lacking a tanker fleet of its own, and possessing only a limited refining capacity, Iraq was hard put to market its oil. To make matters worse, the regime had also lost about \$780 million in hard-currency revenue as a result of the nationalization. While the Russians may have welcomed the increased dependency of the Iraqi regime, a situation that could lead to closer cooperation in exploiting the unstable situation in the Persian Gulf (assuming such cooperation could be achieved without unduly alarming Iran), nevertheless, the Russians would have to pay for this dependency. Thus, 5 days after Baki’s arrival, an agreement was signed

stipulating that the Soviet Union would help Iraq transport oil, build a refinery in Mosul (near the Kirkuk field) with an annual capacity of 1.5 million tons, and help prospect for oil in southern Iraq. The Russians also agreed to give further assistance to the Baghdad-Basra oil pipeline. This agreement, like previous Soviet-Iraqi ones, stipulated that the USSR would be paid for its assistance by Iraqi oil exports.²² Indeed, the sharp increase in Iraqi exports to the USSR in 1973 (see Table 2), composed almost entirely of oil,²³ demonstrates that this commodity had become an important factor in Soviet-Iraqi trade.

TABLE 2

Soviet-Iraqi Trade, 1969-77 (in millions of rubles)

Year	Soviet exports	Soviet imports	Total trade
1969	60.9	4.2	65.1
1970	59.4	4.1	63.5
1971	99.1	5.5	104.6
1972	90.1	61.6	151.7
1973	141.5	190.6	332.1
1974	182.3	270.8	453.1
1975	274.1	325.4	599.5
1976	341.6	372.9	714.5
1977	281.0	321.0	602.0

Sources: *Vneshniaia torgovlia SSSR statisticheskii sbornik*, 1970, 1972, 1974, 1976, 1977.

Interestingly enough, even at this period of great dependence on the USSR the Iraqi Ba'athists were careful not to become too closely linked to Moscow. Thus less than a week after Baki's visit to the Soviet Union, Saddam Hussein made an official visit to Paris and on June 18 a 10-year agreement was signed whereby the French oil firm CFP would buy 23.75 percent of the production of the nationalized oil fields.²⁴ To emphasize still further the Iraqi desire to balance the USSR and France, Saddam Hussein stated in an interview in *Le Monde* that he wished to see Iraq's relations with France raised to the level of those with the USSR.²⁵ Iraqi efforts to avoid too great a dependence on the USSR were not limited to France, however. In August 1972 the Iraqis agreed to the opening of a US Interests Section in the Belgian Embassy in Baghdad, and in 1973 major oil agreements were signed with Italy and Japan.

Although the Iraqi government was careful to keep its distance from the USSR, Moscow after its enforced exodus from Egypt in July 1972 sought to counter this blow to its Middle East position by emphasizing its greatly improved relations with Iraq, which it hailed for taking the lead in combating "anti-Sovietism" in the Arab world.²⁶ Another tactic utilized by the USSR during this period was to encourage the establishment of national fronts in Arab countries where Communist parties could function as junior partners and thereby hopefully influence the Arab national leaders to take more pro-Soviet positions. While the Iraqi regime had given lip service to the establishment of a national front that the ICP had long been advocating, the Ba'athists did not seriously entertain the idea until a *coup d'etat* attempt on June 30, 1973, almost succeeded in assassinating al-Bakr and overthrowing the regime. In reporting this development, the Soviet foreign affairs weekly *New Times* urged the al-Bakr regime to learn from this experience and finally implement the long-promised "progressive national front" of the Iraqi Ba'ath Party, the ICP, and the Kurdish National Party.²⁷ Perhaps because it was severely shaken by the abortive *coup d'etat* or because its conflict with Iran had escalated to the brink of open warfare, the al-Bakr regime consented to the formation of the National Front, although on terms that insured the absolute dominance of the Ba'ath party. While the ICP, which was legalized, agreed to the terms of the Front, the Kurds refused and Kurdish-Iraqi relations degenerated to the point of virtual full-scale warfare.

In addition to the establishment of the National Front and the inclusion of two Communists in the Iraqi cabinet, Soviet assistance was playing a key role in Iraqi efforts to develop its oil industry, and Soviet military aid was helping to protect Iraq against its hostile neighbors (and perhaps encouraging Iraq to take a more aggressive stance in its border conflict with Kuwait.) In light of these developments, Soviet influence in Iraq, highlighted by the visits of the Soviet navy to the Iraqi part of Umm Qasr,²⁸ may be said to have reached a high point in July 1973. However, Moscow's influence remained clearly limited, and events of the following 2 years were to lead to a diminution of even this limited position.

July 1973 - March 1975: Dependency Diminished

The two major difficulties facing the Iraqi regime during this

period, once it had recovered from the effects of the abortive *coup d'etat*, were its conflicts with Iran and with the Kurds who were receiving military aid from Iran. While Soviet military assistance was needed both to deter Iran from an overt attack and to oust the Kurds from their mountain fortresses, Iraq was to receive an unexpected bonus during this period. As a result of the quadrupling of oil prices, the regime found itself able to shop in the world market for capital goods to aid in its economic development and for military equipment as well. It was also now able to end its barter deals with socialist countries, including the USSR, and to demand direct payment for its oil. This new situation was to lead to a diminished Iraqi dependence on the USSR, a phenomenon that was to make itself increasingly felt in the post-1975 period.

From the Soviet viewpoint, aid to Iraq against the Kurds was perhaps distasteful. Previous Soviet policy toward the Kurds had fluctuated between assistance during periods when relations were strained between Baghdad and Moscow and calls for Kurdish-Arab cooperation when Soviet-Iraqi relations were good. But in the spring of 1974 when the Iraqi government began preparations for an all-out attack against the Kurds, the USSR may have seen aid to Baghdad as a necessity. After a temporary improvement in its Middle East position during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, the Soviet Union's fortunes had turned downwards again as Egypt, once the primary Soviet ally in the Arab world, began to move into the American camp and the United States, long dormant in Middle East diplomacy, took the lead in the postwar efforts to achieve Arab-Israeli disengagement and settlement. During this process a pro-Western Egyptian-Saudi Arabian axis emerged which appeared capable of attracting other Arab states to its ranks. Given this development, the USSR faced the danger of isolation in the Arab world. Good relations with Iraq, one of the few remaining Arab countries in which the USSR could claim influence and an opponent of American diplomatic efforts, became a necessity.

Thus, following a Moscow visit by Saddam Hussein in February 1974, the USSR came out in full support of the Iraqi government against the Kurds. The Soviet media now claimed that the Kurds had been infiltrated and influenced by "imperialist and reactionary" elements.²⁹ The USSR also stepped up its military aid as Soviet Defense Minister Grechko paid a visit to Iraq in March 1974, most probably to inspect Iraqi preparations for their offensive against the Kurds.³⁰ In return for the Soviet diplomatic and military

support, the Ba'athist regime signed a joint communique with the USSR which advocated the solidarity of the Arab states "on an anti-imperialist basis" and the "consolidation" of their cooperation with the USSR. This declaration seemed a small price to pay for extensive Soviet aid.

Although Moscow was prepared to aid the Iraqis against the Kurds, it was more reluctant to get involved in the conflict between Iran and Iraq. While the USSR clearly did not like the way in which Iran was becoming the American policeman of the Persian Gulf, Teheran's role in the region was certainly preferable to a direct American one. In addition the USSR had not abandoned the hope of ultimately neutralizing Iran, and Moscow had begun to develop extensive trade relations with Iran, as it now imported Iranian natural gas and even sold some military equipment to the Shah's regime. Indeed at the high point of the Iran-Iraq conflict in 1974, Soviet trade with Iran exceeded that with Iraq, 495.7 million rubles to 453.1 million rubles.³¹

As a result, the USSR sought to play an even-handed role in the Iranian-Iraqi conflict, frequently urging the leaders of both countries to improve relations. The USSR warmly welcomed, therefore, the agreement of March 1975 between Iran and Iraq in which the two nations signed an agreement delineating their long-disputed border and agreeing to cease assistance to dissident groups within each other's territory. This meant a termination of Iranian aid to the Kurds, who were then in the midst of a life-and-death struggle with the advancing Iraqi army. With the end of the Iran-Iraq conflict and the inevitable end of the Kurdish struggle for autonomy, the Soviet position in the Persian Gulf seemed to be greatly enhanced. The long-feared possibility that the USSR would be drawn into a war between Iran and Iraq was now eliminated. The USSR could continue to improve its relations with Iran as well as Iraq while also assuring itself a continued flow of oil from Iraq and natural gas from Iran.

The Iranian-Iraqi agreement was to have another effect on Soviet policy, however. By removing the two main threats to the Iraqi government, the agreement made the Ba'athists far less dependent for military aid on the USSR. In addition, with the quadrupling of oil prices in December 1973, the Iraqi government was at the end of its economic dependence on the USSR. Baghdad then embarked on a major economic development plan and increasingly placed its

orders for factories and other goods with Western European, Japanese, and even American firms rather than with the USSR and East Europe. Although Soviet-Iraqi trade sharply increased during this period (see Table 2), Iraqi exports were already outstripping Soviet exports, as the Iraqis began to repay previous Soviet loans (see Table 3). To be sure, the USSR remained actively involved in the Iraqi economy, training Iraqi workers, building factories, canals, and power stations, and Iraq did sign a cooperation agreement with the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in July 1975.³² Nonetheless, the thrust of Iraqi economic relations was clearly in a Western direction, a development which was to become even more evident in the 1975-78 period.

TABLE 3

Iraqi Trade, 1969-77 (in millions of US dollars)

Year	Iraqi Imports	Iraqi Exports	Total trade
1969	440	1,042	1,482
1970	509	1,100	1,609
1971	694	1,530	3,334
1972	713	1,370	2,083
1973	906	2,190	3,096
1974	2,365	6,942	9,307
1975	4,204	8,276	12,480
1976	3,470	8,841	12,311
1977	3,898	9,664	13,562

Sources: UN Statistical Yearbook, 1977, New York: United Nations, 1978, pp. 472-277; and, Foreign Trade (Moscow), No. 7, 1979, p. 45.

July 1975 - September 1978: Adopting an Independent Line

In the period following the signing of its treaty with Iran, Iraq embarked on a policy of improving relations with its other neighbors in the Gulf, particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Increased conflict with Syria and the PLO, however, clouded Iraq's efforts to assume a position of leadership of the Arab world and contributed to its continuing isolation there. Meanwhile, Iraq's economic ties to the West continued to develop. Of even more serious concern to Moscow during this period was Iraq's continued opposition to Soviet peace initiatives in the Middle East, and its persecution of the Iraqi Communist party which had openly opposed a number of Iraqi government policies.

The Iraqi government made a definite effort to improve relations with its once hostile Persian Gulf neighbors in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq Treaty. Thus in July 1975, an agreement between Iraq and Saudi Arabia was signed, dividing the neutral zone which lay along their common border.³³ In addition, several Iraqi officials made tours of Gulf states in an effort to develop cooperation and enhance the Iraqi role in the Gulf. Iraq also began to extend economic assistance to Jordan during this period, and a road between the Jordanian port of Aquaba and Iraq was planned.

From the Soviet viewpoint the new Iraqi initiatives held both advantages and disadvantages. Should Iraq draw closer to Saudi Arabia, it could conceivably influence the Saudi government to adopt a less pro-Western policy and erode the Saudi Arabian-Egyptian axis which by 1976 had attracted a number of other Arab states including the Sudan and North Yemen.³⁴ On the other hand, by drawing closer to Saudi Arabia, Iraq might itself come under Saudi influence and draw further away from the USSR. This was a development the USSR could ill afford at a time when its Middle East position was continuing to deteriorate in the face of American diplomatic success. However, the issue was at least temporarily mooted by Iraqi assistance to leftist forces during the Lebanese civil war of 1965-76, a development which blunted Baghdad's diplomatic initiative in the Persian Gulf by once again raising suspicions of Iraqi intentions among the pro-Western monarchies of the region.³⁵

The primary Iraqi foreign problem, once its conflict with Iran was settled, was Syria, and this was one conflict in which the Iraqis could not call upon Moscow for assistance. Indeed, in his speech to the Twenty-Fifth Party Congress in February 1976, Brezhnev publicly ranked Syria over Iraq in its list of Arab allies, something the Iraqi leadership may not have appreciated.³⁶ In any case, there were a number of issues dividing the rival Ba'athist regimes including Syria's cutting off Euphrates River water to Iraq, Iraq's cutting off oil supplies to Syria, and attempts by each government to assassinate the leaders of the other. The USSR, still seeking to forge an "anti-imperialist" alignment in the Arab world, was clearly concerned about the Syrian-Iraqi conflict and sought to overcome it through public admonishments and a mediation effort by Soviet Prime Minister Aleksei Kosygin. At the height of the Lebanese civil war, he journeyed to both Baghdad and Damascus

which were backing opposing sides in the conflict. But Kosygin's efforts were to no avail.³⁷ Even when Syria and Iraq joined a number of other Arab states in forming the Front of Steadfastness and Confrontation to protest Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November 1977, this unity did not last. Iraq pulled out of the meeting, claiming that Syria wanted a deal with Israel.³⁸ Indeed, not only was Iraq in conflict with Syria over this point, it also became involved in the summer of 1978 in an assassination campaign against PLO leaders whom it claimed were seeking an agreement with Israel.³⁹

By this time Iraqi opposition even to Soviet-endorsed peace plans, such as the October 1977 joint statement with the United States, was becoming a problem for the USSR, which was trying to rebuild its Middle East position by co-sponsoring with the United States the renewal of the Geneva Conference. Even more aggravating to the USSR during this period, however, was the continued westward turn of the Iraqi economy. Indeed by 1977 as Soviet-Iraqi trade began to drop (see Table 2), Iraqi-American trade had sharply increased to the point that it almost equalled Iraqi-Soviet trade.⁴⁰ The Soviet leadership, which has long emphasized the connection between economics and politics, could have drawn small comfort from Iraq's frequent protestations that its economic ties in no way influenced its political relationships.⁴¹

Several additional problems clouded Soviet-Iraqi relations in 1978. Soviet aid to the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia in its war against the independence-seeking Eritreans, one faction of whom were backed by Iraq, clearly antagonized Baghdad.⁴² On the other hand, in the spring of 1978 the Iraqi government announced the execution of a number of Iraqi Communists, which could only anger Moscow.

Conflict between the ICP and the Iraqi Ba'athists had long been brewing. By 1976, the ICP had become increasingly unhappy with its virtually powerless position in the Iraqi government and had begun to advocate openly an increased role for itself in the National Front. In addition the ICP began to advocate genuine autonomy for the Kurds and openly opposed the Ba'athist policy of resettling Kurds outside of Kurdistan. Clearly unhappy with the westward drift of the Iraqi economy, the ICP also condemned the growing power of "private capital" and Iraq's "continuing dependence on the capitalist world market."⁴³

In addition to making these open criticisms of Ba'athist policy, the Communists reportedly sought to form secret cells in the Iraqi armed forces and carried on antigovernment propaganda among Iraq's Kurds and Shiites—the groups most disaffected with the Sunni Ba'athist rule in Iraq. “Indeed the Ba'athists may well have suspected Communist involvement in the February 1977 Shiite religious protest demonstrations. Given the Iraqi regime's readiness to liquidate any of its outspoken opponents whether or not they resided in Iraq, it appeared only a matter of time until the crack-downs occurred.” Persecution of the ICP became increasingly open in 1977, but in the spring of 1978 the Iraqi government decided to execute a number of Communists. Possibly reacting to the pro-Soviet coup in nearby Afghanistan, the Ba'athist regime evidently decided that the crackdown took precedence over its relations with the USSR. Indeed as Naim Haddad, one of the leaders of Iraq's ruling Revolutionary Command Council, bluntly stated: “All Communist parties all over the world are always trying to get power. We chop off any weed that pops up.”⁴⁶

The executions cast a pall over Soviet-Iraqi relations, despite the protestations of Iraqi leaders that they wanted good relations with the USSR. Significantly, however, Haddad stated “the Soviet Union is a friend with whom we can cooperate as long as there is no interference in our internal affairs.”⁴⁷ But in the midst of Moscow's growing concern about trends in Iraqi foreign and domestic policy, the Camp David agreements gave the USSR another opportunity to rebuild its position in the Middle East.

September 1978 - July 1979: The Aftermath of Camp David

While the Soviet leadership was undoubtedly unhappy with the results of Camp David, Moscow could only have been pleased with a number of developments in the Arab world that the Egyptian-Israeli-American summit precipitated. These included the reconciliations between Iraq and Syria, Jordan and the PLO, and Iraq and the PLO, culminating in the Baghdad Conference of November 1978, which appeared to align almost the entire Arab world against Sadat. In addition, several months later Moscow received an unexpected bonus when the Shah of Iran was ousted and the Islamic government which replaced his regime left CENTO, proclaimed Iranian neutralism, and offered full support to the Palestinian cause. Unfortunately for the USSR, however,

just as its long-sought anti-imperialist bloc in the Arab world appeared to be forming (and had the possibility of expanding to include Iran), actions by Iraq served not only to divide the nascent bloc but also to run counter to Soviet policies in a number of areas.

While the Camp David summit was in progress, the USSR seemed particularly concerned that the United States would obtain a military base in either Egypt or Israel.⁴⁸ Although the outcome of Camp David did not provide for such a military base, it was clear that the United States, by virtue of its mediating efforts and its promises of economic and military aid, was becoming even more involved in Egypt and Israel. The USSR may well have feared that a more formal military arrangement was not far off and that the Camp David system might expand to include such states as Syria and Jordan and possibly even the PLO.

Not unexpectedly, therefore, the USSR greeted the agreements with hostility. In a major speech at Baku on September 22, Brezhnev denounced what he termed the US attempt to "split the Arab ranks" and force the Arabs to accept Israeli peace terms. In addition he returned to the old four part Soviet peace plan, emphasizing that Israel had to withdraw totally from all territory captured in the 1967 war and agree to the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Brezhnev also repeated the Soviet call for a return to the Geneva Conference, with full participation of the PLO. Interestingly enough, perhaps to balance the American success at Camp David, Brezhnev hailed events in Afghanistan in his Baku speech, emphasizing that the new left-wing government which had seized power in that country in April had embarked on the road to socialism.⁴⁹

If the Soviet reaction to Camp David was hostile, the reaction of most of the Arab states was not much warmer. While President Carter dispatched a series of administrative representatives to try to sell the agreement to such key Arab states as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria, they met with little success. Indeed, only three days after the announcement of the Camp David agreements, the Front of Steadfastness and Confrontation met in Damascus. Not only did it condemn Camp David, which it termed "illegal," and reaffirm the role of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, it also decided on the need to "develop and strengthen friendly relations with the Socialist community led by the USSR."⁵⁰ Reinforcing Soviet satisfaction with this development, PLO

Moscow representative Mohammed Shaer stated that the Front for Steadfastness and Confrontation was "the core of a future broad pan-Arab anti-imperialist front."¹¹

The Soviet Union for its part moved once again to reinforce its ties with key members of the rejectionist front as first Assad of Syria, then Boumedienne of Algeria, and finally Arafat of the PLO visited Moscow in October. The Soviet media hailed the visiting Assad as a representative of the Steadfastness Front. One result of the meeting, besides the joint denunciation of Camp David and of attempts to "undermine Soviet-Arab friendship," was a Soviet decision to "further strengthen Syria's defense potential."¹²

While the the visit of Assad to Moscow could be considered a success for the USSR in its efforts to prevent the Camp David agreement from acquiring further Arab support, the Syrian leader's subsequent move toward a reconciliation with Iraq was even more warmly endorsed by the USSR. As discussed above, the Syrian-Iraqi conflict had long bedeviled Soviet attempts to create a unified "anti-imperialist" bloc of Arab states. Therefore when Assad announced that he had accepted an invitation to visit Iraq, the Soviet leadership must have seen this as a major step toward creating the long-sought "anti-imperialist" Arab bloc. While many observers saw Assad's visit as a tactical ploy to strengthen Syria's position in the face of the projected Israeli-Egyptian treaty, the USSR was effusive in its praise. Moscow Radio called it "an event of truly enormous importance which had considerably strengthened the position of those forces that decisively reject the capitulatory plans for a settlement drawn up at Camp David."¹³

While the Syrian-Iraqi reconciliation could be considered by Moscow as the most positive result of Camp David, the limited rapprochement between the PLO and Jordan was also deemed a favorable development, since it further reduced the chances of Jordanian participation in the Camp David accords and brought Jordan closer to an alignment with the anti-Sadat forces in the Arab world. The two rapprochements helped set the stage for the Baghdad Conference which appeared to further consolidate the bloc of Arab states opposing Sadat—a development warmly greeted by Moscow. At Baghdad, not only were the Camp David agreements condemned, with even Saudi Arabia participating (the Saudis may have been influenced, if not intimidated by the Syrian-Iraqi rapprochement), but a joint PLO-Jordanian commission was

established, foreshadowing further cooperation between these two erstwhile enemies. In addition, another reconciliation took place as the PLO and Iraq, which had been involved in an assassination campaign against each other in the summer, also appeared to end their conflict. Besides these reconciliations, specific anti-Egyptian measures were decided upon at Baghdad. Thus, the Arab League headquarters was to be removed from Cairo and economic sanctions taken against Egypt should Sadat go ahead with the signing of the treaty.

Finally the USSR must have been pleased by the Baghdad Conference's formula for a "just peace" in the Middle East: Israeli withdrawal from the territories captured in 1967 and the recognition of the "right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state on their national soil."⁵⁴ While the latter phase was open to differing interpretations, the juxtaposition of the two statements seemed to indicate that even such radical states as Iraq and Libya might, for the first time, be willing to grudgingly accept Israel's existence. Although the Baghdad statement on peace was far from the trade, tourism, and normal diplomatic relations wanted by the Israelis, it was very close to the peace formula which had been advocated by the USSR since 1974. In sum, the Soviet leadership was undoubtedly pleased with the results of the Baghdad summit, with one Soviet commentator deeming it "a final blow to imperialist intentions aimed at dissolving Arab unity and pressuring other Arabs to join Camp David."⁵⁵

Given the key role of Iraq in orchestrating the anti-Sadat forces at Baghdad and helping to form what the USSR hoped might become the nucleus of the long-sought anti-imperialist Arab bloc, it is not surprising that Soviet-Iraqi relations improved in the aftermath of the conference. Indeed, one month later, Saddam Hussein himself was invited to Moscow. While the main purpose of his visit was probably to coordinate the Soviet and Iraqi positions opposing Camp David, it appears that other issues occupied the discussions as well. These included Soviet-Iraqi trade relations, problems pertaining to Iraq's Communist party, and the Soviet supply of arms to Iraq following Camp David. In this regard there were a number of reports in the Western press that both Syria and Iraq were asking for sharp increases in Soviet weapons supplies to compensate the Arabs for Egypt's departure from the Arab camp.⁵⁶ The USSR, however, reportedly told Syria and Iraq that since they were now cooperating they could pool their weapons."

In resisting the Syrian and Iraqi demands (if this, indeed, is what happened), the USSR may have been concerned that if the Syrians and Iraqis were too well armed they might provoke a war against Israel at a time inconvenient for the USSR,⁵⁸ or it may have simply been one more case where an arms supplier was unwilling to meet all the demands of its clients.

At any rate, while there appeared to have been progress on the question of economic relations during the talks, the outcome of the military aid question was not clear. The final communique stipulated only that "the sides reiterated their readiness to keep cooperating in strengthening the defense capacity of the Iraqi Republic."⁵⁹ Even less was said on the subject of the Iraqi Communist party. The only public reference (and a veiled one at that) to this area of conflict in Soviet-Iraqi relations was made in a dinner speech by Kosygin who stated:

Friendly relations with the Republic of Iraq are highly valued in the Soviet Union and we are doing everything to make them more durable. This is our firm course and it is not affected by circumstantial considerations.⁶⁰

If the Soviet leadership sought to use the Brezhnev-Hussein meeting to secure improved treatment for the Iraqi Communists, it was not successful. Less than a month later, on January 10, *Pravda* published an editorial from the Iraqi Communist paper *Tariq Ash-Shab* deploring "the widespread persecution of Communists in Iraq and repression against the Communist party's organization and press." *Pravda* followed the editorial 3 days later by publishing the statement of the December 1978 Conference of Arab Communist parties which similarly condemned Iraq for its treatment of the ICP.⁶¹

The anti-Iraq campaign in the Soviet press is of particular interest. In the past the USSR had grudgingly tolerated attacks on local Communist parties so long as the regime responsible adopted a proper "anti-imperialist" stance. Indeed, the USSR has even gone so far as to urge the dissolution of Arab Communist parties or their restriction to the role of teachers of "scientific socialism" in Third World countries to avoid such conflicts.⁶²

It may well be, therefore, that Moscow saw more than just a domestic problem in Iraq's persecution of the ICP, which continued through the first half of 1979. Iraq, in leading the opposition to the Egyptian-Israeli treaty, was seeking to project itself as the

leader of the Arab world. In order to accomplish this task, however, Iraq had not only to arrange a rapprochement with Syria and the PLO, but it had as well to establish a working relationship with Saudi Arabia, the Arab world's leading financier and a growing Persian Gulf military power. The Soviet leadership may have suspected, therefore, that the overt anti-Communist campaign in Iraq was designed to signal to the Saudis that Iraq was no longer a close ally of the USSR. When Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein went so far as to state that "we reject the wide expansion by the Soviet Union in the Arab homeland" and that "the Arabs should fight anyone—even friends like the Soviets who try to occupy the Saudi land," this may have confirmed Soviet suspicions.⁶³

Yet another factor which may have tarnished somewhat Iraq's usefulness to the USSR as a leader of the anti-Sadat and anti-American forces in the Arab world was the eruption of a serious quarrel between Iraq and South Yemen (the PDRY), the most Marxist of the Soviet Union's Arab allies. There appear to have been two major causes for the quarrel. In the first place, when the PDRY invaded pro-American North Yemen in late February 1979, Iraq led an Arab mediation mission which, against the background of a major American military build-up of North Yemen, pressured the South Yemenis to withdraw before any of their major objectives were achieved. Given the apparent Soviet support for the invasion, this would appear to have been a case where Soviet and Iraqi objectives were in conflict.⁶⁴ Secondly, several months later, an Iraqi Communist party member, Taufiq Rushdi, who had been lecturing in the PDRY, was murdered—apparently by a "hit team" of Iraqi security men attached to Iraq's Aden Embassy. In reprisal, a PDRY force stormed the Iraqi embassy and seized the gunmen, an action which provoked a storm of protest from Baghdad.⁶⁵

If the unity of the anti-Sadat forces in the Arab world was threatened by the Iraq-PDRY conflict, it was also endangered by the growing strife between Iraq and the Moslem fundamentalist government led by the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran. The problem originated in Iranian Kurdistan where the Kurds, seizing the opportunity provided by the disintegration of the Shah's regime and of the Iranian army, demanded autonomy.⁶⁶ This in turn led to bloody clashes between the central authorities and Iran's Kurds. As the Iranian Kurds agitated for independence, this inevitably affected the Kurds living in Iraq who, after receiving arms from their

brethren in Iran, rekindled their war against the Ba'athist regime in Iraq. This in turn led to Iraqi bombing of Kurdish border villages in Iran and a sharp deterioration in Iranian-Iraqi relations.⁶⁷ Relations between the two states deteriorated further with charges by the Iranian Governor General of Khuzistan that Iraq had smuggled weapons into the region in which most of Iran's ethnic Arabs live. This was followed by an Iraqi crackdown on Shiite religious leaders in Iraq who had maintained close relations with Khomeini,⁶⁸ a development which may have precipitated the abortive *coup d'etat* in July 1979. Iran's clash with Iraq also affected its relations with other Arab states. In response to Iraqi demands that Iran return the three Arab islands in the Straits of Hormuz seized by the Shah in 1971, a religious leader close to Khomeini reasserted Iran's claim to Bahrein which the Shah had renounced in 1970.⁶⁹

The rise in Iranian-Iraqi tensions served to split further the camp of the anti-Sadat Arabs, with Kuwait and Bahrein lining up behind Iraq while Libya and the PLO, which had been early supporters of Khomeini, continued to back the Iranians.⁷⁰ It also negatively affected Iranian-Soviet relations, already strained by growing anti-Communist sentiment in Iran and by Soviet support for what was perceived in Iran as the anti-Islamic Taraki regime of Afghanistan. Thus a front page editorial in a government-supported Iranian newspaper, the *Islamic Republic*, claimed that "the ruling clique in Iraq" was plotting against Iran both to "prevent the spread of Iran's Islamic revolution into Iraq" and to "open the road to the warm waters of the Persian Gulf to their big master"—a clear reference to the Soviet Union.⁷¹

In spite of these events, however, Iraqi-Soviet relations did not reach the breaking point. Iraq still proved able to play a role in Soviet strategy when Iraqi objectives coincided with those of the USSR, as in the case of the second Baghdad Conference of late March 1979, which voted sanctions against Egypt for signing the peace treaty with Israel and also condemned the United States for its role in the peace settlement. Nonetheless by June 1979 it was clear that Iraq was no longer a client of the USSR. It could not be counted on for pro-Soviet statements in return for Soviet economic and military aid. While the USSR continued to sell military equipment to Iraq, the Iraqis were also receiving an increasing amount of military equipment from France. (The French sold Iraq

18 Mirage F-1 interceptors and 30 helicopters in 1978¹² and were negotiating a major \$2 billion arms deal for aircraft, tanks and other weapons in the summer of 1979.)¹³ In addition, Iraq continued to depend heavily on the West for its economic development as it sought to play an increasing role in Arab, regional and world affairs.

The abortive *coup d'etat* of July 1979 in which Syria may have been implicated, served to cool Syrian-Iraqi relations and slow Iraq's quest for leadership in the Arab world. This event, which once again underlines the precarious nature of the ruling elite's hold over the Iraqi government, serves as a useful point to review Soviet-Iraqi relations since the Ba'athists returned to power in 1968.

CONCLUSIONS

In evaluating Soviet policy towards Ba'athist Iraq in the 1968-79 period, one can make several general comments about the success—or the lack thereof—of Soviet policy. In the first place, Soviet influence with the elite ruling Iraq has been shown to be very limited indeed. If one measures influence in terms of the Soviet ability to modify the behavior of a ruling elite, the USSR has been singularly ineffective with the Iraqis on matters of significance to Iraq. Thus the USSR has not been able to alter Iraqi opposition to Soviet-endorsed plans for ending the Arab-Israeli conflict; nor has it been able to prevent mistreatment of the Iraqi Community party. Indeed, only in the period from 1972 to 1975 when Iraq was in greatest need of Soviet help were the Ba'athists willing to make concessions *vis-a-vis* the Communists. Even the concessions that were made, the inclusion of two Communists in cabinet posts and the establishment of a national front with Communist participation, were relatively insignificant ones, since the Ba'athists kept the reins of power firmly in their own hands. In any case, the crackdown on the ICP which began in 1977 effectively eliminated any hopes the USSR might have had that the ICP would have any influence in the Iraqi regime.

In the area of behavior reinforcement, a much lower indicator of intrastate influence, the USSR has had more success. Thus Soviet oil development assistance strengthened the Iraqis in their opposition to the Western-owned oil companies and was a factor in

Iraq's June 1972 decision to nationalize the Iraq Petroleum Company. Similarly, Soviet military aid to Iraq helped it to defeat the Kurds, deter an attack from pro-Western Iran, and build up Iraqi military strength so that it might serve as rival leader of the Arab world to Egypt. Indeed, by aiding the Iraqis in areas where Iraqi interests coincided with those of the USSR, as in the oil nationalization and in Iraq's opposition to Sadat's peace initiative, Moscow has sought to utilize Iraq as a major "anti-imperialist" force in the Middle East in the overall Soviet strategy of weakening and ultimately excluding Western influence from the region.

Unfortunately for Moscow, however, Iraqi and Soviet objectives have not always coincided. Divergences in the approaches of the two countries became increasingly apparent in the period following the Iranian-Iraqi Treaty of 1975 when Iraqi dependence on the USSR diminished. Thus while the USSR had looked to Iraq to be a center of anti-Western activity in the Arab world, Iraq began to develop very close and military ties to France, and reoriented its economy toward the West. In addition, as Iraq began to project itself as the leader of the Arab world, its anti-Communist domestic policy began to take on overtones of an anti-Soviet foreign policy. Finally Iraq's quarrels with the PDRY and Iran and its continued strained relations with the PLO served to weaken what Moscow had hoped would emerge as a solid "anti-imperialist" bloc of Middle Eastern states following the Camp David agreements and the revolution in Iran.

In sum, therefore, the Soviet Union's record of success in its dealings with Iraq is a mixed one. Its economic and military aid have proved useful in establishing ties with the regime, but the value of both instruments of Soviet policy have tended to diminish as Iraq deepened its relationship with France and other Western countries. At the same time the Iraqi Communist party has proven to be a major obstacle in the path of establishing a close relationship between Moscow and Baghdad, since the Iraqi regime tends to see the hand of Moscow behind the activities of the ICP. All in all the course of Iraqi-Soviet relations in the 1968-79 period indicates the low level of Soviet influence over a "client state" that has given relatively little in the way of political obedience in return for a large amount of Soviet economic and military assistance.

ENDNOTES

1. For recent studies of Soviet policy in the Middle East, see Robert O. Freedman, *Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970*, second edition, New York: Praeger, 1978; Jon D. Glassman, *Arms for the Arabs: The Soviet Union and War in the Middle East*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1975; Galia Golan, *Yom Kippur and After: The Soviet Union and the Middle East Crisis*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1977 and Yaacov Ro'i, *From Encroachment to Involvement: A Documentary Study of Soviet Policy in the Middle East*, Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1974. For a general study of possible Soviet objectives in the Middle East, see A.S. Becker and A.L. Horelick, *Soviet Policy in the Middle East*, Santa Monica, California: Rand Publication R-504-FF, 1970. For an Arab viewpoint, see Mohamed Helkal, *The Sphinx and the Commissar*, New York: Harper and Row, 1978.

2. Political science models dealing with the exertion of influence in Soviet foreign policy in general and Soviet foreign policy toward the Middle East in particular are still relatively rare. For a general study of influence, the interested reader is advised to consult J. David Singer's article, "Inter-Nation Influence: A Formal Model," in the influence theory section of *International Politics and Foreign Policy*, ed. by James N. Rosenau, New York: MacMillan, 1969. Singer makes the useful distinction between influence leading to behavior modification in a target state and influence leading to behavior reinforcement. Another useful study, which examines the phenomenon of influence from the perspective of the target state, is Marshall R. Singer, *Weak States in a World of Powers*, New York: Free Press, 1972, especially chapters 6, 7, 8. See also Richard W. Cottam, *Competitive Interference and Twentieth Century Diplomacy*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1967. For an attempt to analyze Soviet influence in the Third World, see *Soviet and Chinese Influence in the Third World*, ed. by Alvin Z. Rubinstein, New York: Praeger, 1975. For an effort to measure Soviet influence in Egypt, see Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Red Star on the Nile: The Soviet-Egyptian Influence Relationship Since the June War*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977.

3. For studies of Soviet military aid, see Glassman, and George Lenczowski, *Soviet Advances in the Middle East*, Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1972.

4. For a view of the role of Israel in Soviet Middle East strategy, see Freedman, chapter 8.

5. For a study of Soviet policy toward the Communist parties of the Arab world, see Robert O. Freedman, "The Soviet Union and the Communist Parties of the Arab World: An Uncertain Relationship" in *Soviet Economic and Political Relations with the Developing World*, ed. by Roger E. Kanet and Donna Bahry, New York: Praeger, 1975, pp. 100-134, and John K. Cooley, "The Shifting Sands of Arab Communism," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 1975, pp. 22-42.

6. For an analysis of the Soviet diplomatic difficulties during the Lebanese civil war of 1975-76, see Freedman, chapter 7.

7. For two books which treat the Iraqi Ba'athist regime from very different perspectives, see Edith and E.F. Penrose, *Iraq: International Relations and National Development*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1978 and Majid Khadduri, *Socialist Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics*, Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, 1978. The study by the Penroses is highly critical of the Ba'athist regime, while Khadduri's book is so favorable in its treatment as to be almost a panegyric. For a background history on the Ba'ath, see John Devlin, *The Ba'ath Party: A History*

From Its Origins to 1966, Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1976. The role of Iraq's Communist party is extensively treated in Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

8. See Khadduri, pp. 36-38 for a description of the Ba'athist efforts to keep party and state separate.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

10. For an analysis of Soviet policy toward the Persian Gulf at this time, see A. Yodfat and M. Abir, *In the Direction of the Persian Gulf*, London: Frank Cass & Co., 1977, ch. 6.

11. Khadduri, p. 144.

12. See Penrose, chs. 10 and 16.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 427-428. See also Arthur Klinghoffer, *The Soviet Union and International Oil Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1977.

14. See Freedman, *Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970*, p. 34.

15. For a description of these events, see *Ibid.*, pp. 54-60.

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17. Cited in *Middle East Monitor*, Vol. 2, No. 1, January 1, 1972, pp. 2-3.

18. The text of the treaty is in Khadduri, pp. 241-243.

19. Cited in Penrose, p. 409.

20. See I. Bronin, "Arabskaia Nefi-Ssha-Zapadnaia Europa," *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodyne otnosheniia*, No. 2, February 1972, pp. 31-42.

21. For an analysis of Soviet policy toward the Arab oil weapon, see Robert O. Freedman, "The Soviet Union and the Politics of Middle Eastern Oil," in *Arab Oil: Impact on the Arab Countries and Global Implications*, ed. by Mark Tessler and Naiem Sherbiny, New York: Praeger, 1976, pp. 305-327.

22. *Izvestiia*, July 22, 1972.

23. *Vneshniaia torgovliia SSR za 1974 god*, Moscow: International Relations, 1975, p. 238.

24. Penrose, p. 434.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 435.

26. See Freedman, *Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970*, p. 100.

27. *New Times*, No. 28, 1973, p. 17.

28. For an analysis of the impact of Soviet port visits of this type, see Anne M. Kelly, "Port Visits and the Internationalist Mission of the Soviet Navy," *Soviet Naval Influence: Domestic and Foreign Dimensions*, ed. by Michael McCWire and John McDonnell, New York: Praeger, 1977, pp. 510-529.

29. See *Pravda*, March 14, 1974; April 26, 1974.

30. *Pravda*, on March 27, 1974, stated that Grechko had come for "a detailed discussion of questions relating to the present state and future development of Soviet-Iraqi cooperation in the military and other spheres."

31. *Vneshniaia torgovliia SSR za 1974 god*, p. 14.

32. See *Foreign Trade* (Moscow), No. 10, 1975, pp. 8-14 for a Soviet view of Soviet economic cooperation with Iraq.

33. Khadduri, p. 160.

34. For a study of intra-Arab diplomacy during this period, see Freedman, *Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970*, ch. 7.

35. *Ibid.*, Khadduri, p. 168.
36. Freedman, *Soviet Policy Toward the Middle East Since 1970*, p. 230.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 242-245.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 318.
39. See Fulvio Grimaldi, "The PLO-Iraq Conflict," *Middle East*, No. 47, September 1978, pp. 38-39.
40. *Middle East*, July 1978, p. 63; total Iraqi-American trade in 1977 was \$592,400,000.
41. See comments by Iraqi Trade Secretary Mahdi al-Ubaidi, *Middle East*, No. 41, March 1978, p. 101.
42. On this point, see David Albright, "The War in the Horn of Africa and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," in *World Politics and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, ed. by Robert O. Freedman, New York: Pergamon, 1979.
43. See Baqir Ibrahim, "The Masses, The Party and the National Front," *World Marxist Review*, Vol. 19, No. 8, August 1976, pp. 49-56 and Aziz Mohammed, "Tasks of the Revolutionary Forces of Iraq," *World Marxist Review*, Vol. 19, No. 9, September 1976, pp. 10-18.
44. Tewfiq Mishlawi, "Crackdown on Communists in Iraq," *Middle East*, No. 45, July 1978, pp. 29-30.
45. For a list of Iraqi actions against enemies of the regime, see the article by J.P. Smith, *The Washington Post*, August 6, 1978.
46. Cited in *Ibid.*
47. Cited in Mishlawi, p. 30.
48. See *Pravda*, September 10, 1979.
49. *Pravda*, September 23, 1978.
50. Leonid Medvenko, "Middle East: Fictions and Realities," *New Times*, No. 40, 1978, p. 6.
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52. *Pravda*, October 7, 1978.
53. Radio Moscow (Domestic Service), October 28, 1978 (International Diary Program).
54. For a report on the results of the Baghdad Conference, see Baghdad I.N.A. November 5, 1978, in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report: Middle East and North Africa*, November 6, 1978, pp. A-13 - A-15. See also Amman Ar-Ra'y, in Arabic, November 6, 1978, in *Ibid.*, pp. A-19 - A-20.
55. Radio Moscow (in Arabic to the Arab World), November 6, 1978. Iraq, however, later backed away from the apparent concession of Israel's right to exist.
56. See Reuters report in *Jerusalem Post*, November 24, 1978; AP report in *The New York Times*, November 24, 1978; and the article by Ned Temko, *Christian Science Monitor*, November 30, 1978. See also the broadcast by Radio Kuwait (KUNA) on December 13, 1978 of an *Ar-Ra'y Ai-'am* article challenging the USSR to give more military assistance to Iraq and Syria.
57. AP report from Moscow, *Jerusalem Post*, January 5, 1979.
58. If so, the incident is reminiscent of Moscow's unwillingness to provide Egypt with the weaponry Sadat wanted in 1971 and 1972. There were also reports that following Camp David, the USSR felt it had greater leverage over Iraq and Syria and it could exercise that leverage to obtain improved treatment of the ICP from Iraq and the long-sought friendship and cooperation treaty from Syria. (See the

Western sources mentioned in footnote 56 above).

59. *Pravda*, December 14, 1978.

60. *Tass* in English, December 12, 1978. (*Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report: Soviet Union*, Vol. III, December 13, 1978, p. F-3).

61. *Pravda*, January 13, 1979.

62. On this point, see Freedman, "The USSR and the Communist Parties of the Arab World."

63. Cited in report by Ned Temko, *Christian Science Monitor*, April 11, 1979.

64. For an analysis of the Soviet role in the PDRY invasion of North Yemen, see Robert O. Freedman, "Soviet Middle East Policy in the Aftermath of Camp David," a paper delivered to the 1979 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, 1979, pp. 33-36.

65. This incident is discussed in Tewfiq Mishlawi, "Iraq's Foreign Policy Headaches," *The Middle East*, No. 57, July 1979, p. 10.

66. For a discussion of the events in Iran, see Robert O. Freedman, "Iran's Revolution and the Mideast Balance of Power," *Jewish Frontier*, Vol. 46, No. 6, June-July 1979, pp. 4-5; 30.

67. See report in *The Washington Post*, June 15, 1979.

68. Cited in AP report from Teheran, *Baltimore Evening Sun*, June 6, 1979.

69. Cited in report by William Branigin, *The Washington Post*, June 16, 1979.

70. See report by Ned Temko, *Christian Science Monitor*, June 18, 1979.

71. Cited in AP report from Teheran, *The Baltimore Evening Sun*, June 6, 1979.

72. *SIPRI Yearbook, 1979*, London: Taylor & Francis Ltd., 1979, pp. 218-220.

73. See report in *The New York Times*, July 28, 1979 and UPI report in *Jerusalem Post*, August 5, 1979.

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came to power. The paper finally examines the evolution of the Soviet-Iraqi relationship from the coup d'etat which brought the Ba'athists back to power in July 1968 until the present, and draws some conclusions about the success of Soviet foreign policy during that time.

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