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## THESIS

THE BATH PARTY IN IRAQ: FROM  
ITS BEGINNING THROUGH TODAY

by

Joel L. Cabana

December 1993

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DTIC QUALITY INSPECTED 2

94 2 28 068

# REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.

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|--|--|---|--|--|
| 1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)   |  | 2. REPORT DATE<br>1993 December                         | 3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED<br>Masters Thesis |  |
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE<br>The Ba'th Party in Iraq: From Its Beginning Through Today (U)   |  |   | 5. FUNDING NUMBERS                                 |  |
| 6. AUTHOR(S)<br>Cabana, Joel L.  |  |   |  |  |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)<br>Naval Postgraduate School<br>Monterey, CA 93943-5000   |  |   | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER           |  |
| 9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)  |  |   | 10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER     |  |
| 11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES<br>The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.  |  |   |  |  |
| 12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT<br>Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.  |  |   | 12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE                             |  |
| 13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)<br>The conventional wisdom concerning the future of Iraq after the Gulf War of 1990-1991 centers on the prospect of Saddam Hussein and the Ba'th Party being ousted from power. Should this happen, critics argue, peace, security, and predictability will return to Iraq in particular and the Middle East in general. This view of the situation is wrong.<br>This thesis examines the political history of Iraq since the end of World War One, the formation of the Ba'th Party, and the Ba'th Party since its ascent to power in Iraq. Leadership, Institutionalization, Policies, and Legitimacy form the core of the Ba'thist hold on power in Iraq. In its 25 years of power the Ba'th Party has improved the standard of living in Iraq and penetrated society such that any change of regime will result in only marginal and superficial change. The resulting leadership may call itself by other names, but the majority of people in positions of power will be holdovers from the Ba'th regime. |  |   |  |  |
| 14. SUBJECT TERMS<br>Iraq, Ba'th, Ba'th Party, Saddam Hussein, Middle Eastern Politic  |  |   | 15. NUMBER OF PAGES<br>130                         |  |
|  |  |   | 16. PRICE CODE                                     |  |
| 17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT<br>UNCLASSIFIED  | 18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE<br>UNCLASSIFIED | 19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT<br>UNCLASSIFIED | 20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT<br>UL                   |  |

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The Ba'th Party in Iraq:  
From Its Beginning Through Today

by

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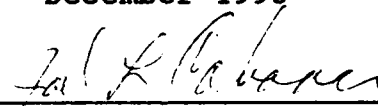
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MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

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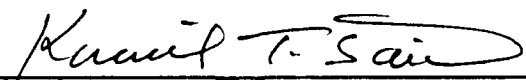
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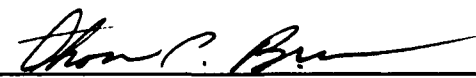
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### ABSTRACT

The conventional wisdom concerning the future of Iraq after the Gulf War of 1990-1991 centers on the prospect of Saddam Hussein and the Ba'th Party being ousted from power. Should this happen, critics argue, peace, security, and predictability will return to Iraq in particular and the Middle East in general. This view of the situation is wrong.

This thesis examines the political history of Iraq since the end of World War One, the formation of the Ba'th Party, and the Ba'th Party since its ascent to power in Iraq. Leadership, Institutionalization, Policies, and Legitimacy form the core of the Ba'thist hold on power in Iraq. In its 25 years of power the Ba'th Party has improved the standard of living in Iraq and penetrated society such that any change of regime will result in only marginal and superficial change. The resulting leadership may call itself by other names, but the majority of people in positions of power will be holdovers from the Ba'th regime.

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| Dist           | Author or Special                         |
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|      |   |    |
|------|---|----|
| I.   | INTRODUCTION .....  | 1  |
| II.  | POLITICAL HISTORY SINCE THE MANDATE .....                   | 4  |
|      | A. COLONIAL PERIOD: (1919-1932) .....                       | 4  |
|      | B. MONARCHICAL PERIOD: (1932-1958).....                     | 8  |
|      | C. AUTOCRACY PERIOD: (1958-1968) .....                      | 16 |
| III. | THE BA'TH PARTY TO 1968 .....                               | 21 |
|      | A. FORMATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE PARTY .....               | 22 |
|      | 1. Formation in Syria .....                                 | 23 |
|      | 2. Formation in Iraq .....                                  | 26 |
|      | 3. Structure of the Ba'th .....                             | 29 |
|      | B. IDEOLOGY OF THE PARTY .....                              | 31 |
|      | 1. Unity, Freedom, and Socialism .....                      | 32 |
|      | 2. Changes in Ideology .....                                | 36 |
|      | C. LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY IN IRAQ .....                    | 39 |
|      | 1. Early Iraqi Ba'th Leadership: (1949-1958) ....           | 39 |
|      | 2. Iraqi Ba'th Leadership Under Qasim:<br>(1958-1963) ..... | 41 |
|      | 3. Rebuilding Iraqi Ba'th Leadership:<br>(1963-1968) .....  | 44 |
| IV.  | THE BA'TH PARTY AFTER 1968 .....                            | 47 |
|      | A. LEADERSHIP .....   | 49 |
|      | 1. Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr: (1968-1979) .....                   | 51 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 2. Saddam Hussein: (1979-present) .....             | 55  |
| B. INSTITUTIONALIZATION .....                       | 65  |
| 1. Political .....                                  | 66  |
| 2. Bureaucratic .....                               | 71  |
| 3. Civil .....                                      | 74  |
| 4. Military .....                                   | 77  |
| C. POLICIES .....                                   | 79  |
| 1. Economic .....                                   | 81  |
| 2. Social .....                                     | 88  |
| D. LEGITIMACY .....                                 | 94  |
| V. CONCLUSION .....                                 | 104 |
| A. THE AFTERMATH OF THE GULF WAR AND THE FUTURE ... | 108 |
| 1. The Aftermath of the War .....                   | 109 |
| 2. The Future .....                                 | 111 |
| LIST OF REFERENCES .....                            | 117 |
| INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....                     | 120 |

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Persian Gulf War of 1990-1991 has raised serious questions as to the desirability of the leadership in Iraq of the Ba'th Party in general and Saddam Hussein in particular. To most outside observers, the problem in Iraq is Saddam Hussein and the Ba'th Party. They suggest that if he and his party were eliminated that the problems with Iraq would be ended. This line of thinking ignores what has happened in Iraq since it became a nation and the events of the last 25 years.

Iraq became a country in 1919 under a British mandate. The British installed a king and created a constitutional monarchy which would lead Iraq to independence in 1932. The monarchy overcame several challenges to its rule and lasted until 1958 when the army rebelled and the royal family was killed. Iraq became a republic, and the next ten years would see the reins of power shift four times. This was the decade in which the Ba'th Party came to prominence and was nearly eliminated at the hands of the Iraqi leadership. The party survived and in July 1968 came to power after it first seized the government and then eliminated its rivals.

In 1939 the party was born in Syria. It was started by three nationalist schoolteachers upset with the mandate

system in Syria. The movement grew and spread to Iraq in 1952. It was a small movement in Iraq, with only about 50 members in 1952. It was a highly disciplined and structured organization. The ideology of "unity, freedom, socialism" was, and still is, the guiding principle of the Ba'th Party.

The leadership of the party has been solid and ruthless from the beginning. There have been four leaders of consequence with the two most important being Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein. It is under the direction of these two men that the Ba'th Party came to power in 1968 and has remained in power through the present day. The leadership has been very disciplined and has used propaganda, oppression, and the reliance on close tribal or family relations to maintain its grip on power.

The party has also sought to institutionalize its rule in every sector of society. Through the use of its highly developed political organization the party has penetrated virtually every bureaucratic, civil, and military organization in Iraq. The party has grown from 50 members in 1952 to over 50,000 in 1984 with well over 1.5 million active supporters. The government and party payrolls have grown to about 30 percent of the population of 18 million.

The party has implemented economic policies that have raised the standard of living in Iraq. It nationalized the oil industry in 1972 and proceeded to follow several



industrialization and modernization programs designed to make Iraq an economic power in the region. The successful social programs started by the Ba'th Party have included free education and healthcare as well as a determined effort to re-educate the people on their "Iraqi" history.

The government has attempted to stifle opposition by trying to improve the quality of life, but when that has not worked, it has used force. Estimates as high as 500,000 people being deported or relocated are common. The regime has been accused of brutality and of using chemical weapons on its own civilian population.

The party has used the constitution, national elections, cooperation or elimination opposition parties, and its longevity to claim legitimacy. These efforts have made large portions of society dependent on the Ba'th. In effect, the Ba'th has created a constituency.

The United Nations has done a great deal of harm to the Ba'thist government, but that government has survived. The punishments and sanctions have been used as propaganda by the Ba'th with some apparent success. The Western hope that once Saddam Hussein leaves the scene, things will return to normal is not well founded. The Ba'th Party may go away, but the people in control will not. There are too many people with too much to lose for that to happen. They will call themselves something else, but they will be there.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

At the end of World War One, the victorious powers created the modern day state of Iraq. They installed a king, ran a mandate, and granted independence to the state in 1932. What followed was a revolution that overthrew the monarchy in 1958, three military dictatorships over the following ten years, and finally another revolution, or coup, that secured the rule of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party (ASBP) that has lasted until the present day. From the beginning of Ba'thist rule in Baghdad, there have been two major wars and more or less continuous internal dissention between the government and the Iraqi Kurdish and Shi'a populations.

It is the last war which poses the greatest questions about the future of Iraq. The 1990-1991 Gulf War saw the Iraqi Army defeated and the country left in ruins. The major problem according to outside observers was that Saddam Hussein remained in power after Iraq's defeat. The principle assumption appears to be that "peace, security, and predictability will return to the Middle East once

Saddam Hussein is ousted"<sup>1</sup> and that "Iraq's travails would have ended with Saddam's fall."<sup>2</sup> These views are the optimistic aspirations of the leaders of the world that was aligned against Iraq during the war. However, they ignore the facts on the ground in Iraq and the staying power of men like Saddam Hussein. It is my thesis that the Ba'th Party and Saddam Hussein as the primary defining leader, has changed Iraq such that once Saddam Hussein is no longer in power, the resulting leadership, whether Ba'thist or not, will be very similar.

In addressing this question from the historical perspective, there are certain aspects about Iraq that must be examined. The first is the political history of Iraq from the time it was declared a state after World War One until the advent to power of the Ba'th Party under the leadership of Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein. The second aspect is the Ba'th Party up until 1968 itself, to include: the birth, growth, structure, ideology, and leadership of the party. The third, and most important,

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<sup>1</sup>Christine M. Helms, "Political Environment in Iraq: Prospects for Change," in Balance of Power in Central and Southwest Asia, ed. Steven R. Dorr and Neysa M. Slater (Washington D.C.: Defense Academic Research Support Program, 1992), 39.

<sup>2</sup>Graham E. Fuller, Iraq in the Next Decade: Will Iraq Survive Until 2002? RAND Note N-3591-DAG (Santa Monica: RAND, 1993), 1.

aspect to be considered will be the Ba'th Party in Iraq after 1968, including: the leadership, the institutionalization, the policies, and the legitimacy that the Ba'th has generated during its tenure. Finally, in the conclusion, consideration will be given to the Gulf War of 1990-1991 and its aftermath as well as to the future of Iraq.

## II. POLITICAL HISTORY SINCE THE MANDATE

The political history of Iraq since the mandate can be divided into four distinct periods. They are: Colonial (1919-1932), Monarchical (1932-1958), Autocratic (1958-1968), and Totalitarian (1968-the present). For the purposes of this chapter the examination will be inclusive through the Autocratic period. The post 1968 period will be addressed in a later chapter.

### A. COLONIAL PERIOD: (1919-1932)

Prior to World War One the area now known as Iraq was part of the Ottoman Empire. While it is clear that Britain was firmly in control of Iraq by the end of the war it was not until the end that their rule became official. The British victory and the 1919 Paris Peace Conference ensured that "Iraq was formally made a class A mandate entrusted to Britain."<sup>3</sup>

The British initially followed a policy that was primarily "one that would establish an Arab government

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<sup>3</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 4th ed., Area Handbook Series, ed. Helen Chaplin Metz, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1990), 32. The Iraqi mandate was completed at the April 1920 San Remo Conference in Italy when Palestine was also given to Britain and Syria was given to France.

capable of protecting Britain's interests."<sup>4</sup> In implementing this policy the British used British military and foreign service officers to either run or advise the government at every level.<sup>5</sup> It was apparent that efficient government was wanted before any arabization could take place. This policy, the 1920 San Remo Conference, and what Antonius describes as the "denial of independence and the arbitrary imposition of the mandatory system,"<sup>6</sup> led to the decisive event during the colonial period: the 1920 revolt.

The revolt started shortly after the completion of the conference and by July had spread to Mosul and throughout the Euphrates River Valley.<sup>7</sup> For three months, June, July, and August, there was widespread unrest in opposition to British rule. The revolt was eventually put down, but the cost to the British was exceptionally high, with over 40

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<sup>4</sup>Phebe Marr, The Modern History of Iraq (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 29.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 32. Marr lists 1,022 British officers, many from India, in 1920 as administrators. This was further compounded by Indians staffing the subordinate positions within the administration. (Iraq: A Country Study, 33).

<sup>6</sup>George Antonius, The Arab Awakening (Lebanon: Librairie Du Liban, 1969), 313.

<sup>7</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 34.

million pounds sterling spent and more than 400 British soldiers killed.<sup>8</sup>

In response to the revolt, the British had Sir Percy Cox take over duties as Civil Commissioner, replacing the more heavy handed Colonel Arnold Talbot Wilson.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, Britain held a conference in Cairo in March of 1921 which gave Cox a new set of instructions with regard to the mandate. The new goal was to end the military government, formulate an Iraqi constitution, and arabize the government with Arab leadership.<sup>10</sup> The decision was made to create a monarchy which would be favorable to the British. King Faisal of the Hashimite clan, who was in exile in Palestine, was chosen to be king. While there was a vote in which Faisal received 96 percent approval, Marr suggests that "his real support was nowhere near that figure."<sup>11</sup>

On 27 August 1921, Faisal was coronated. With him came the arabization of the government and the new focus on independence for Iraq. In 1922 Iraq signed the first of

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<sup>8</sup>Marr, 33. Antonius says Arab deaths were about 4,000 and total casualties were around 10,000 (The Arab Awakening, 314).

<sup>9</sup>Antonius, 314,315. Wilson was actually Cox's deputy but was acting as Civil Commissioner while Cox was serving in Persia between April 1918 and October 1920.

<sup>10</sup>Marr, 33.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 36. She goes further to say that Faisal's competition was removed by the British prior to the election.

four treaties of alliance with the British.<sup>12</sup> These treaties gave the British a relatively free hand in the administration of Iraq. British advisors retained control of almost all foreign, fiscal, and domestic issues. Although the army was under the control of the Iraqi government, with British advisors, the British were able to maintain a separate force to ensure their position within the country.<sup>13</sup>

The decade of British control was characterized by the drive for modernization, arabization of the administration, and for the birth of nationalist movements within the country.<sup>14</sup> It was not until June 1929 that Britain decided to support the longstanding request by Iraq for membership in the League of Nations. The resulting Anglo-Iraqi treaty negotiations were tedious and filled with setbacks. They were finally completed in June 1930 after a new Iraqi prime minister, Nuri al-Sa'id, was brought in to replace Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun, who had committed suicide in November 1929.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Antonius, 360. The others were in 1926, 1927, and 1930.

<sup>13</sup>Marr, 39. They relied on the RAF and an Assyrian force numbering about 5,000 which was under British control.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 29. It should be remembered that nationalist movements were widespread throughout the Middle East as well as Europe during the interwar years.

<sup>15</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 39.



The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 had both good and bad points for Iraq. The British agreed to support the nomination of Iraq into the League of Nations in 1932 and they were to officially end the mandate. But the costs of British support would be high. The British retained their rights to bases, wartime occupation, exclusive British advisory help, and the appointment of a British Ambassador that would "take precedence over other ambassadors."<sup>16</sup> The British essentially remained in the same position as before the treaty but with greatly reduced costs. With the strongly pro-British monarchy and government in control, Iraq was admitted into the League of Nations in October 1932 as an independent state, the first mandate state to do so. Once Iraq became officially independent it entered into a new era in its history.

#### **B. MONARCHICAL PERIOD: (1932-1958)**

King Faisal I, the third son of King Husain, the Sherif of Mecca, was to be the first of three Hashimite Kings in Iraq. His reign in an independent Iraq was short as he died on 7 September 1933 of a heart attack while visiting Switzerland. His son Ghazi, who was 21 years old, became King. During this period the government in Iraq went through crises in nationalist sentiments, coup d'`etat's,

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<sup>16</sup>Marr, 51.

the Second World War, the Palestinian War of 1948, and the emergence of the communist's as a political force, as well as conducting the business of governing, which had been carried out by the British during the mandate.

The nationalist sentiment was rising towards the end of the mandate and it continued to grow throughout the period of the monarchy. King Ghazi was even considered an "ardent but inexperienced Arab nationalist."<sup>17</sup> He was much less amenable to British suggestions than his father had been. But this nationalism was also extracting a toll on Iraq. The thirties were years of civil and political unrest, from 1933 through 1939 Iraq had eight different governments.<sup>18</sup>

The tribal revolts of 1934 and 1935-1936 were just the beginning of the governments problems. The world was in depression and nationalism was on the rise in many countries, and Iraq was no exception. The anti-British feelings were being fanned by the Palestine situation, the continuing British presence in Iraq, and the effective nationalist propaganda of the German minister in Baghdad, Fritz Grobba. The movement was centered around schools where the limited number of teachers had large audiences.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 42.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>19</sup>Marr, 79.

It was these feelings that gave impetus to the 1936 Bakr Sidqi coup, the first military coup to take place in the modern Middle East.

The reasons given for the coup range from nationalist motivations to reaction to the oppressive actions of the government and go as far as the desire to emulate the successful authoritarian governments of Europe.<sup>20</sup> The real significance of the coup was the fact that it was carried out by the military. It signaled the rise of military dominance in the political arena. They installed an "Iraqi First" government that alienated the Arab nationalists and that would last until General Sidqi was assassinated in 1937.<sup>21</sup> For a time the pro-British forces in the government reasserted themselves with the formation of the Nuri al-Sa'id government in December 1938.

The re-emergence of Nuri was followed closely by the untimely death of Ghazi in 1939. This allowed the appointment of a regent due to the fact that Ghazi's son, Faisal II, born May 1935, was still a small child. The regent, Abd al-Ilah was the Queen's brother and the son of King Ali, the last King of the Hejaz, and was considered pro-British and "controllable" by Nuri. The other factor in

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 68, 69. Germany and Italy are the examples cited.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 73, 75.

Iraqi politics at this time was the imminence of World War Two. While the Arab nationalist's were in favor of supporting the Germans, the Nuri government broke relations with Germany in late 1939. Arab nationalist sentiments won out because in 1940 Nuri ended up resigning, and was replaced by the strongly pro-German government of Rashid Ali.

The regent and Nuri continued to press pro-British positions and eventually had to flee Baghdad in April 1941 when Rashid Ali, with the backing of the army, took control of the country. This action was as far as the nationalist's were able to get prior to the revolution of 1958 and it was to be short lived. No sooner had Nuri and the Regent left when the British invaded and reoccupied Iraq. The coup was in April and by June they were fully in control of Baghdad. By 1942 there were six brigades of soldiers and two armored brigades from Britain, India, and Poland in the country.<sup>22</sup> The King, his regent, and Nuri were also back in power and ever more reliant on the British for their position in Iraq. The war years saw Iraq struggle economically as most underdeveloped countries did, but it also saw the reinstalled Iraqi government bow to British pressure and declare war on Germany as the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 85,87.

stipulated. By the end of the war (1945), Iraq had joined the new Arab League and United Nations.<sup>23</sup>

After World War Two the regent embarked on what might be called a liberalization plan to allow political parties. There were five licensed, of which four were in opposition, and one unlicensed, the Communist, which was the most influential.<sup>24</sup> However, the liberalization did not last because of 1946 incidents such as the civil unrest in Kirkut and Abadan. The regent, with help from Nuri, clamped down on political freedoms to retain control of the country. The regent had also attempted to gain concessions, and increase his position domestically, from the British in the form of the Portsmouth Treaty of 1947, but the resistance to it was so severe that the government was forced to resign and the plan was eventually repudiated. Following this politically stressful year was to come another, and possibly more catastrophic year.

In May of 1948, war broke out in Palestine. Not only did the Arab armies, with Iraqi participation, lose the war, but Iraq lost half of its oil revenue and most of the Iraqi Jewish community immigrated to Israel.<sup>25</sup> The decade ended

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<sup>23</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 46.

<sup>24</sup>Marr, 98. She lists them by name and provides an outline of their platforms.

<sup>25</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 48.

with Iraq licking its wounds and rerouting oil pipelines in order to recoup oil revenue. By 1952 the economy was on the rebound, new oil royalty agreements with the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC), and the governments programs for improving social and economic conditions were beginning to bear fruit.<sup>26</sup>

The 1950s, however, would be the defining decade for Iraq. During the decade the government continued to repress political dissent and used force when necessary to keep order. Faisal II became King on his 18th birthday in 1953 and the regent, who had been in charge, became crown prince, as long as Faisal II had no male children.<sup>27</sup> It was during this time that pan-Arab nationalism was gripping Egypt and Syria. There was great pressure for Iraq to make some move on the international scene and it was in this area that Iraq would make crucial mistakes.

First, in 1954 the Cold War finally hit home in Iraq. The Nuri government broke relations with the Soviet Union and embarked on the Western sponsored Northern Tier program of containment. By the end of 1955 Iraq was a principal

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<sup>26</sup>Marr, 110., Iraq: A Country Study, 48.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 113.

member of the Baghdad Pact.<sup>28</sup> This new internationalism was opposed by virtually all Arab nationalists, both inside Iraq and throughout the Middle East. British participation in an otherwise regional organization was viewed as a threat to the sovereignty of Iraq and a rekindling of colonialism in the Middle East. As George Lenczowski put it in his book, The Middle East in World Affairs:

Following Iraq's adherence to the Baghdad Pact in 1955, its policies could be described as a forging of links with the West, isolation from the Arab world, and concentration on its own economic development.<sup>29</sup>

The isolation from the Arab world was the important aspect of Iraq's participation in the Baghdad Pact. Shortly after signing the Pact, the Suez crisis in Egypt erupted. Opposition to government policies was stronger than ever after the British invaded Egypt in 1956, so much so that Nuri declared martial law.<sup>30</sup> The new round of oppressive tactics eventually forced Nuri to leave office and go back to parliament.

Second, in response to the union between Egypt and Syria, the formation of the UAR, the government felt that it

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<sup>28</sup>George Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 283-286. The members of the British sponsored Pact members were: Iraq, Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, and Britain.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 286.

<sup>30</sup>Marr, 119. Martial law was in place until May of 1957.

needed to form a counter to it. The logical choice seemed to be a Federation with Jordan, the other Hashimite monarchy in the Middle East. Iraq was to be the senior partner, with Nuri becoming Prime Minister of the Federation. What the Federation succeeded in accomplishing was to further isolate Iraq from the rest of the Arab countries. The Federation also had the effect of increasing internal opposition to the monarchy due to the reliance on Iraqi revenue to fund over 80 percent of the Federation due to the fiscal limitations of Jordan.

The final, and fatal, error made by the government came in 1958. Civil War had broken out in Lebanon and the Iraqi government decided to send forces to intervene. This action gave the opposition the opportunity it needed to move on the government. In July 1958, the forces assigned to go to Lebanon under the command of Colonel Abd al-Salam Aref, one of the principle Free Officers, instead went to Baghdad and carried out the revolution that would end the monarchy.<sup>31</sup>

As Marr suggests, the final years of the monarchy were concerned with foreign affairs, such as the Baghdad Pact, the Suez crisis, and the Federation with Jordan, while becoming ever more authoritarian and oppressive at home.

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<sup>31</sup>Hanna Batatu, The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements in Iraq (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 800.



She goes further to say, "the seeds of future military dictatorship were sown by Nuri's authoritarian regime between 1954 and 1958."<sup>32</sup> She was right.

### C. AUTOCRACY PERIOD: (1958-1968)

The King and Crown Prince were killed on 14 July 1958 and Nuri al-Sa'id was killed a day later in Baghdad. The revolution of the group of Free Officers was now complete. The revolution had ushered in a decade of rule that would be characterized by the resurgence of military leadership and the rise, fall, and rise again of the Ba'th Party.

The principal leader of the Free Officers was Brigadier Abd al-Karim Qasim, who became the new ruler of Iraq.<sup>33</sup> He quickly moved to abolish the Parliament and consolidate power in the hands of the Free Officers.<sup>34</sup> Initially the revolution was thought to be a great victory for the Arab nationalist cause, but with time it became clear that Qasim was not interested in the cause. A power struggle developed between Qasim and Aref over the future policies of the country. Aref was an Arab nationalist while Qasim, being of

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<sup>32</sup>Marr, 124, 125.

<sup>33</sup>Batatu, 800. Batatu gives a detailed listing of the membership and the positions each would eventually have.

<sup>34</sup>Marr, 155. The Free Officers had clear plans on how to take power but were ambiguous about what they would do once in power. Marr lists 12 general ideas of the Free Officer's program.

Kurdish origin, was more of an Iraqi nationalist. More importantly, Qasim was concerned with his own position and retaining power. This conflict led Qasim to have Aref arrested and sent to prison in early 1959 on a charge of treason,<sup>35</sup> thus temporarily eliminating his principle political rival. Qasim had also disposed of Rashid Ali,<sup>36</sup> who had returned after 17 years in exile, by accusing him of plotting a coup, which prompted pan-Arab members of Qasim's cabinet to resign.

Throughout 1959, and somewhat throughout his entire tenure, Qasim relied on the communists to retain power. It was primarily the communists that he relied on to keep the pan-Arabist groups in check. The communists pressured Qasim into pulling out of the Baghdad Pact and increasing military and economic ties to the Soviet Union in early 1959. Events in March and July would drive a wedge between Qasim and the communists.

In March 1959 a group of disgruntled Free Officers in Mosul were massacred by communist supporters of Qasim.<sup>37</sup> Although Qasim had engineered the presence of the

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 160. Aref's death sentence was commuted to life and he was pardoned in December 1962 and would become the President after the Bathist coup of 1963.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 162.

<sup>37</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 51.

communists, the resulting power that the communists assumed would spring up again in July. The incidents at the Kirkut communist rallies would push Qasim away from the Communist Party. These events also moved other pan-Arab groups, namely the Ba'th, to decide that Qasim had to go.

The Ba'th attempted to assassinate Qasim in October 1959 but were unsuccessful. This was to be a sign of the future for Qasim. He attempted to bring political action under his control with a law concerning political parties in 1960 but eventually gave up on it in 1962 after it proved ineffective.<sup>38</sup> Qasim had become a one man show. He took on foreign policy himself, by repudiating the 1937 Shatt al-Arab agreement with Iran, by precipitating the Kuwait crisis in 1961, and by breaking off relations with the other states in the Middle East in response to their support of Kuwait during the Kuwait crisis.<sup>39</sup>

Qasim, like the monarchy he overthrew, had become isolated. Although the Soviet Union strove to support him through the Iraqi Communist Party to the end and even tried to warn him of the impending dangers,<sup>40</sup> it was the isolated Qasim that was ousted by a Ba'thist coup in February 1963.

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<sup>38</sup>Marr, 167.

<sup>39</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 52.

<sup>40</sup>Marr, 167.

This government would last for only ten months in which the party would strive to physically eliminate its rivals by whatever means possible. The principle means for this was their paramilitary force, the National Guard, which numbered around 5,000 in February 1963 and 34,000 in August 1963.<sup>41</sup> The brutality of the Ba'th during 1963 caused its downfall and rise of Abd al-Salam Aref, who had been something of a figurehead President, as the undisputed leader of Iraq.

While Aref was a pan-Arabist and he initially put several pan-Arabists in his cabinet, his desire for joining the United Arab Republic waned after he gained power. Eventually he would rid his government of the pan-Arabists in 1965 and replace them with members of his tribal group. It was Aref that introduced socialist programs into Iraq with the nationalization of many companies. He would govern until killed in a helicopter crash in April 1966.<sup>42</sup> Aref's successor was named a week later, it was his brother, Abd al-Rahman Aref.

He was elected president by the National Defense Council and Cabinet on 17 April 1966 with the backing of the army.<sup>43</sup> The idea was apparently that he could be manipulated by

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<sup>41</sup>Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, Iraq Since 1958 (London: I.B. Taurus and Co., 1990), 85.

<sup>42</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 55.

<sup>43</sup>Marr, 197. He was a colonel in the army himself.

others. Adb al-Rahman Aref's regime can be characterized by the following statement:

In the opinion of Phebe Marr, a leading authority on Iraq, on the eve of the June 1967 War between Israel and various Arab states, the Arif government had become little more than a collection of army officers balancing the special interests of various economic, political, ethnic, and sectarian groups.<sup>44</sup>

The failure of Aref to be a decisive leader was compounded by the continuing Kurdish problem and the non-participation of Iraqi troops in the 1967 war. He attempted to regain his political power through oppressive measures, but only succeeded in further inciting opposition groups. It was in response to the failures of the second Aref regime that the Ba'th was able to form an alliance with the army and overthrow the regime on 17 July 1968. It is the Ba'th regime that is in control today and the rest of this study will focus on that.

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<sup>44</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 57.

### III. THE BA'TH PARTY TO 1968

In 1939 the beginnings of a political movement that would have a far reaching impact in the late 20th century were taking place in Syria. In response to the French consenting to give up Alexandretta to Turkey, a Syrian schoolteacher named Zaki al-Arsuri formed a group of ardent nationalists to protest the decision.<sup>45</sup> At about the same time Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar, also schoolteachers, were beginning to form their own group in Damascus, to be named the Arab Ba'th party in September of 1940.<sup>46</sup> The merger of these two small groups formed the nucleus of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party (ASBP)<sup>47</sup>, or Ba'th Party.

From these humble beginnings would emerge a powerful political party which would eventually rely on the use of civilian leadership instead of the traditional military

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<sup>45</sup>Batatu, 722.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 726.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 729,730. The Ba'th merged with Akram al-Hurani's Arab Socialist Party in November 1952 and the name of the combined party was changed to the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party. In other works the name of the party is the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party (Republic of Fear, al-Khalil).

leadership that had been relied on to that point.<sup>48</sup> The work of three men would shape the destiny of Iraq for the foreseeable future. The Ba'th would eventually actively participate in the 1958 revolution, overthrow the resulting military government, and finally, after being ousted from power themselves, return five years later to create the present government of Iraq.

In this chapter the introduction to the origins of the Ba'th Party in Syria, its spread to Iraq, and the structure that it took on will be addressed first. Second will come the examination of the party ideology as defined by the founders and the changes that were made in response to the rifts within the party. Finally the Ba'th Party leadership in Iraq during the three principle periods prior to 1968 will be examined.

#### **A. FORMATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE PARTY**

The Ba'th got its start in Syria sometime in the early 1940's and branched out to Iraq, as well as several other

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<sup>48</sup>Khaldoun Hasan al-Nageeb, "Social Origins of the Authoritarian State in the Arab East," in Statecraft in the Middle East, ed. Eric Davis and Nicolas Gavrielides (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1991) 53. He points out that in the 15 years following the 1948 Palestine War there were military coups in over two-thirds of the countries in the Middle East. Between 1960 and 1970 he notes 38 such coups (20 succeeding and 18 failures). In Iraq the leadership was military with al-Bakr but it has been primarily Saddam Hussein who has been making decisions since the early years of the Ba'th regime.

countries, about a decade later. In Iraq Since 1958, the authors suggest that the formation of the party was

developed partly as a national liberation movement in opposition to the French and partly in response to what its leaders regarded as the political and ideological inadequacies of the older generation of Syrian nationalists.<sup>49</sup>

In this section an examination of the formation of the Ba'th first in Syria and then Iraq will be made, with an outline of the party structure to follow.

### 1. Formation in Syria

Batatu pinpoints the origins of the Ba'th Party to September 1940.<sup>50</sup> The principle founders, Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din Bitar, were both Sorbonne educated schoolteachers in Damascus who had formed a nationalist group in opposition to the mandate. The third founder was Zaki al-Arsuzi, also a Sorbonne educated schoolteacher in Alexandretta<sup>51</sup> who had formed a group in opposition to the French and their policy that gave the district of Alexandretta to Turkey. The two groups merged to form what is commonly referred to as the Arab Ba'th Party.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Sluglett and Sluglett, 87.

<sup>50</sup>Batatu, 726.

<sup>51</sup>Amatzia Baram Culture, History and Ideology in the Formation of Ba'thist Iraq, 1968-89 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 9. Arsuzi never actually joined the Ba'th Party.

<sup>52</sup>S.N. Mehdi, "Ba'athist Syria and Iraq: A Comparative Approach," Islamic Revolution, 3, no. 11 (1981): 5.



The initial converts were students from the colleges and secondary schools of Syria. By 1942 both Aflaq and Bitar had left their jobs as teachers to devote more time to the organization of the party. Their following was quite small for the first few years and they did not declare themselves publicly until June of 1946.<sup>53</sup> The Party Newspaper, Al-Ba'th, was issued for the first time on 3 July 1946. The Party finally adopted a Constitution at the first Party Congress in April 1947.

The Party Congress of 1947 was the defining event for the early Ba'th. It is here that the rules for membership were drawn up as well as the organization was defined. At this point the Ba'th was being run by Aflaq and the rules such that he would have the final say on all party issues.<sup>54</sup> The Constitution that was adopted during the Congress had three fundamental principles: "Unity and Freedom of the Arab Nation, Personality of the Arab Nation, and The Mission of the Arab Nation."<sup>55</sup> The Ba'th had

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<sup>53</sup>Batatu, 727. The party membership was under 10 in 1943 and it would only number 4500 by 1952.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 744.

<sup>55</sup>John F. Devlin The Ba'th Party: A History from its Origins to 1966 (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1976), 346, 347. Appendix D of his book contains the 1947 Constitution of the Ba'th Party.

declared themselves to be a pan-Arab organization and dedicated to striving for the people.

The Ba'th continued to build membership and spread its message throughout Syria and to other Middle Eastern countries. The Palestine War of 1948 gave a new boost to nationalist causes as the Arab people witnessed the failures of the ruling governments. However, the Ba'th continued to remain a small group as the Party suffered a setback in 1949 when the government published a letter written by Aflaq, while in jail, renouncing political ambitions.<sup>56</sup> It was not until the 1952 merger with the Arab Socialist Party, founded by Akram al-Hurani in Hama, that the Ba'th Party began to flourish. The merger of these two groups gave the Ba'th a new name, the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party (ASBP), and merging greatly increased the membership with the addition of the Arab Socialist Party's 10,000 active members and 40,000 followers.<sup>57</sup>

The post-Palestine War era is also the important period for the formation of the Ba'th in other countries around the Middle East. Up to the war, the Ba'th had been confined to the areas surrounding Damascus and its University. After the war the ideas of Ba'thism began to

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<sup>56</sup>Batatu, 727.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 729.

spread to Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan. The most important for the spread was without a doubt, Iraq.

## 2. Formation in Iraq

The first signs of Ba'thism were brought to Iraq as early as 1949 by a few Syrian teachers and by Iraqi students returning from Syria and Lebanon.<sup>58</sup> Growth was slow in Iraq as well as Syria during this time. The group was officially recognized as a branch of the Ba'th in 1952.<sup>59</sup> An Arab Shi'a, Fu'ad al-Rikabi, and Ba'th member since 1950 assumed the leadership of the Iraqi Ba'th in 1951 and headed the party for the next eight years. His stature was greatly increased when he was elected to the National Command in 1954. Under his leadership the party went from about 50 members in 1951, 289 in 1955,<sup>60</sup> and 300 members plus 1,200 "organized helpers", 2,000 "organized supporters", and 10,000 "unorganized supporters" in 1958.<sup>61</sup>

The initial organization was made up of predominately lower income groups in Iraq, while the Syrian organization came from the middle class. Batatu accounts for this by pointing out that the middle class was much

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<sup>58</sup>Majid Khadduri, Socialist Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics Since 1968 (Washington D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1978), 8.

<sup>59</sup>Batatu, 743.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 743.

<sup>61</sup>Sluglett and Sluglett, 90.

broader in other Middle Eastern countries than it was in Iraq. Its geographical center was in Baghdad with the province of Nasiriyyah as the second leading center for recruits.<sup>62</sup>

The Iraqi Ba'th entered the political scene in 1955 with the organization of opposition to the Baghdad Pact<sup>63</sup> but came into its own after the 1958 Revolution. Rikabi became Minister of Development in the Qasim cabinet, thus representing the Ba'th in the new government. This participation was short lived as the subject of unification with the United Arab Republic was put forward and immediately rejected by Qasim and Rikabi resigned. Participation for the Ba'th would now become opposition.

The Ba'th actively sought to get rid of Qasim by any means possible. The most notable event was the October 1959 assassination attempt by a group of Ba'thists, including Saddam Hussein, that almost succeeded. But, by not succeeding, the Ba'th brought the wrath of the Qasim government down on it. The government started arresting Ba'th members and by 26 December 1959, 77 members of the party were on trial, 21 in absentia, for the failed

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<sup>62</sup>Batatu, 743, 748. Batatu gives a complete breakdown of locations, jobs, and religions of the membership as of 1955.

<sup>63</sup>Devlin, 107. They distributed handbills and incited strikes. The government in turn arrested 22 and seized the Ba'th Party mimeograph machines.

assassination attempt.<sup>64</sup> This represented almost one-third of the entire Iraqi Ba'th and the entire regional leadership. It effectively halted the Iraqi Ba'thist movement. Rikabi was discredited and on 29 November 1959 the Regional Command Council dissolved itself.<sup>65</sup>

On 29 November 1959 the Iraqi Ba'th effectively started over. The National Command in Syria set up a Provisional Regional Command with Talib Shabib as Secretary and including Ali Salih al-Sa'di.<sup>66</sup> The reconstitution of the party was primarily left to al-Sa'di when he returned to Iraq in 1960. His presence in Iraq, while Shabib was in Syria, allowed him to dominate the Iraqi Ba'th and in 1962 he was made Regional Secretary in place of Shabib. His efforts at reconstruction were also successful with the recruitment of some 1,000 probationary members in 1962<sup>67</sup> and about 830 active members and 15,000 supporters in February 1963.<sup>68</sup> From this rebirth the Ba'th was able to maintain its membership and weather the turbulent period that would follow the downfall of the first Ba'th regime in 1963.

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<sup>64</sup>Devlin, 155-157.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 190.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 192.

<sup>68</sup>Samir al-Khalil, Republic of Fear (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 228.

### 3. Structure of the Ba'th

The structure of the Ba'th Party<sup>69</sup> was defined at the First Party Congress in April 1947 and then it was modified in 1954 at the Second National Congress in June 1954. They provided the rules of party membership and allowed the leadership to focus the party in the direction they wanted to take it.

The 1947 meeting approved the Constitution of the Ba'th Party and set the initial structure of the organization. The structure was based on a five level hierarchy with the Division (firqah), at least 12 men, being the base unit, the Section (Shu'bah), two or more Divisions, the Branch (far'), two or more Sections, the Command Staff (hay'at al-qiyadah), the heads of the party's administrative, cultural, labor, athletics, and finance bureau, and finally the Doyen (Amid), the party leader. In addition to this basic structure, the membership was divided into two levels, "members" and "principal members" of which the "principal member" was the more important. The Doyen was the "highest authority" and made all appointments to key posts and he alone had to give the approval for a "member" to become a "principal member" within the party. The Doyen

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<sup>69</sup>Batatu, 744, 745. My primary source for this section is Batatu but it can also be found in works by Marr and Devlin.

was also the only elected member of the National Command, he was elected for a period of two years.

The Second Party Congress was held in Damascus in June of 1954. The party had grown and was expanding rapidly to other countries throughout the Middle East. The merger with the Arab Socialist Party had roughly tripled the strength of the organization and it was necessary to revamp the hierarchy and overall structure of the party to allow for the increased membership. The new hierarchy was based on seven levels instead of the original five.

The original hierarchy was adapted with the addition of two new levels of party structure. The first was a new base unit, the Cell (halagah), which allowed three to seven men to organize instead of the original 12 or more. The second was the addition of a new level just above the Branch level. It was the Region (qutr) level, which allowed for the absorption of countries other than Syria into the party structure. Thus Iraq was now a region with its own Regional Command and party hierarchy while still being tied to the National Command. All other levels of party hierarchy remained the same with the exception of the Doyen. The Doyen position was renamed Secretary General and lost some of its earlier power.

Other changes that were made were to make the party more elective in nature and to take away much of the

appointment power of the leadership. Elections were to be held at virtually every level of the party. The other main change was the reclassification of members. The old "member" and "principal member" categories were replaced with "candidate" and "active member" categories. Under the new system a "candidate" would become an "active member" after a six month probationary period unless something adverse was found to disqualify the candidate.

The party structure in Iraq was slightly different, It consisted of the party wide hierarchy plus two additional membership levels. The "organized partisan" and "organized supporter" levels were introduced into Iraq in 1962 by the Regional Command in order to regulate the flow of new members into the Iraqi region of the party.<sup>70</sup>

#### **B. IDEOLOGY OF THE PARTY**

While it is true that the Ba'th Party was founded by Arsuzi, Bitar, and Aflaq, there has only been one ideologue for the party; Michel Aflaq. A Christian, both born and raised in Damascus, Aflaq was a teenager during the rebellious 1920's in Syria. Nationalism was on the rise and he was exposed to it on a regular basis. Aflaq attended Christian schools in his youth and then attended the Sorbonne in France, where he met Bitar, where he received

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 1010.



his greatest exposure to socialism through the "Marxist wave that swept over the European campuses during the world-wide slump and financial crisis of 1929-1932."<sup>71</sup>

From this background Aflaq was to formulate the ideology of the Ba'th. In this section an examination of Ba'thist ideology as presented by Aflaq and some of the ideological changes that have occurred through the breakup of the Syrian and Iraqi Ba'th will be made.

### **1. Unity, Freedom, and Socialism**

"Unity, Freedom, Socialism"- These words are the defining ideological terms for the Ba'th party as envisioned by Michel Aflaq. They are used in his literary works, party propaganda, and, perhaps most significantly, in the Ba'th Constitution. The early rhetoric of the party emphasized the "re-creation of the Arab nation" in order to link itself to the "Golden Age" of the first two "Arabro-Islamic" empires, the Umayyad (661-750) and the Abbassid (750-1258),<sup>72</sup> and it was through the platform of "Unity, Freedom, and Socialism" that Aflaq strove to achieve it.

The idea of "unity", or pan-Arabism, was not new to the Middle East when Aflaq started preaching it, but the

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<sup>71</sup>Batatu, 725.

<sup>72</sup>Eric Davis and Nicolas Gavrielides, "Statecraft, Historical Memory, and Popular Culture in Iraq and Kuwait," in Statecraft in the Middle East, ed. Eric Davis and Nicolas Gavrielides (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1991), 125.

Ba'th made pan-Arabism their priority. Aflaq believed that "Arab society could only be revitalized through Arab unity (and) the Ba'th Party was to be the standard bearer and vanguard of the Arab nation."<sup>73</sup> Through unity, Aflaq argued, the artificial states and differences imposed upon the Middle East by the colonial West would disappear. Unity of the Arabs is also "historically inevitable" and a "moral necessity" according to Aflaq.<sup>74</sup>

The Ba'th Constitution of 1947 has a clear "unity" message. Several articles deal with the subject of the "Arab nation," the "Arab individual," and the "Arab homeland."<sup>75</sup> The constitution clearly defines unified borders of the "Arab fatherland" in Article seven, which states:

The Arab fatherland is that part of the globe inhabited by the Arab nation which stretches from the Taurus Mountain, the Pocht-i-Kouh Mountains, the gulf of Basra, the Arab Ocean, the Ethiopian Mountains, the Sahara, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Mediterranean.<sup>76</sup>

Aflaq also pushed the idea of unity further by invoking religion in his cause. The Ba'th, being a secular

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<sup>73</sup>Sluglett and Sluglett, 88.

<sup>74</sup>Batatu, 731.

<sup>75</sup>Devlin, 345-352. The three "fundamental Principles", Articles: 1,2,3,4,6,7,10,11,15, and 20 all define what the pan-Arab state is.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 347.

party, had to develop a way to attract followers across confessional lines, and religion was the means they chose to do it. Great emphasis was given to the great Arab-Islamic empires of the past. Rhetoric such as, "the force of Islam ... discloses itself in a new form, that of Arab nationalism" and "Islam, in its pure essence, arose out of the heart of Arabism" was used to attract a wider audience to the cause.<sup>77</sup> The Ba'th used religion to legitimize their appeal and to give people something to identify their "Arabness" to.<sup>78</sup>

The pan-Arab "unity" principle of the Ba'th party was followed by the second principle; Freedom. The Ba'thist desire for "freedom" is for freedom of self-determination. The very first principle of the 1947 Constitution states that the nation must be "free to direct its own destiny."<sup>79</sup> To Aflaq, the colonial past of the Middle East had to be addressed. Freedom from imperialism was a key factor in building a nation.

It is important to consider, however, that Aflaq's concept of "freedom" is for the Arab nation first and foremost. Ba'thist freedom will not be subordinate to the

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<sup>77</sup>Batatu, 733.

<sup>78</sup>Khalil, 209.

<sup>79</sup>Devlin, 345.

freedom of individuals. The constitution proclaims rights of individuals but is clear in limiting these rights "within the limits of the higher Arab national interest."<sup>80</sup> Aflaq calls the individual "the Foundation" of the nation. But he also states that the individual must fulfill the required "conditions" for being a part of that nation and it is the Ba'th which imposes the conditions.<sup>81</sup>

The third principle of the Ba'th is "socialism." The constitution proclaims the "Party of the Arab Ba'th is a socialist party."<sup>82</sup> Batatu suggests that while Aflaq was influenced by the Communists, he strove to make the socialism of the Ba'th clearly "Arab" in nature. By claiming that "'socialism' like the other objectives of the Ba'th, issues from the 'depths' of the Arab nation"<sup>83</sup>, Aflaq ties it to the greater goal of Arab unity. Aflaq describes his brand of socialism as "scientific socialism plus spirit."<sup>84</sup> Some authors go so far as to say that "the Ba'thist vision of socialism is essentially non-Marxist, and

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid. 345, 351. The Second Fundamental Principle proclaims individual rights and Article 41 subordinates them to the state.

<sup>81</sup>Batatu, 736.

<sup>82</sup>Devlin, 349. Article 26.

<sup>83</sup>Batatu, 736.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

in fact anti-Marxist"<sup>85</sup> although others suggest that "socialism was perceived merely as an expedient for drawing the deprived classes into the camp of unity."<sup>86</sup>

The socialist emphasis of the Ba'th is laid out in the constitution. Articles 27 through 37 of the constitution directly address the economic policies of the party. The basic themes are equality, central planing, and redistribution. On the point of redistribution, it was clear that "struggle" to relieve the "minority" rich would have to be made.<sup>87</sup> There was to be limited private ownership and worker participation in management as well as the abolishment of usury and exploitation. Aflaq was after rapid industrialization and wanted the state to control all aspects of the rise to industrial power.

## 2. Changes in Ideology

"By 1957 ... the Syrian Ba'th had become a babel of conflicting ideological currents."<sup>88</sup> The rapid expansion of the party and the merger with the Arab Socialist Party in 1952 brought many new, and sometimes conflicting, ideas into the party. The biggest change was yet to come. In 1958 the

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<sup>85</sup>Sluglett and Sluglett, 89.

<sup>86</sup>Baram, 10.

<sup>87</sup>Batatu, 737.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 730.

Syrian branch of the party dissolved itself with the merger of Syria into the United Arab Republic (UAR).<sup>89</sup>

Aflaq's status within the party changed with these events. The failures and lack of leadership of the party were blamed on him. Younger members blamed him for not leading the party through the tough times of the UAR and others accused him of being out of touch with the day to day needs of the party.<sup>90</sup>

The concept of "guided democracy" was brought up in response to party failures.<sup>91</sup> Some within the party believed that Aflaq was misguided when he thought that the problems of society would melt away once the Arab nation established itself. In 1963 these ideas were codified by the adoption of a much more focused and centralized platform at the party's Sixth National Congress. The party shelved the idea of parliamentary representative democracy and declared that "the people's democracy, led by a vanguard party (the Ba'th) would limit the political freedom of the bourgeois and upper classes, just as those elements, when in power had limited the freedom of the masses."<sup>92</sup> It

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<sup>89</sup>Devlin, 211.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 212, 213.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 214.

essentially eliminated any positive impacts that the bourgeois elements might have made in favor of complete management by the people, which were to be "socialized" by the government.<sup>93</sup>

The degeneration in solidarity between younger and older party members of the Ba'th got continually worse in the early 1960s. The party had originally not advocated the use of violent means to come to power, but when the Ba'th in Iraq ousted Qasim in 1963, Aflaq was quick to go to Baghdad and proclaim unity. This type of contradiction continued until a "new Ba'thist regime in Syria (including Hafiz al-Asad) decided to disown the 'old guard' of Aflaq and Bitar."<sup>94</sup>

The rise of the military in Syria was the final blow to the Ba'th that Aflaq had worked to build. The military rejected his ideas as out of date and his methods not effective. Aflaq was the "old guard" and it was time for him and those like him to go. He was not even allowed to deliver a speech at the Eighth National Congress in April 1965.<sup>95</sup> The old guard continued to fight the new wave of Ba'thists but in the end they were totally rejected and

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid. Resolution No. 9. of Sixth National Congress.

<sup>94</sup>Sluglett and Sluglett, 90.

<sup>95</sup>Devlin, 296.

Aflaq ended up going to Iraq where he was received with great reverence and caused the split in the Ba'th party that exists to this day.

### **C. LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY IN IRAQ**

The Ba'th Party in Iraq got its start sometime in 1949 when it migrated from Syria. The growth and leadership of the party can be broken into three periods. The first being the period encompassing the arrival of the Ba'th in Iraq through the 1958 revolution. The second period starting from the emerging Qasim regime through the Ba'thist fall from power in November 1963. And the final period covering the dissolution of the Regional Command on 14 November 1963 through the re-emergence in the years leading up to the July 1968 return to power.

#### **1. Early Iraqi Ba'th Leadership: (1949-1958)**

In 1949 the first signs of Ba'th party organization emerged in Iraq. The first recorded leader was Fayez Isma'il, a Syrian student from Alexandretta who was studying law in Baghdad.<sup>96</sup> His early efforts were carried on by the first native Iraqi, Abd-ur-Rahmam ad-Damen, in 1950 when Isma'il returned to Syria.<sup>97</sup> He too would only serve in the

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<sup>96</sup>Batatu, 741. He notes that Isma'il was the brother of Wahib al-Ghanim, a member of the Syrian Ba'th Command.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 742.



leadership capacity for about a year. By now the party had spread from Baghdad to Nasiriyyah, Ramadi, Basrah, and Najaf primarily through the work of students.<sup>98</sup>

In 1951 the reigns of the emerging party were handed over to Fu'ad al-Rikabi, a Shi'a from Nasiriyyah. His reign would last for eight years and cover the rise of the party from obscurity to prominence in Iraq. He took over a very small party of around fifty members and increased the membership to over 100 in 1952 when the Iraqi branch of the party was recognized by the National Command in Syria. From this point the party continued to grow with Rikabi being elected to the National Command in 1954, as the Iraqi Region representative, and reaching 289 by June 1955.<sup>99</sup> The increase in military membership was especially notable during the 1950s with Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr, Salih Mahdi Ammash, and Abd-Allah Sultan becoming members.<sup>100</sup>

Under Rikabi's leadership the party began to publish a newspaper, first named al-Arabi al-Jadid (The New Arab) and later changed to al-Ishtiraki (The Socialist), in

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 743.

<sup>100</sup>Khadduri, 11. The men are significant because they would later become members of the Regional and National Commands and in the case of al-Bakr the President of Iraq.

1963.<sup>101</sup> Rikabi's Ba'th has been described as being "deeply involved in anti-government demonstrations and other opposition activities" throughout the 1950s.<sup>102</sup> The primary event prior to the revolution in 1958 was the strike organized by Rikabi in June of 1955 protesting the forming of the Baghdad Pact. Rikabi was arrested along with more than a hundred others, only 22 went to trial, and the party mimeograph machine was seized.<sup>103</sup> It was this event, which the party quickly recovered from, that gained the Iraqi Ba'th recognition from both the government and the popular press.

In 1956, in response to the Suez Crisis, Rikabi led the Iraqi Ba'th into a coalition with other nationalist groups in opposition to the government and its association with Britain. This was the last notable event of the Iraqi Ba'th prior to the revolution, although the party continued its agitation right up until the revolution in 1958.

## **2. Iraqi Ba'th Leadership Under Qasim: (1958-1963)**

Fu'ad Rikabi was still the Regional Secretary at the time of the revolution. While there were no Ba'thist officers in the small group of Free Officers actually

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<sup>101</sup>Devlin, 106.

<sup>102</sup>Baram, 11.

<sup>103</sup>Devlin, 107.

carrying out the revolution, the Ba'th had something just as good. Rikabi was related to the second most important Free Officer, Abd al-Salam Aref, as well as the fact that there were Ba'thist officers who supported the revolution, such as al-Bakr and Salih Mahdi Ammash.<sup>104</sup> Upon the successful completion of the revolution on 14 July 1958 the Ba'th, Rikabi, got one seat on the cabinet, that of Minister of Development. With this, the National Command appointed Talib Husayn Shabib as Regional Secretary.<sup>105</sup>

The party, which Rikabi claimed to number over 300 with some 15,000 supporters,<sup>106</sup> immediately pushed for Iraq to join the UAR. Qasim appears to have wanted no part of the union and in protest Rikabi resigned in February 1959, along with seven others.<sup>107</sup> Just ten months later an attempt to assassinate Qasim would be made by the Ba'th. This event was disastrous for the Iraqi Ba'th. It led to the Regional Party being dissolved on 29 November 1959 and the fleeing of the Iraqi Ba'th leadership. While Shabib worked to

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<sup>104</sup>Devlin, 109. This relationship later reportedly got Aref labelled as a Ba'thist when he was not.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 337. Appendix A and B list both National and Regional Commands and Congresses for the Ba'th Party.

<sup>106</sup>Sluglett and Sluglett, 90.

<sup>107</sup>Batatu, 813. Table 42-2.

reorganize the party, it was not until the ascendance of Ali Salih al-Sa'di that the party would come back.

Al-Sa'di was promoted to Ba'th Party Regional Secretary in May 1962. He was devoted to bringing an end to the Qasim regime and worked toward that end. He spent time building strength within the army, unions, schools, and peasant groups.<sup>108</sup> Under al-Sa'di's leadership it was reported that there were "several plans made to overthrow Qasim (but they) were intercepted by the regime and aborted" by the regime.<sup>109</sup> This activity continued until the party was ready to move in 1963.

On 8 February 1963, the party finally came to power. The party immediately established the National Council of Revolutionary Command (NCRC) and appointed Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr as prime minister and Abd al-Salam Aref as president.<sup>110</sup> But, as Ba'th Party Regional Secretary and Minister of the Interior, al-Sa'di retained the most power in the government. Al-Sa'di had control of the paramilitary forces and thus the streets, which gave him control over the government.

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<sup>108</sup>Devlin, 192.

<sup>109</sup>S.N. Mehdi, 9. It should be noted that this was against the standing Ba'th policy of not using coups to achieve power.

<sup>110</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 53.

This group, however, was far from homogeneous. There were three distinct factions vying for control of the party. There were "leftists" who were led by al-Sa'di, "rightists" who were led by Talib Shabib, and the "centrists" who were led by al-Bakr.<sup>111</sup> This competition for power, which appeared to be a personal grab for power by al-Sa'di,<sup>112</sup> coupled with the brutal measures that the Ba'th was pursuing in eliminating opposition groups, led this competition to take drastic measures. The Ba'th installed president, with the help of al-Bakr, removed al-Sa'di and the majority of the Ba'th leadership on 18 November 1963.

### 3. Rebuilding Iraqi Ba'th Leadership: (1963-1968)

Although al-Bakr and some other Ba'thist remained in the Aref government after November 1963, their power diminished. In September 1964 the Ba'thists were reported to be planning another grab for power.<sup>113</sup> Aref, hearing of this, removed from the government and repressed the Ba'th to the point that by 1966 the Ba'th virtually ceased to exist.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup>Baram, 12.

<sup>112</sup>Sluglett and Sluglett, 92. In June of 1963 al-Sa'di announced, in opposition to the National Command, that "he as his group were 'Marxist and Leftists' and that opponents were 'rightists and reactionary'."

<sup>113</sup>Baram, 12, 13.

<sup>114</sup>Sluglett and Sluglett, 98.

The party had fallen apart for the second time in just a few years. The Regional Command was dissolved on 14 November 1963 and a provisional one appointed in February 1964.<sup>115</sup> The years immediately following the fall from power were characterized by the struggle for power between al-Sa'di and al-Bakr. The National Congress brought this struggle to an end in 1965 when al-Bakr was appointed Regional Secretary, with Saddam Hussein as his deputy, and al-Sa'di was expelled from the party.<sup>116</sup>

The next three years were spent rebuilding and preparing for the time the Ba'th would again come to power. Amatzia Baram in Culture, History & Ideology in the Formation of Ba'thist Iraq, 1968-89 suggests five developments in Iraq between 1963 and 1968 that would define the Ba'th of the future and allow it to regain power in Iraq. They are: the rift between the "pro" and "anti" Syrian factions of the Ba'th, the failure of the Aref's to defeat the Kurdish insurgency, the disappearance of Shi'a leadership (al-Sa'di) from the Ba'th, the conflict with Pahlavi Iran, and most importantly, the failure of the Iraqi regime to take part in the June 1967 Six Day War.<sup>117</sup> As

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<sup>115</sup>Devlin, 339. Saddam Hussein was appointed provisional Secretary.

<sup>116</sup>Khadduri, 16, 17.

<sup>117</sup>Baram, 13.

Amatzia Baram puts it in his book:

The downfall of Abd al-Rahman Arif and the rise to power of the Ba'th party in July 1968 were in no small measure the outcome of the failure of the Iraqi army to support Jordan and Syria effectively in their struggle against Israel.<sup>118</sup>

On 17 July 1968 the Ba'th party, led by Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein, in coalition with some disgruntled non-Ba'thist military officers executed a coup that sent Abd al-Rahman Aref in exile and brought the Ba'th to power once again.

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<sup>118</sup>Ibid.

#### IV. THE BA'TH PARTY AFTER 1968

The Ba'th Party did return to power on 17 July 1968, but only with the decisive help of non-Ba'thist military officers, `Abd al-Razzaz al-Nayif, the Director of Military Intelligence, Colonel Ibrahim `Abd al-Rahman al-Da'ud, the commander of the Republican Guard, and Colonel Sa`dun Ghaidan, the commander of the 10th armored brigade, which was the Republican Guards tank regiment.<sup>119</sup> As payment for their participation in the coup these three men were awarded the positions of Prime Minister, al-Nayif, Minister of Defense, al-Da'ud, and command of the Republican Guard, Ghaidan, as well as places on the newly formed Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) in the government that was formed immediately after the coup.<sup>120</sup>

The Ba'th leadership, Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr, would have to wait until the end of the month to complete a Ba'thist takeover of the government. It was not until 30 July 1968

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<sup>119</sup>Sluglett and Sluglett, 112. A complete chronology of the events of early July 1968 through the end of the month can be found in Iraq Since 1958, p.110-116.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 114. The RCC consisted of seven men, all military officers, of which three were confirmed Ba'th Party members and one of the non-Ba'th members was a cousin of al-Bakr's from Takrit.



that al-Da'ud and al-Nayif were removed from the government.<sup>121</sup> The other member of the non-Ba'th group, Ghaidan, was converted, or at least coerced, to become a Ba'th Party member and continue on in his position.<sup>122</sup> So a second coup had taken place and as Phebe Marr puts it in The Modern History of Iraq, "The coup of 30 July had put al-Bakr and the military Ba'thists in power, but the Ba'th position was still precarious."<sup>123</sup> With fewer than 5,000 Ba'th Party members on the roles in 1968 the party had to build a sustainable government.

It is the government that is built and that controls Iraq to this day that will be the focus of this chapter. It will be examined by looking into four distinct areas of the regime from 1968 to the present. Leadership will be addressed first because traditionally it has been the defining characteristic of most, if not all, regimes in the region. It most certainly has defined the Iraqi regime under al-Bakr and even more so since the advent to power of Saddam Hussein, who has redefined the Ba'th in a reflection of himself. Second, the institutionalization that the Ba'th Party has been able to generate throughout Iraq in its more

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<sup>121</sup>Marr, 212. Al-Da'ud was sent to Jordan to visit the Iraqi force stationed there and told not to return, he was given an ambassadorial slot, and al-Nayif was sent out of the country as ambassador to Morocco.

<sup>122</sup>Sluglett and Sluglett, 116.

<sup>123</sup>Marr, 213.

than two decades of control. Third, an examination will be made of some of the policies, both economic and social, that the Ba'th have instituted. And finally, a look at the legitimacy that the Ba'th has gained through the use of the various items mentioned above as well as through the use of its distinctively Iraqi Ba'thist ideology.<sup>124</sup>

#### A. LEADERSHIP

With the Ba'thist desire to engineer change in Iraq from the top down, the leadership of the party, and thus the country, has been of paramount importance. Also indicative of the type of leadership that will be brought to the forefront in Iraq is the suggestion by Majid Khadduri in Socialist Iraq: A Study in Middle Eastern Politics Since 1968 that "The Arabs yearn for a 'strong' leader to preside over their destiny; if he possesses integrity, straightforwardness, and strength of character, he is likely to receive the support and confidence of the people."<sup>125</sup>

Phebe Marr has suggested that there have been roughly seven factors identifying the leadership of the Ba'th:

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<sup>124</sup>Phebe Marr, "Iraq: Its Revolutionary Experience Under the Ba'th." in Ideology and Power in the Middle East, ed. Peter J. Chelkowski and Robert Pranger, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), 186. This article lays out a workable model for an examination of the Ba'th Party and its role in shaping Iraq and is where I got the idea to focus on the four areas as noted above.

<sup>125</sup>Khadduri, 46.

ethnic Arab, Sunni Muslim, narrow geographic base, family ties, poor to lower-middle-class, a common age group, and a commonality of experiences including jail.<sup>126</sup> These factors are true for the present Ba'thist regime in Iraq and they for the most part hold true, with the exception being religion, for the previous leadership groups as well. While the various leadership groups have not always been agreed as to the direction the party should be taking, they have had the most important characteristic of homogeneity within their particular groups. This is true of the early as well as present day Iraqi Ba'th leadership. The first Iraqi Ba'th Party leader, Fa'ud al-Rikabi, was a Shi'a and his following came from this group as well as from relatives. When Ali Salih al-Sa'di was the party leader the al-Rikabi forces were pushed aside in favor of al-Sa'di's followers, "petty criminals" from the Baghdad area. This precedent continued through Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein, both who have relied on relatives and others from the predominately Sunni area around Takrit.<sup>127</sup>

The 17-30 July 1968 coup concentrated power in the hands of al-Bakr with Saddam Hussein as his second in command. This section will focus on the leadership period of al-Bakr

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<sup>126</sup>Marr, "Iraq: Its Revolutionary Experience Under the Ba'th," 192, 193.

<sup>127</sup>Sluglett and Sluglett, 108, 109.

and the subsequent assumption of power and total dominance of the Ba'th Party and the country by Saddam Hussein.

**1. Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr: (1968-1979)**

When al-Bakr assumed the leadership of the Iraqi Ba'th Party in 1965 he was 51 years old. His life to that point had been filled with jobs ranging from teaching in Iraqi schools to government as well as being an officer in the army. To understand his leadership of Iraq from July 1968 through July 1979 a few things must be examined. His life history until he assumed the Presidency, how he and the Ba'th came to power in 1968, how he consolidated and maintained his position within the Ba'th as well as the country after 1968, and his relationship with other party figures, notably Saddam Hussein, are most important.

Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr was born in 1914 to relatively poor parents in the town of Tikrit. His early life was spent studying in Baghdad where he entered a teachers college in 1929. In 1932 he graduated and went on to be a teacher in the primary school system for six years. During this time he was exposed to the fervent nationalism that was spreading throughout the country as well as the continued poverty that was the defining characteristic of Iraq at the time. It seems that he was affected by the Bakr Sadqi coup in 1936 because in 1938 he left the teaching profession and entered the military college in Baghdad. He was

commissioned a second lieutenant in 1942, just after the British completed their suppression of the Rashid Ali forces in Iraq.<sup>128</sup>

It is during al-Bakr's time in the Army that he apparently received his calling to politics. According to Khadduri, "Bakr's ambition to play a role in politics was aroused when the Free Officers movement began to spread secretly in the Army in 1952."<sup>129</sup> Al-Bakr joined the Ba'th Party sometime during the fifties and was one of the members of the group of officers that helped Qasim overthrow the monarchy. He served in the army until his forced retirement, for supporting Aref against Qasim, in October of 1958.

Once out of the army, al-Bakr appears to have worked towards the goals of the party. He would come back to the government in the 1963 Ba'th coup and be a part of the forces that helped Aref rid the government of the Ba'thist leadership of al-Sa'di in November 1963.<sup>130</sup> After falling from the grace of the Aref government, al-Bakr spent time in jail for his anti-Aref stances. His time in jail was spent

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<sup>128</sup>Khadduri, 69, 70, 71. The author gives a brief and comprehensive background to al-Bakr.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid, 71.

<sup>130</sup>Baram, 12. As mentioned before the "centrist" faction of the Ba'th Party was led by al-Bakr and would remain in the Aref government until September 1964.

consolidating his leadership, gained in 1965 at the Seventh Ba'th National Congress, of the party and rebuilding for the eventual coup of July 1968.

As already related, the Ba'th, under the leadership of al-Bakr, allied itself with the military non-Ba'thists in order to achieve success in the coup of 17 July 1968. The subsequent removal of the non-Ba'th forces from the new regime show that the alliance was a tactical move on al-Bakr's part and that he was the one calling the shots within the party.<sup>131</sup> It is from this point that the consolidation of power for both al-Bakr and the Ba'th Party takes place.

Marr points out further in assessing the leadership of Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr that,

In addition to keeping the army in line, he projected a paternal image that somewhat mitigated the party's reputation for harshness. As a practicing Muslim and a known moderate, al-Bakr appealed to the more conservative and nationalist elements in the population, and as a consummate manipulator, al-Bakr often helped mediate conflicts within the party.<sup>132</sup>

So it is quite apparent that al-Bakr appealed to those around him because he was, at age 54, still young enough to have gone through the trials of bringing the party to prominence, while being at least ten years older than the

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<sup>131</sup>Marr, The Modern History of Iraq, 209.

<sup>132</sup>Ibid., 218.

rest of the party leadership.<sup>133</sup> He also appealed in that he brought a certain amount of legitimacy to the leadership as he was the only member of the party to have held senior positions in both the government and the army prior to the 1968 coup.

After riding the regime of the Nayif and Da'ud followers, al-Bakr went on to rid himself of any competition that might come from within the party. He set up systems of control that would allow only those personally loyal to himself to attain high positions within the government.<sup>134</sup> Al-Bakr was not "prepared to allow political opponents to conspire against the new regime, not even under the guise of 'loyal opposition'."<sup>135</sup> With this in mind al-Bakr eliminated the military opposition that was led by Hardan al-Tikriti and Salih Mahdi Ammash. He removed al-Tikriti in 1970 and Ammash in 1971. The opposition to his leadership was effectively wiped out, through purges, by 1974 when al-Bakr "was the only former army officer still in a key post."<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup>Sluglett and Sluglett, 116.

<sup>134</sup>al-Khalil, 25.

<sup>135</sup>Khadduri, 32.

<sup>136</sup>Marr, 215,216. Hardan al-Takriti went to Kuwait where he was assassinated in 1971 and Ammash went on to become the Ambassador to the Soviet Union and eventually to obscurity.

Al-Bakr survived numerous attempts to oust him from power, with the most notable one coming in 1973 when the Director of Iraq's Internal Security service attempted to assassinate both al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein.<sup>137</sup> The plot was foiled and the perpetrators were caught and executed. But the most significant result of the assassination attempt was the new found power and position that Saddam Hussein would take and continue to build until his assumption of the Presidency in July 1979. In effect the two ruled almost as co-equals in Iraq from shortly after this incident.<sup>138</sup>

## **2. Saddam Hussein: (1979-Present)**

Before dealing with how Saddam Hussein has managed to consolidate his position as leader of the Ba'th Party and transform the Ba'th into an extension of himself a look into his background and how he got to the position of leadership must be made.

Saddam Hussein was born on 28 April 1937 in al-Auja, a suburb of Tikrit, to a life of poverty where he had no father and his stepfather regularly beat him.<sup>139</sup> After years

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<sup>137</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 243.

<sup>138</sup>Marr, 229. She notes that Saddam began to take on a greatly increased public role starting in 1974 and by 1977 ministers who should have been reporting to al-Bakr were reporting to Saddam for virtually everything.

<sup>139</sup>Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi, Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography, (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 7, 10. Much has been made by the Iraqi press that Saddam was born in Tikrit,



of neglect and abuse, he was sent to be raised by his uncle, Khairallah Talfah. Talfah was a fervent nationalist who had been dismissed from the army and temporarily jailed for his involvement in the 1941 Rashid Ali affair. It is from his uncle that many attribute Saddam's early political aspirations.<sup>140</sup>

The schooling of Saddam Hussein started in 1947 at age ten. He went to Baghdad in 1955 after primary school to continue his education. After failing the entrance examinations into the military schools of the day, he continued on to civilian high school where he would get his start in politics in 1956.<sup>141</sup> From this point on, his life became a part of the greater Ba'thist struggle to gain power. He quickly gained the reputation and image of a

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which is the birthplace of the great Muslim leader, Salah al-Din, in 1138. In truth, Saddam was born in Al-Auja, a suburb of Tikrit, and the great leader that was born there was actually Kurdish and not Arab.

<sup>140</sup>Ray T. Bradley, "Saddam Hussein Portrait of an Arab Leader" (Masters Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 1991), 25.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., 12. The actual dates are not clear. Khadduri suggests that he joined the Ba'th Party in 1956 around the time of the widespread demonstrations against the Baghdad Pact and Karsh maintains that he did not join until the next year, but it is safe to say he got his first taste of opposition politics in 1956.

"'shaqawah', a local term denoting a kind of tough or bully - a man to be feared."<sup>142</sup>

Saddam became involved with the assassination attempt against Qasim in 1959 as a junior Ba'th Party supporter and was forced to flee the country.<sup>143</sup> He spent time in Syria, where he met Aflaq and gained full party membership, and eventually Egypt, where he finished high school and began law school. He returned to Iraq in 1963 to take a minor position in the regime after the Ba'th seized power in February.<sup>144</sup> His most significant action during this time was his joining the faction of the Ba'th Party headed by his relative from Tikrit, General Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr. It is this action that would catapult Saddam into the Ba'thist leadership circle after the Ba'th fell from power later that year.

After the fall of the Ba'th in November 1963, Saddam Hussein maintained his close ties with al-Bakr and was for a time in 1963 the Provisional Regional Secretary of the Ba'th while the National Command got things within the Iraqi Ba'th

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<sup>142</sup>Marr, 220.

<sup>143</sup>Khadduri, 72, 73. The regime has made this event into a big deal and used it to glorify Saddam Hussein as a fearless and great fighter, leader, strategist, and revolutionary. There have even been movies made depicting his actions.

<sup>144</sup>Karsh and Rautsi, 22. They state he was appointed to the Central Bureau for Peasants.

sorted out. He quickly fell in line with al-Bakr and became the second in command of the Iraqi Ba'th during the rebuilding phase of the party from 1964 through 1968. He spent time in jail as a political prisoner and although he is not reported to have played an active role in the 17 July 1968 coup, he certainly played a significant role in the 30 July coup that eliminated any non-Ba'thist opposition.<sup>145</sup>

Saddam Hussein was Deputy Chairman of the Ba'th Party Regional Command in 1968 and in that position he was in control of the party's security organization as well as the popular militia that was being formed, both traditional sources of power with the Ba'th Party.<sup>146</sup> His star was rising fast and as Phebe Marr notes, there are really three factors that account for his rise to power:

First, his capacity and willingness to shelter behind President Bakr, the man who had the more visible position in the regime until the mid-1970s. Second, his astute understanding of, and ability to manipulate, domestic politics. Third, his ability to take the lead in matters of state, even when they involved risk.<sup>147</sup>

However, it was the coup attempt in 1973 that allowed Saddam to reorganize the internal security organization in Iraq and fill it with people personally

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<sup>145</sup>Khadduri, 51, 52, 53.

<sup>146</sup>Bradley, 58.

<sup>147</sup>Marr, "Iraq: Its Revolutionary Experience Under the Ba'th," 197.

loyal to him, which gave him the power he would eventually use to assume and consolidate his own leadership position in 1979. The aftermath of the coup attempt allowed Saddam to purge members of the Ba'th Party suspected of disloyalty and to reorganize the internal security organization into three separate organs that were all accountable and staffed with people that were loyal to him personally. He was effectively taking over the country without having to be accountable for being in charge. It would come down to the failing health of al-Bakr in the later part of the decade that would push Saddam into taking the reigns of power for himself. As has been stated, "there is little doubt that Husayn [Hussein] was impatient to assume official title to the power he held in actual fact [in 1979], and he probably engineered the older man's [al-Bakr] retirement."<sup>148</sup>

It was on 16 July 1979 that President al-Bakr appeared on television and announced his resignation and to pass the leadership torch over to Saddam Hussein, who was immediately sworn in as President.<sup>149</sup> With the rise to the top leadership position completed, Saddam immediately set out to consolidate his position just as al-Bakr had done before him.

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<sup>148</sup>Marr, The Modern History of Iraq, 229.

<sup>149</sup>Sluglett and Sluglett, 208.

Shortly after Saddam Hussein assumed the primary leadership role in both the Ba'th party and the country it has been reported that there was a coup attempt by opposition forces within the Ba'th leadership. It is not clear whether or not there was actually a coup plot, but it is certain that Saddam eliminated any opposition that might have been brewing. With al-Bakr stepping aside in July, Saddam purged, through their "conspiracy" in the plot, the Regional Command Council of five members and eliminated about 500 other "high-ranking Ba'thists" by 1 August 1979.<sup>150</sup> He immediately packed the Ba'th leadership with party members who were either related to himself or with associates who were longtime friends.<sup>151</sup>

Saddam was able to complete his consolidation of power in rather short order due to his extensive control of the party even before he became president. Because he controlled the internal security organization, he was able to effectively eliminate most opposition even before it could take shape. Saddam has been quoted as saying,

I know there are scores of people plotting to kill me. I know they are conspiring to kill me long before they actually start planning to do it. This enables me to get

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<sup>150</sup>al-Khalil, 70.

<sup>151</sup>Adeed Dawisha, "The Politics of War: Presidential Centrality, Party Power, Political Opposition," in Iraq in Transition, ed. Frederick Axelgard (Boulder, Westview Press, 1986), 23.

them before they have the faintest chance of striking at me.<sup>152</sup>

This a quote that Saddam Hussein has lived by for the last 15 years. His hold on power has been tenacious. Saddam has used purges, the internal security forces, the media, the postal service, his family, and even history to retain his grip on the leadership position in Iraq.

Throughout his tenure as the leader of Iraq, Saddam has executed, imprisoned, or expelled any opposition forces either in or out of the government. He has executed both generals for failing at the battle front against Iran and religious leaders for their opposition to his secular policies.<sup>153</sup> The use of his internal security forces for imprisonment and torture of Iraqi's has been widely reported and is said to include acts against children and bystanders.<sup>154</sup> The use of force has also extended to the civilian population with campaigns of resettlement for Kurds and deportation of opposition Shi'a to pacify resistance to the Ba'th leadership. As Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh

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<sup>152</sup>Karsh and Rautsi, 2. He is reported to have said this shortly after coming to power in 1979.

<sup>153</sup>Saddam has executed numerous high ranking military men for their failures in both the war with Iran and the war with the coalition forces over Kuwait in 1990, 1991. He also executed the Shi'a religious leader Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, along with his sister, in 1980.

<sup>154</sup>Bradley, 47.

noted in their book The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991, "The Use of physical force to promote his political ends had been the hallmark of the Iraqi leader's career from the start."<sup>155</sup>

The government controlled media and postal service are two other sources of his staying power. Al-Khalil reports that the media is so biased towards Saddam Hussein that hardly a day can go by without a major news story about his accomplishments, the radio is filled with his name and speeches, the streets are filled with pictures of him, and there are even Saddam T-shirts and wrist watches for sale in the shops.<sup>156</sup> Saddam dominates the stamp industry as well. He has "reigned supreme on Iraqi stamps since 1979" with his first appearance coming in 1976.<sup>157</sup> Saddam has been portrayed in movies and has taken official credit for virtually everything good that has happened to Iraq since 1968 and pushed off responsibility for everything bad.

Saddam's pervasive use of family members in positions of authority has been well documented. While true

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<sup>155</sup>Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, The gulf Conflict 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 19.

<sup>156</sup>al-Khalil, 110. Even as late as the summer of 1993, The New York Times reported a story about an exhibition of portraits of Saddam Hussein in a Baghdad art gallery.

<sup>157</sup>Donald M. Reid, "The Postage Stamp: A Window on Saddam Hussein's Iraq," Middle East Journal, 47, no.11 (Winter 1993): 77, 79.

that family ties have been no assurance of job security, he has fired several family members for apparent mistakes, being a direct family member or an extended family member has assured the opportunity to serve. It is this clan organization that Saddam has relied upon to form the foundation of his power in Iraq.<sup>158</sup>

His boldest attempts at glorifying himself as the leader of Iraq have been his attempts to associate himself with the great leaders of Iraq's past. He at one point was having bricks cast with his name on them to be placed in the walls of Babylon, which he was having reconstructed, just as the name of Nebuchadnezzar was inscribed on the originals.<sup>159</sup> The comparison with Salah al-Din is also often used in the popular media to foster Saddam's image. While these have been popular myths that Saddam has built around himself he has also commissioned historical records searches that have "proven" him to be a "descendent of the family of the Prophet, Ali and al-Husayn."<sup>160</sup>

In concluding this section on the leadership of Saddam Hussein it is appropriate to address the way in which Saddam has transformed the Ba'th Party in Iraq in an

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<sup>158</sup>Sluglett and Sluglett, 276.

<sup>159</sup>Baram, 48, 49.

<sup>160</sup>ibid., 138.



extension of himself. It is the leader who defines what the organization will look like and in Saddam's case it is entirely true that the Ba'th has become an extension of himself. As mentioned before, he has packed the party and government with people that are related to and personally loyal to him. Those people in positions of leadership owe their status to him and thus obligated to ensure his success.

Saddam Hussein has been in charge of the government for more than 15 years and in effective charge of the Ba'th Party for almost 20. It is clear that he as an individual, has done more to shape the Iraqi Ba'th Party than all the other leaders that the Ba'th has had combined.<sup>161</sup> He has lived by the laws of the jungle. To Saddam, it is either kill or be killed. It is with this view of the leadership of the Ba'th in general and of Saddam Hussein in particular that the rest of this chapter must be viewed. Everything that the government has done in Iraq for the last 25 years has been done to ensure the retention of power by the leadership, notably Saddam Hussein.

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<sup>161</sup>Marr, "Iraq: Its Revolutionary Experience Under the Ba'th," 196.

## B. INSTITUTIONALIZATION

It has been said that, "No revolution can succeed without a high degree of institutionalization. The Ba'th has learned this lesson well."<sup>162</sup> The institutionalization of the Ba'th Party into Iraqi society has been one of the paramount goals since the coup in 1968. As has been stated before, the Ba'th took control of the government in July 1968 with fewer than 5000 party members. With Iraq's history of military coups and instability of government, the Ba'thist hold on power was not assured to last. Their experience in 1963 had taught the leadership that in order to keep their grasp on power they needed to get their ideas and goals across to the people.

The Ba'th Party has approached their goal of institutionalization from every direction of society. They have concentrated on penetrating society at every level, through every age group, and every organization. In this section, four of the most critical segments of Ba'thist institutionalization will be addressed. First, the political institutionalization of the Ba'th into Iraqi society will be examined because it is through this organization that the Ba'th is able to reach out to other segments of society. Second, the institutionalization of

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<sup>162</sup>Ibid., 186.

the Ba'th throughout the bureaucracy will be probed. Third, an examination of the institutionalization of the party and its ideas throughout the civil sector of society will be made. And finally, the Ba'thist institutionalization of the military will be explored because it is this group that has traditionally provided the challenge to government power in Iraq.

#### **1. Political Institutionalization**

The Ba'th regime has maintained control over Iraqi society, "not through this Tikrit network, but mainly through an elaborate party organization."<sup>163</sup> This is not a new idea, but it is one that requires an extensive party organization and a commitment to party unity by every level of the organization. To achieve dominance in Iraqi society, the Ba'th has set about controlling, or Ba'thizing, the politics of Iraq in the following ways: by creating an extensive internal party organization and fostering its growth, by maintaining a paramilitary organization that is loyal only to the party, by attempting to bring other political groups into the system where they can be controlled by the Ba'th, and by creating a National Assembly which gives promise to the public of a more representative leadership.

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<sup>163</sup>Ibid., 187.

The Ba'th Party organization in Iraq as it stands today is made up of six levels, as opposed to the original seven levels from before the Syrian and Iraqi Ba'th split, and has been estimated in 1984 to have somewhere between 25,000 and 50,000 full time members with a support base of about 1,500,000.<sup>164</sup> The six levels of the party are: the CELL (halagah), which consists of three to seven active members and functions at the neighborhood level, the SECTION (firqah), which consists of three to seven cells and is responsible for recruitment and policy execution for a small subsection of a city or town, the DIVISION (shu`bah), which consists of two to five sections and is the first level of the party that has an elected command over a part of a medium sized city, the BRANCH (far'), which consists of at least two divisions is the level that exercises control of party activities over an entire medium sized city or part of a major city such as Baghdad, the AREA COMMAND (tanzim) is the level which controls a regional area of Iraq, of which there are five, the highest level is the REGIONAL COMMAND which controls the party at the national level and which heads up the government.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>164</sup>al-Khalil, 39.

<sup>165</sup>Marr, 187.

The Ba'th has also sought to control society through the use of its paramilitary force. This is basically the same organization that was responsible for the campaign of terror when the Ba'th took control of the government in 1963. It has been reorganized and is far bigger now than it has ever been. The Ba'thist paramilitary organization has grown from a force of about 50,000 in 1977 to a force of over 650,000 in 1987, with the majority of the growth occurring after the start of the war with Iran.<sup>166</sup>

It was renamed the Popular Army in 1974 and has taken a place within the structure of Iraqi society as a parallel institution to the army.<sup>167</sup> Its mission has remained constant throughout the length of the Ba'thist rule. It was "set up by the Ba'th to act as an exclusively party security organ."<sup>168</sup> While it has acted as such, it has also taken on a more conventional role when necessary. It has been reported that the Popular Army fought as coordinated forces during the war with Iran and that it was used as a security force during the 1990-1991 war over Kuwait.

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<sup>166</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 263.

<sup>167</sup>Dawisha, 25. This organization also goes by names such as, the Peoples Army, the Popular Militia, and the National Guard to name a few.

<sup>168</sup>Khadduri, 43.

The Ba'th sought early on to bring the other "progressive" political groups into line by offering incentives and a promise of freedom to function within the system. The National Action Charter was drafted in 1971 in an attempt to allow integration of the various groups within Iraq to participate in the governing of the country.<sup>169</sup> This act was followed up in 1974 with the creation of the Progressive National Front (PNF) which was designed to give the Kurdish, Communist, and other non-represented parties as well as the Ba'th Party a say in the affairs of state.<sup>170</sup> This new organization did open the door to the other parties during the middle of the decade. It also allowed the Ba'th to control their access to government and to contain their growth. It was shortly after the front was put into effect that the 1975 Algiers Agreement was signed and the Ba'th cracked down on the Kurds. It was also only a few years until the Ba'th cracked down on the communists and either imprisoned or forced into exile virtually the entire Iraqi Communist Party.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 194.

<sup>170</sup>Marr, The Modern History of Iraq, 227.

<sup>171</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 195. The Algiers Agreement was significant in that it cut off Iranian and US support for the Kurdish opposition and effectively broke the back of the Kurdish movement and the Marxist coup in Afghanistan scared the Ba'th enough to rid the country of the potential threat that the communists represented.

The Ba'th has also attempted to bring the population at large into the political system through the election of a National Assembly. The election of a National Assembly was something that was promised from the very early days of the regime, in the 1970 interim Constitution, but that was not implemented until after Saddam Hussein became President. The 1979 draft law to create a National Assembly was one of his first acts after taking office. The law was promulgated in March 1980 and the elections took place on 20 June 1980 with the first meeting on 30 June 1980.<sup>172</sup>

The qualifications to become a member of the 250 seat National Assembly were strictly controlled by the Ba'th. A person had to be Iraqi born, at least 25 years old, have an Iraqi father, not be married to a foreigner, and not be a member of any of the previous ruling classes from within Iraq. But the most important criteria was that "candidates had to believe in the principles of the 17-30 July revolution."<sup>173</sup> Once a person decided to run for office he was scrutinized by a committee of Ba'thists who were to ensure his loyalty. Thus the Ba'th Party effectively controlled the outcome of the election. Reports of the first election results had Ba'th Party members controlling

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<sup>172</sup>Marr, 231, 231.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid.

75 percent of the seats and 100 percent of the vote with similar results in 1984 and 1989.<sup>174</sup>

## 2. Bureaucratic Institutionalization

Samir al-Khalil, in his book Republic of Fear, summed up the Ba'th Party's relationship with the bureaucracy this way, "The leader must function as an extension of the party and thus does define the party to some extent, but without the bureaucracy he [and the party] would be lost."<sup>175</sup> The Ba'th Party set about institutionalizing their rule immediately after they took power in 1968. In the 25 years they have been in charge they have attempted to set up a constitution, a bureaucratic structure, and the means to enforce and institutionalize their idea of government and to hold on power.

The Ba'th implemented an interim Constitution in 1970<sup>176</sup> and have since revised and even announced a new constitution as late as 1990, but nothing has been done with regards to its implementation. The constitution allows for four branches of government; the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), the National Assembly, the President, and the

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<sup>174</sup>Dawisha, 26, 27. the voting population in Iraq for the first election was estimated at 6,000,000 with universal suffrage for citizens over age 18.

<sup>175</sup>al-Khalil, 124.

<sup>176</sup>Khadduri, 183-198. As amended in 1973 and 1974. This document is also known as the Provisional Constitution.



Judiciary. The way it is written, the president and the RCC end up with most of the powers of government.<sup>177</sup> The powers given to the Ba'th by the constitution are far reaching. They have the ability to appoint judges, control industry, provide all essential services, and because they have manipulated the electoral process with regards to the National Assembly, they have to answer to no one but other party members. The constitution has clearly been a propaganda tool for the "pan-Arabist" and "Arab Socialist" factions within the party.

The use of the courts has further institutionalized the Ba'th Party's control over society. Immediately after taking power in 1968 special, "revolutionary" courts were set up to rid Iraq of any "security" threats.<sup>178</sup> These courts were used by the Ba'thists to eliminate any opposition and to further the consolidation of the regime. The 1970 Constitution also gives the President the right to appoint judges.<sup>179</sup> This puts all judicial authority in the hands of the Ba'th Party.

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<sup>177</sup>Ibid., 34, 35.

<sup>178</sup>Ibid., 42.

<sup>179</sup>Ibid., 193. Article 58 gives the President of the Republic the right to appoint both civil and religious judges and to terminate their services when needed.

The size and growth of government under the Ba'th has also led to the integration of Ba'thist ideas in society. The growth of government in Iraq has been phenomenal. The non-military side of government has grown from under 10,000 in 1938 and just over 20,000 in 1958 to well over 835,000 in 1980.<sup>180</sup> This translates into almost five percent of the population owing their livelihood to the Ba'th Party and if you add the army into this figure it jumps to almost ten percent. This growth has also allowed the Ba'th to penetrate every bureaucratic organization in Iraq, from city hall to national economic planning boards to the neighborhood level trash collectors.

The most significant organization set up by the Ba'th Party to facilitate the institutionalization of their rule has been the internal security organization. Although initially set up immediately after the coup in 1968 it did not rise to prominence until after its reorganization in 1973. The three separate parts of the security apparatus, the "Amn", State Internal Security, the "Estikhbarat", or Military Intelligence, and the "Mukhabarat", or Party Intelligence, were set up to be accountable to one man, Saddam Hussein.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>180</sup>al-Khalil, 41.

<sup>181</sup>Ibid., 12-16.

While no concrete numbers are available for the size of the security forces within Iraq it has been estimated that "one-fifth of the economically active Iraqi labour force (about 3.4 million people) were institutionally charged during peacetime (1980) with one form or another of violence."<sup>182</sup> The internal security organization has been credited with the rounding up and elimination of opposition forces and with the maintenance of order in times of crisis, such as the war with Iran and the conflict in Kuwait where it has been reported that deserters would be shot.<sup>183</sup>

### 3. Civil Institutionalization

The Ba'th Party has complete control over virtually every aspect of civil affairs. They control the media, the trade unions, and organized associations of every kind. Their actions have allowed them to penetrate into "every sphere of public and domestic life."<sup>184</sup> With control over such vast economic resources, primarily oil, they have been able to create and support organizations that have been favorable to them.

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<sup>182</sup>Ibid., 38. al-Khalil goes further to describe a kind of "Big Brother" society where children inform on their parents and neighborhoods all inform the security forces about the activities of their neighbors, p.61.

<sup>183</sup>Dilip Hiro, The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall Inc., 1991), 61, 62.

<sup>184</sup>Sluglett and Sluglett, 228.

The Ba'th controlled media in Iraq is a tool of institutionalization. Right from the very start in 1963<sup>185</sup> the Ba'th has used the media to get the attention of the people. There have been televised trials and executions as well as countless speeches by the party leadership. The only things that appear are the approved versions in accordance with Ba'thist doctrine. The state has manipulated the media so much that it has been compared to that of the former Soviet Union and to other Eastern block countries.<sup>186</sup>

While trade unions appeared first during the Qasim regime<sup>187</sup> their use as a tool of institutionalization was not realized until the Ba'th took over Iraq in 1968. The Ba'thist control over trade unions has "mushroomed since 1968."<sup>188</sup> and the use of union to distribute the party's message has grown right along with the unions. Marr reports that the "Ba'th controls their [the unions] activities through election of Ba'thists to positions in their

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<sup>185</sup>Uriel Dann, Iraq under Qassem (New York: Praeger, 1969), 370. The media was used to falsely report Qasim's death which appears to have significantly affected the army's response to the coup. It has also been reported that Qasim's dead body was shown on Iraqi television to discourage opposition to the coup.

<sup>186</sup>al-Khalil, 84.

<sup>187</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 50, 51.

<sup>188</sup>Marr, "Iraq: Its Revolutionary Experience Under the Ba'th," 188.

hierarchies."<sup>189</sup> Virtually all of Iraq's public sector workers had belonged to government sponsored trade unions up until 1987 and the private sector workers were not allowed to form unions. But the situation changed in 1987 with the implementation of a law abolishing Iraq's labor law, which had promised lifetime employment. Once this was done the Ba'th, which already had control of the public sector employees, started to gain more control over the private sector workers who were now allowed to join trade unions.<sup>190</sup> The party control over the workers is very much complete.

The party has made enormous inroads in creating professional associations and other civic organizations to get its platform across. The Ba'th party has created an extensive network of youth organizations. They have organizations for children under ten years old, the Pioneers, and another for children 11 to 15 years old, the Vanguard, and still another for the youth between the ages of 16 and 20, the Youth Organization.<sup>191</sup> There are also groups for women such as the General Federation of Women. It is with these and other groups, which are lined up according to occupation or neighborhood, that the Ba'th uses

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<sup>189</sup>Ibid.

<sup>190</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 128.

<sup>191</sup>al-Khalil, 76, 77.

to indoctrinate the population and institutionalize the Ba'thist ideals.

#### **4. Military Institutionalization**

Between 1936 and 1968 there were 12 successful military coups in Iraq with the last one being the Ba'thist in 1968.<sup>192</sup> The military has always played the central role in Iraq politics and its influence has been dominant. When Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein came to power in 1968 it was their central purpose to bring the military to heel. The Ba'th Party as an organization has sought to bring the army under control by eliminating any opposition forces within it, by infiltrating Ba'thists into its ranks and by politicizing it.

From the very beginning the Ba'th has sought to eliminate any military opposition to their rule. The cases of al-Tikriti and Ammash served notice on the military that the civilian wing of the party was to be in control. This line of reasoning has continued throughout the 25 years of Ba'thist rule. Saddam Hussein is known to have executed from several to several hundred officers during the war with Iran for not following orders or suspected disloyalty<sup>193</sup> and

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<sup>192</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 241, 242.

<sup>193</sup>Bradley, 65.

the execution of top commanders for the failures during the Kuwait confrontation of 1990-1991 has been commonplace.<sup>194</sup>

By infiltrating the military the Ba'th has always been able to ensure that no plotting or opposition movements could form. Immediately after taking power in 1968 the Ba'th started handing out commissions to party members and it quickly moved to restrict admission to the military college in Baghdad to party members.<sup>195</sup> There are "Party commissars at all levels" of the military who report directly to the party.<sup>196</sup> Another aspect of the Ba'thization of the army has been the tremendous growth the armed forces have seen during the Ba'thist reign. The Armed forces have almost tripled in size just in the period 1977 through 1987, with reserve forces doubling over the same period.<sup>197</sup> The Ba'th is the only political party that is allowed to recruit in the army, but all army personnel are barred from ever joining another party whether they are in uniform or out, and those who disobey are subject to the death penalty.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>194</sup>Freedman and Karsh, 419.

<sup>195</sup>Sluglett and Sluglett, 120.

<sup>196</sup>Ibid., 206.

<sup>197</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 263. the war with Iran accounts for the dramatic increase but even after the war the army was not significantly demobilized and it appears that even in 1993 that it is still of significant size.

<sup>198</sup>Dawisha, 22.

The party goal has been for the army to see itself as an "ideologically committed military wing of the party."<sup>199</sup> Although some authors have called the army a potential trouble spot for the regime it has not appeared to be the case. The Ba'th has used the army as a tool of repression and under Ba'thist control it has become what some call "an army metamorphosed into a creature of the Ba'th."<sup>200</sup> The armed forces have long been used for fighting the internal battle of Iraq, such as against the Kurds in the North and the Shi'as in the South. Commanders have received some autonomy in use of tactics but the primary control of the armed forces has rested with the Ba'th in general and Saddam Hussein in particular.

### C. POLICIES

In 1992 it was estimated that the population of Iraq had reached almost 18.5 million people with an annual growth rate of 3.7 percent.<sup>201</sup> When the Ba'th Party took over the country in July 1968 the population was estimated to be in the neighborhood of 8 million.<sup>202</sup> With the tremendous growth

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<sup>199</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>200</sup>al-Khalil, 28.

<sup>201</sup>Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook 1992 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1992), 161.

<sup>202</sup>The Middle East and North Africa, 14th ed. 1967-1968, S.v. "Iraq."



in population over the time that the Ba'th has been in power the regime has had to make some very important decisions regarding the economic and social health of the country. Being committed to socialist methods from the beginning has driven some of the policies, but it has been the desire to remain in power that has driven others. As one author has described the situation the Ba'th Party was in soon after the coup, "In the search for stability, the government was aware of the need to improve the living standards of its people."<sup>203</sup>

Fortunately, Iraq has vast reserves of crude oil and during the tenure of the Ba'th, the price of oil has gone up. Income from these deposits rose steadily during the 1970s and was projected to go even higher during the 1980s, but the war with Iran from 1980-1988 and the war over Kuwait in 1990-1991 and its aftermath have seriously hurt Iraq's access to international markets.

The Ba'th Party has had a profound impact on the population in all aspects of daily life. The decisions made by the leadership with regard to policy are unquestioned and final so their importance has to be considered vital to an assessment of the Ba'th. This section will focus on the economic and social policies of the Ba'th Party since 1968.

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<sup>203</sup>Edmund Ghareeb, "Iraq in the Gulf," in Iraq in Transition, ed. Frederick W. Axelgard (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 65.

## 1. Economic Policies

Article One of the Iraqi Constitution states that the aim of the government is to "establish a Socialist System."<sup>204</sup> It goes further to state that the "State shall undertake planning, directing and guiding the national economy" and the "National resources and fundamental instruments of production are the property of the people."<sup>205</sup> Right from the very start the Ba'th Party took complete control over the economic destiny of the country.

The method for their dominance was laid out in a six step plan.<sup>206</sup> The plan called for: planning and research, agrarian reform, nationalization of the oil industry, industrialization, irrigation, and for social and cultural development. The emphasis on economic aspects of this plan are plain. Five of the six are aspects of what the Ba'th has pursued since 1968. Along with these factors of economic development, the dramatic growth of government and the changes in policy direction have also been notable.

The Ba'th government quickly set out to plan for the future. It modeled its planning systems from those in the Eastern block countries. The design and implementation of

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<sup>204</sup>Khadduri, 183.

<sup>205</sup>Ibid., 184, 185. Articles 12 and 13.

<sup>206</sup>Ibid., 112.

five year plans, with budgets in the hundreds of millions, to achieve economic goals became the norm. Central Planning boards began to plan everything from what will be produced to how much. The planning boards initially followed the development program set out by the earlier Aref regime and the first five year plan was not ready until 1971.<sup>207</sup>

Subsequent five year plans were used to spur development in the industries considered critical to the Ba'thist regime: oil, steel, building materials, and transportation.<sup>208</sup>

Setbacks in the central planning of the Ba'th government have occurred during the war with Iran when the fourth five year plan, 1981-1985, was suspended and the fifth, 1986-1990, was never implemented.<sup>209</sup>

The second as well as the fifth phase of the six step plan was for the reform of agriculture. Iraq has gone from a food self-sufficient country in the 1950s to a country that has imported up to 25 percent of its needs in the late 1970s.<sup>210</sup> Reform started when the monarchy was

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<sup>207</sup>Ibid., 113.

<sup>208</sup>Jonathan Crusoe, "Economic Outlook: Guns and Butter, Phase Two?" in Iraq in Transition, ed. Frederick W. Axelgard (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 39.

<sup>209</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 127.

<sup>210</sup>Kieth McLachlan, "Iraq: Problems of Regional Development," in The Integration of Modern Iraq, ed. Abbas Kelidar (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 145.

toppled in 1958 but brought to new levels with the Ba'th in charge. While land redistribution has been a key element in the Qasim and Ba'thist regimes, it has not been that effective. More than three years after the Ba'th Party took over, less than 20 percent of the landholders still owned more than 66 percent of the land.<sup>211</sup> The government has also endeavored to increase the amount of land that is viable for farming. Massive irrigation projects including dams have been completed in an attempt to reduce the amount of land lost due to increasing salinity in the soil with limited success.<sup>212</sup>

The government also began to spend money on agriculture like it had never been done before.<sup>213</sup> The state began to provide seeds, fertilizers, water, and the tools for the producers.<sup>214</sup> Cooperatives, collectives, and state farms were set up to try to increase the output and to provide more people with the opportunity to work, a mandatory objective according to the socialist principles of the Ba'th. By 1975 there were 1,653 cooperatives, 72

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<sup>211</sup>Sluglett and Sluglett, 139.

<sup>212</sup>McLachlan, 146, 147. Iraq: A Country Study, 154.

<sup>213</sup>Marr, The Modern History of Iraq, 249. While she notes that the percentage of developmental funds has actually declined from the 1950s its real dollar amounts have gone up dramatically because of much higher budgets.

<sup>214</sup>Khadduri, 119.

collective farms, and nine state owned farms throughout Iraq.<sup>215</sup> However, for all its planning and spending on agricultural reform, the plans have not stopped the rural to urban migration of the population. No less than 50 percent of Iraq's population was involved in agricultural production during the 1950s, and by 1977 that figure had dropped to less than 30 percent with a corresponding shift in the rural and urban populations.<sup>216</sup> This area of the six step plan has clearly not gone according to Ba'thist desires, but with the ability to import food the regime has been able to minimize its effects.

Nothing in the Ba'thist program has been more successful than the plan to nationalize the oil industry. In May 1972 the Ba'th government nationalized the northern oilfields of the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC).<sup>217</sup> Since the discovery of oil in Iraq the government had only been receiving royalties from the foreign owners, mainly British. The revenues collected by the Iraqi government rose dramatically after nationalization, from US \$476 million in

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<sup>215</sup>McLachlan, 143.

<sup>216</sup>Marr, "Iraq: Its Revolutionary Experience Under the Ba'th," 201.

<sup>217</sup>Ghareeb, 65. They did not, however, nationalize all foreign oil interests in the country. They allowed the French to continue to operate for ten more years and the Americans were operating the Basra Petroleum Company which was not nationalized until after the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.

1968 to US \$26 billion in 1980.<sup>218</sup> The nationalization came just before the oil price rises of the 1970s and the Ba'thist government benefited greatly. Oil became the primary source of income for the government with a rise from under 20 percent of net government income from oil in 1968 to over 50 percent in 1980.<sup>219</sup> The use of oil revenues to fund all aspects of the economic program was evident. Oil nationalization was the tool that the Ba'th hoped would bring the country out of the "third world syndrome."<sup>220</sup>

Industrialization, the fourth step of the plan, has been a top priority of the Ba'th. With the government controlling and planning the entire process it was clear from the start that this area would receive the majority of the available funding, over 30 percent of the development budget prior to the war with Iran.<sup>221</sup> By building up of heavy industries such as steel, iron, and building materials, the Ba'th is trying to become an economic powerhouse in the region. The government has long desired the role of being an exporter of goods other than oil from Iraq. Expansions in the fields of cement production,

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<sup>218</sup>Marr, The Modern History of Iraq, 242.

<sup>219</sup>Ibid.

<sup>220</sup>Crusoe, 48.

<sup>221</sup>Marr, The Modern History of Iraq, 249.

vegetable oils, and fertilizers were all marked for the export market.<sup>222</sup>

The emphasis on socialist economic development in Ba'thist Iraq has also made the government by far the largest employer and further entrenches the Ba'thist rule. The government payroll increased from 224,253 employees in 1968 to over 935,000 non-military employees in 1980.<sup>223</sup> The party has made every attempt to create a loyal and obedient workforce that owes their jobs to the patronage of the Ba'th Party. The spending on development has created a monstrous bureaucracy where there is approximately one government employee for every 15 members of the population not counting the internal security or armed forces.<sup>224</sup>

Ba'thist economic policies have been funded for the most part by revenues from the export of oil. After the war with Iran started in 1980 these revenues came crashing down. The pre-war income generated by Iraqi crude was about US \$21 billion in 1979 and it was running at US \$26 billion in 1980,<sup>225</sup> however, after the war started, the income was

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<sup>222</sup>Khadduri, 132.

<sup>223</sup>al-Khalil, 41.

<sup>224</sup>This figure is based on the population estimates for Iraq in 1980 of nearly 12 million.

<sup>225</sup>Freedman and Karsh, 19.

estimated at just over US \$10 billion for 1982.<sup>226</sup> The loss of income was staggering.

The government tried to continue economic development spending patterns as before, but could not sustain both a guns and butter policy. The 1981 non-war expenditures were US \$23.6 billion, an all time high, but with exports dropping off by more than 60 percent it was clear that austerity measures would have to be implemented sooner or later.<sup>227</sup> The development budget, which had been running at over 30 percent of the national budget, was cut to below 18 percent and shifted its emphasis to war related materials and alternative export routes for oil.<sup>228</sup>

In addition to cutting the amount of money spent on economic development the government turned to a more liberal policy regarding private enterprise. In the last two years of the war, the Ba'th government sought to make the economy vigorous by lifting price controls, attempting to attract foreign capital, and by privatizing many of the state owned businesses.<sup>229</sup> Saddam Hussein at one point said, "From now

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<sup>226</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 261. Production and revenue figures for the war years are published here.

<sup>227</sup>Ibid., 123.

<sup>228</sup>Marr, 301.

<sup>229</sup>Freedman and Karsh, 22.



on the state should not embark on uneconomic activity,"<sup>230</sup> and shortly thereafter the government proceeded to privatize 95 percent of the gas stations, most state run agricultural enterprises, most state department stores, and even some state operated industries, notably Iraqi Airways.<sup>231</sup>

The government cut back on the numbers of foreign workers that would be allowed into Iraq, a number that had swelled due to the shortage of manpower because of the war. It also changed its labor laws to allow for the reduction in the size of workforces and the elimination of lifetime employment.<sup>232</sup> By the end of the war the Ba'thist government was deeply in debt to foreign creditors and its ability to meet the payments was only accomplished by taking the money out of economic and social program budgets. The war caused major disruptions in the economic policies of the Ba'thist government and the situation has not improved due to the war in Kuwait and the ongoing United Nations sanctions that prohibit all but the most needed imports.

## **2. Social Policies**

Social policies are an area where the Ba'thist government has made significant progress during its tenure

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<sup>230</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 129.

<sup>231</sup>Ibid., 130.

<sup>232</sup>Marr, "Iraq: Its Revolutionary Experience Under the Ba'th," 188.

in Iraq. Article two of the Constitution proclaims that "the people is the source of authority and its [Iraq's] legitimacy."<sup>233</sup> The party has put forth its programs in an attempt to accomplish the sixth step, the social and cultural development of a secular society, in its plan for Iraq.<sup>234</sup> The Ba'thist government has sought to achieve this goal through egalitarian measures, education and health improvements, and through the promulgation of a Ba'thist view of history. And where these measures have failed to co-opt the people they have resorted to coercive means.

Part three of the Constitution directly addresses the egalitarian question for the Ba'th.<sup>235</sup> The words equality, dignity, privacy, freedom, and innocence are used throughout. The Ba'th government has gone through a great deal of effort to ensure that some of these words have meaning. The goal of equality has been carried out with the attempt to eliminate the middle and upper classes of landowners, the liberation of women in a Muslim society,<sup>236</sup> and through the strengthening of labor laws to improve the

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<sup>233</sup>Khadduri, 183.

<sup>234</sup>Ibid., 112.

<sup>235</sup>Ibid., 186-189.

<sup>236</sup>Marr, 200, 205.

average workers life.<sup>237</sup> The Ba'th has even gone as far as to pass laws concerning the rights of women in society and to sponsor womens organizations. During their tenure the number of Iraqi women in the workforce has increased dramatically.<sup>238</sup>

The education and literacy policies that the Ba'th government have undertaken have produced significant improvements in both of these areas in Iraq. The Ba'th government has seen to it that schooling is free for all levels of education through university and that it is mandatory through the secondary level. Phebe Marr reports in her book The Modern History of Iraq, that between the years 1968 and 1983 the number of children attending school has gone from 1,265,000 in 1968 to 3,720,000 in 1983.<sup>239</sup> Even more recent statistics show that number to have increased again to 4,132,820 students in 1985.<sup>240</sup> In addition to increasing the number of students and schools throughout Iraq, the Ba'th government also began a very intensive

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<sup>237</sup>Khadduri, 138. The labor laws of 1970 and 1971 gave workers rights in the workplace, unionizing authority, and set up a pension program similar to the US Social Security program. All but the labor union aspects remain in force.

<sup>238</sup>al-khalil, 88 89.

<sup>239</sup>Marr, The Modern History of Iraq, 241.

<sup>240</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 260. Comprehensive statistics on all levels of schooling as well as numbers of schools may be found here.

"anti-illiteracy" program in 1978. It was designed to help, and even force, older Iraqi citizens to learn to read through completion of a two year course of instruction aimed at all adults.<sup>241</sup> The literacy rate has recently surpassed 60 percent for those over the age of 15, both male and female, bringing Iraq up from the bottom of the world rankings up to the middle.<sup>242</sup>

In the area of health reform the Ba'th has fostered the growth and capability of the healthcare system during the last 25 years. Healthcare is free and the number of hospital beds has increased from 9200 in 1958 to over 24,700 in 1982, while the number of doctors has increased from 1190 to 4661 and the number of dentists has increased from 112 to 897 during the same period.<sup>243</sup> Even more impressive is the rise in the ratio of doctors to population. It has gone from one doctor for every 4,200 in 1968 to one doctor for every 1,790 in 1980.<sup>244</sup> This policy has significantly helped the population with respect to life expectancy, 46 years in 1960 to 67 years in 1980, and infant mortality, 139 per 1000

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<sup>241</sup>Marr, "Iraq: Its Revolutionary Experience Under the Ba'th," 201.

<sup>242</sup>Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook 1992, 162.

<sup>243</sup>Marr, The Modern History of Iraq, 263.

<sup>244</sup>Ibid., 241.

live births in 1960 to 66 per 1000 live births in 1991.<sup>245</sup> It should also be remembered that this was done during a time when Iraq was in an all out war that may have claimed well over 100,000 Iraqi lives.<sup>246</sup>

The Ba'th government has also gone about a systematic program of re-writing history to emphasize the distinctively Iraqi nature of it. The archeological program within Iraq has received a great deal of attention, as well as money, from the Ba'th government. The budget for the Administration of Antiquities shot up by more than 81 percent after the Ba'th Party took over.<sup>247</sup> Government sponsorship of extensive restoration projects at Hatra, Nineveh, Nimrod, Ashur, and most notably, Babylon were started and continued to be funded even during the war with Iran while other more economically viable projects suffered.<sup>248</sup> Another project the Ba'th moved forward in was the renaming of eight provinces to reflect an Arab past and to directly refute any possible Persian connection.<sup>249</sup> The

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<sup>245</sup>Ibid., 264, and The World Factbook, 162.

<sup>246</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 245.

<sup>247</sup>Baram, 41.

<sup>248</sup>Ibid., 45, 47.

<sup>249</sup>Ibid., 61, 62. The name changes were: al-Ramadi to al-Anbar, Kut to Wasit, Diwaniyya to Qadisyya, Nasiriyya to Dhiqar, Al-Amara to Maysan, Mosel to Nineveh, and Al-Hilla to Babylon. One new province was created in the Tikrit area, that of Salah

re-writing of history was complete with the altering of money and stamps to reflect the past as well as the association of Saddam Hussein with the great "Iraqi" leaders of history.<sup>250</sup>

The government has sought every way possible to socialize the people into their Ba'thist mindset, including the massive influx of money to attempt to bring the Shi'a population economically up to the rest of the country,<sup>251</sup> but when that has failed they have fallen back on the internal security forces to force their position on the opposition. Al-Khalil reports that more than 200,000 Iraqis have been deported from Iraq for not falling in line with the Ba'th government and that around 350,000 Kurds have been resettled away from their homes because of opposition to the government.<sup>252</sup> Reports of the use of torture and brutality are widespread. The government has been accused of using chemical weapons on its own population to quell dissent and that brutality against single families, women and children

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<sup>250</sup>Reid, 82, and Baram, 60, 97.

<sup>251</sup>Dawisha, 23. The government spent large amounts of money both before and after the war with Iran to improve Shi'a living conditions, religious sites, and job potential.

<sup>252</sup>al-khalil, 19, 24.

are regular occurrences.<sup>253</sup> The Ba'th, as policy, have not tolerated dissent or opposition in the past and they have had the means to either oppress it or to wipe it out entirely.

#### **D. LEGITIMACY**

The goal of the Ba'th Party since its coming to power in 1968 has been to be the legitimate government representing the people of Iraq. They have even made the claim "that they derived their mandate to govern the country from the people" and that their rule would eventually be legitimized by popular expression through democratic processes."<sup>254</sup> This is something they can claim to be true with the elections of 1980, 1984, and 1989. Since its attainment of power, the legitimacy of the Ba'th government has rested on the leadership of the party, the institutionalization that it has brought to Iraq, the policies that it has carried out, and through the adaptation of the traditional Ba'thist ideology to the particular situation in Iraq.

From the very beginning the leadership of the Ba'th Party has sought to win the support of the population for their rule. One of the primary reasons of the rise to power of Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr was that he was seen by the

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<sup>253</sup>Bradley, 52, 53, 69, 70, 71.

<sup>254</sup>Khadduri, 44.

people as a man with impeccable nationalist credentials and that he "brought the party a certain legitimacy."<sup>255</sup> Being ten years older than the rest of the new leadership also gave him the mantle of being the patriarch of Iraq. The leadership of al-Bakr lasted for a decade in which the Iraqi people saw great improvement in their lives and much of this improvement has been attributed to al-Bakr and his successor, Saddam Hussein.

When Saddam Hussein took over in 1979, Iraq was a country that was realizing the potential of its vast oil reserves. It has been pointed out that "Saddam has ... personified his country since taking over as president in 1979."<sup>256</sup> His leadership has been glorified in every way possible. His picture adorns nearly every building, office, and there are even art exhibitions dedicated to his likeness. During his tenure, Saddam Hussein has tried to assume the "mantle of pan-Arabism from Nasser" and the claim to affiliation with the likes of Nebuchadnezzar and the family of the prophet Muhammad.<sup>257</sup> Saddam Hussein has brought legitimacy to the Ba'thist hold on the leadership position in Iraq by default. Saddam has power unparalleled in the modern Middle East.

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<sup>255</sup>Marr, 217.

<sup>256</sup>Reid, 77.

<sup>257</sup>Bradley, 54.



The legitimacy the Ba'th has gained through the institutionalization of the party throughout Iraq has been because of the penetration the party has been able to achieve. The growth of the party and its ability to control society down to the neighborhood level has caused the population to choose between the Ba'th and obscurity. The Ba'th government has made attempts to integrate other "progressive" parties into the governing structure through the National Action Charter and National Progressive Front.<sup>258</sup> The Ba'thist opening of political debate, however muted because of Ba'thist control, has been seen to add to the legitimacy of their rule.

The bureaucratic and civil institutionalization of the party have added legitimacy by the sheer numbers of people that owe their assistance to the patronage of the Ba'th. The size of government has grown tremendously during the Ba'thist tenure and its penetration into labor unions and popular organizations of every kind has been complete. Party control over virtually every part of the public and private sector is to be understood as building the necessary political support for the Ba'th to rule.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>258</sup>Dawisha, 22.

<sup>259</sup>Khadduri, 45.

It is the institutionalization of the military that the Ba'th can attribute much of their longevity to. The initial and subsequent purges of the military hierarchy have allowed the Ba'th to keep loyal members in the leadership positions of the armed forces. Party doctrine calls for military leadership to "be party members first and military specialists second."<sup>260</sup> With the spread of Ba'th members in the military, the legitimacy that the government attains is bound to go up. Under Ba'thist control the military has grown from a barely survivable defense force to the largest force in the Middle East.<sup>261</sup> There is no question as to whether the military is an extension of the Ba'th. The internal oppression that the military has willingly inflicted on both the Kurds in the North and the Shi'as in the South is a testimony that the military provides the Ba'th leadership legitimacy by force, if not by numbers of troops.

It is the policies of the Ba'th over the last 25 years that have brought about the most popular legitimacy of the government. Under Ba'thist rule the population of Iraq has measurably improved its standard of living in both the

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<sup>260</sup>Marr, "Iraq: Its Revolutionary Experience Under the Ba'th," 189.

<sup>261</sup>Iraq: A Country Study, 263. It has well over a million members including the reserve forces.

economic and social areas. The economic policies followed have produced thousands of jobs and raised the per capita income from about US \$47 in 1958-1959<sup>262</sup> to US \$1,940 in 1990 with a real growth rate estimate of ten percent.<sup>263</sup> While much of this increase can be attributed to the increase in the price of oil, it must be remembered that the Ba'th Party led the way to oil nationalization and thus can claim responsibility for the successes of the country.

In the area of social policy the Ba'th government has endeavored to touch every Iraqi with widespread programs for the improvement of life. They have overseen the increase in life expectancy, the decrease in infant mortality, and the institution of universal free health services for the entire population.<sup>264</sup> The government's progress on educating the young and illiterate has been equally as impressive. Their policies on women's rights have allowed women an unparalleled place in Middle Eastern society. Al-Khalil reports that as of 1980, women constituted 46 percent of all teachers, 29 percent of all doctors, 46 percent of all dentists, 70 percent of pharmacists, and about 15 to 20 percent of the

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<sup>262</sup>Marr, The Modern History of Iraq, 269.

<sup>263</sup>Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook 1992, 162.

<sup>264</sup>Marr, 241, 263, 264.

entire workforce.<sup>265</sup> If social welfare and economic wellbeing are an indication of legitimacy, the Ba'th has achieved impressive gains through their programs while they have been in charge.

The cultural programs that the Ba'th Party has followed have also attributed to the legitimacy of the party. The Ba'th has consistently strived to create a uniquely "Iraqi" sense of being. Through the use of history the Ba'th has been able to blur the lines of whether or not the historical greatness of Iraq was Arab or not by claiming that all the "great civilizations" came from Iraq.<sup>266</sup> Saddam Hussein has encouraged and even required, schools and museums to work together to educate Iraqi children on the "Iraqi unique" history of the region. It is through these efforts that he has hoped to create a type of "melting pot" in Iraq that would encompass the Kurds and Arabs.<sup>267</sup> The government has even used stamps, coins, and the excavation of historical sites to manipulate history and help legitimize their rule.

The use of ideology by the Ba'th has been the cornerstone of the regimes claim to legitimacy.<sup>268</sup> The party

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<sup>265</sup>al-Khalil, 88.

<sup>266</sup>Baram, 97.

<sup>267</sup>Ibid., 34, 35, 38, 44.

<sup>268</sup>Marr, "Iraq: Its Revolutionary Experience Under the Ba'th," 206.

ideology of "Unity, Freedom, Socialism" has allowed the Ba'th government to shape society into what they want. It is the central theme of the Constitution and has been in the rhetoric, if not the meaning, of all party pronouncements since the Ba'th came to power in 1968.

As has been discussed before the three main ideological standards that the Ba'th have proclaimed are Unity, Freedom, and Socialism. The first term, "Unity", has traditionally meant the unity of the Arab people throughout the Middle East. The Ba'th Party in Iraq has proclaimed this, but in practice it has focused its attention on the unity of Iraq. Amatzia Baram has pointed out that Saddam Hussein has even stated publicly in a lecture to educational committees engaged in rewriting Iraqi school textbooks that the "Arab homeland ... is still an unfulfilled goal", and "that we must not submerge ourselves in the theoretical pan-Arab and neglect the direct local patriotic."<sup>269</sup> The Ba'th Party has spent considerable time and effort in trying to unify the people of Iraq. The phrase "Ba'thism in one country" became a rallying cry and the idea that "Ba'thism would become synonymous with Iraq, its bastion, and then spread to the rest of the Arab world under Iraq's leadership."<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>269</sup>Baram, 20, quoted in Saddam Hussein, al-Thawra wal-nazra al-jadida (Baghdad, 1981), 79, 80.

<sup>270</sup>Marr, 207.

The second term in the Iraqi Ba'thist ideology, "Freedom", has traditionally meant the freedom from imperialism and the right to choose the country's own destiny. Under the Ba'thist Constitution, the individual will have rights "without distinction on the basis of race, origin, language, class or religion."<sup>271</sup> In practice the Ba'th has violated every one of these guarantees without exception. The Kurds have been persecuted, the Iraqi citizens of Iranian origin have been persecuted and deported, the former landowning class has been stripped of its positions without compensation, and the Jews have been forced to flee from the very first days of the Ba'thist rule. The only sure freedom in the country has been for the ruling elite to make the rules and enforce them without regard for anything except remaining in power.

The third term, "Socialism", has traditionally meant that the government will own and operate the means of production. The Constitution addresses this area in the very first article by declaring the desire to "establish a Socialist System."<sup>272</sup> The Ba'th government has been successful in implementing such a system. With the exception of the economic reforms caused by the war with

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<sup>271</sup>Khadduri, 186. Articles 19 through 36 define the rights and responsibilities of the citizens and the State.

<sup>272</sup>Khadduri, 183.

Iran, the government has owned and operated virtually all of the medium to large industry within the country.

The Ba'th Party has also gone after the meshing of its secular nationalism with the religious nature of some parts of Iraqi society. While rejecting the participation of the Islamic clergy in politics, the party has tried to use them to further their goals. The Ba'th has claimed that "Islam was essentially an Arab movement, of which the prime importance was the renewal and fulfillment of Arabism."<sup>273</sup> The secular Ba'thist government used Islam during the war with Iran on various occasions to try to further their cause, such as when Saddam Hussein claimed decendency from the Prophet Muhammad. More recently the words "Allahu Akbar" (God is Great) were added to the national flag in January 1991 during the Persian Gulf crisis as a religious call to arms against the coalition forces aligned against Iraq.

The legitimacy that the Ba'th Party has gained during its more than 25 years in power has been manifested in the way it has governed. The Iraqi Ba'th Party has provided sustained leadership with Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein. This is a stability that Iraq had not seen in its modern era. The party has created and maintained the solid

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<sup>273</sup>Devlin, 24. While this reflect the thinking of Michel Aflaq, the Iraqi Ba'th has adopted it.

institutionalization that is needed to remain in power in a diverse country like Iraq. Its policies have provided the means for people to better their lives as long as they stay within the bounds of the Ba'thist desires. And finally the Ba'th has uniquely tailored its traditional ideology to fit the changing situations in Iraq, and it has allowed them to adapt to almost any setback. What Phebe Marr ended her 1988 essay "Iraq: Its Revolutionary Experience Under the Ba'th," is still true in the 1990s. "Iraq ... is a very different country from what it was in the 1960s."<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>274</sup>Marr, 209.



## V. CONCLUSION

The Ba'th Party has ruled Iraq for over 25 years and there are no signs that it is about to relinquish its hold on that rule. This thesis has attempted to describe the birth, growth, and entrenchment of the Ba'th against the political history of Iraq. From its colonial beginnings Iraq evolved into first a monarchy, then an autocracy, and eventually what many would describe as a totalitarian state controlled by the Ba'th Party and Saddam Hussein.

The Ba'th Party's humble beginnings in 1940 spread over the next 12 years into Jordan, Lebanon, and eventually in 1952, to Iraq. What started with just three school teachers and a couple of small groups of students in the early years became a political movement that would contend for power by the mid-1950s. The structure of the Ba'th was made simple and adaptable. Even after its "customization" in Iraq, the structure of the party remained highly disciplined and manageable for the leadership.

Ideology has remained constant in rhetoric, if not practiced, throughout the Iraqi Ba'thist tenure. The platform of "Unity, Freedom, Socialism" remains as strong today as it was when Michel Aflaq spelled it out in the 1947 Constitution. The changes in ideology have come from the

leadership in Iraq in response to the perceived needs of the day, such as the war with Iran or the war over Kuwait.

There have been four principle leaders of the Iraqi Ba'th Party. It is these men, with their mostly homogeneous following, who have defined the path that the Ba'th has taken since its migration to Iraq. Fu'ad al-Rikabi did not found the Iraqi branch of the party but he gave it vitality, and a good portion of the membership through his relatives, and led it down the road to prominence. When the Ba'th gained power in 1963 it was led by Ali Salih al-Sa'di. During his reign the Ba'th was known for its terror tactics and its ruthless treatment of opposition forces. It is during al-Sa'di's tenure as leader that the Iraqi Ba'th was almost destroyed after its fall from power in November 1963. It was resurrected by the two leaders that followed him, Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein.

When Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr took the reigns of power in 1965 the Ba'th was a party in hiding and was not close to being able to challenge the Aref regime's hold on power. Al-Bakr led the party back and in 1968 the Ba'th was able to form a coalition with opposition army leaders, whom it would oust from the coalition just two weeks after the coup, and come to power once again. This was the start of the most enduring leadership that the Ba'th Party, as well as Iraq, has seen since the time of the mandate. The smooth shift of

power between al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein in 1979 has seen a continuation of the Ba'th's leadership of Iraq. The defining nature of the leadership position has been brought to new levels with Saddam Hussein as President. The Ba'th is today merely a reflection of Saddam Hussein. He has personalized it and made the successes of the party his own, and the failures the responsibility of forces opposing the party.

The Ba'th has sought to institutionalize its position in society. Through the use of political, bureaucratic, civil, and military structures and infiltration the party has had a great deal of control at every level of society from the largest corporation to the smallest village. Ba'thist control over society has made society dependent on the Ba'th for its livelihood as well as its subsistence. The Ba'th has created a "Patron-Client" relationship on a national scale for a good part of the Iraqi population. The Ba'th has become in reality, the "Big Brother" made famous by Orwell in his novel, 1984.

Ba'thist economic and social policies have led to vast improvements in almost all sectors of living standards in Iraq. The implementation of the egalitarian socialist economic system has been the key to Ba'thist economic policy. With the exception of its agricultural policies, the Ba'th, helped by the nationalization and price rises in

oil, has been able to provide jobs, growth, and stability in what was once a primarily agricultural economy. It is the two Gulf wars and their massive costs in both manpower and money that have put the only dampers on the economy in Iraq.

In the social sector, the Ba'th has made progress in education, health, and the cultural fields. Education is universally free for all citizens through the university level. Access to healthcare facilities has been upgraded significantly and is free for citizens. The effort to educate the public on its "uniquely Iraqi" history has been significant.

The Ba'th has spent considerable national resources in socializing its message, but when it has not worked, the party has relied on more forceful methods to ensure its retention of power. Whether it is the use of the internal security forces to suppress opposition groups or the mass deportations of citizens who have some tie to Iran, the Ba'th have done whatever it takes. It is clear that the Ba'th has not and will not tolerate any disagreement with its policies.

The Ba'thist record since it came to power in 1968 has given it the right to claim to be the legitimate representative of the people. The party has claimed that the people would grant it legitimacy through popular democratic processes. The government has held elections for

a National Assembly, but whether or not they can be called democratic, with total Ba'thist control of the process, is a debatable question. The efforts of the Ba'th Party to legitimatize their rule through leadership, institutionalization, and policy implementation have brought stability to Iraq, and improved the standard of living of the citizens.

#### **A. THE AFTERMATH OF THE GULF WAR AND THE FUTURE**

It is the aftermath of the Gulf War of 1990-1991 and the concurrent speculation about the future of the Ba'thist leadership in Iraq that have been foremost on the minds of those studying Iraq since the Kuwaiti crisis. The Gulf War saw the formation of the largest coalition of forces since World War Two, 28 countries including many Arab countries.<sup>275</sup> All of them were aligned against Iraq after it invaded, occupied, and eventually annexed Kuwait. After a little more than six months of bluster on the part of Iraq and preparation on the part of the coalition, Iraqi forces were soundly defeated and driven from Kuwait. The aftermath of this conflict, however, is still taking its toll on Iraq. The Ba'thist government has had to suffer through the imposition of further restrictions on its ability to govern

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<sup>275</sup>"Desert Storm:Coalition Commitment to Desert Storm; The Coalition," Defense 91, Sep-Oct 1991, 58-59.

and it has had to attempt to bring the population back from the defeat while remaining in power.

### 1. The Aftermath of the War

From the very first United Nations Security Council Resolution (SCR) condemning the invasion of Kuwait, SCR 660, and the resolution imposing sanctions, SCR 661, the world has set about systematically trying to punish Iraq and its Ba'thist leadership for their attack against Kuwait.<sup>276</sup> The resolutions continued even after the war was over with the passage of SCR 687, which continued the economic blockade and embargo until the Iraqi government satisfactorily meets the demands of the coalition leaders.<sup>277</sup> These conditions are often thought to include the removal of Saddam Hussein from the government.

The aftermath of the war has also seen the uprisings of both the Kurds in the North and the Shi'as in the South.<sup>278</sup> The Ba'thist government has responded by using the

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<sup>276</sup> "The U.N. Resolutions: The Complete Text," in The Gulf War Reader, ed. Micah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf (New York: Times Books, 1991), 137, 138. Resolutions 660 through 678 may be found here.

<sup>277</sup> Ahmed S. Hashim, "Threat or threatened: Security in Iraq and Impact on Its Neighbors," in Balance of Power in Central and Southwest Asia, ed. Steven R. Dorr and Neysa M. Slater (Washington D.C.: Defense Academic Research Support Program, 1992), 14.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 14-20. the author provides a detailed account of the uprisings and the reasons for their failure.

forces that remained after the fighting with the coalition to put down the rebellions. The United Nations sponsored "Safe Havens", SCR 688, in response to the devastation that Saddam Hussein's forces were inflicting on the Kurds.<sup>279</sup> The Ba'thist government was further hampered by "Operation Provide Comfort"<sup>280</sup> in which direct outside humanitarian support was given to the Kurds in northern Iraq. The government has had to accept these restraints, as well as the implementation of "No Fly" zones for Iraqi aircraft in both the North, above the 36th parallel, and South, below the 32nd parallel, the continuing inspections for weapons of mass destruction, and the occasional attack against facilities or military sites by the coalition forces.<sup>281</sup>

The economic devastation in Iraq after the war with the coalition has been nearly complete. The economy has virtually ground to a halt. Reports of nearly all industries working at reduced capacity or on the verge of stopping altogether have become commonplace.<sup>282</sup> The areas of

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<sup>279</sup>Freedman and Karsh, 421.

<sup>280</sup>Ibid.

<sup>281</sup>"A Missile To Many," The Economist, 23-29 January 1993, 37. These attacks have included shooting down Iraqi warplanes, bombing anti-aircraft sites, and Tomahawk missile attacks on buildings suspected as being sites used for the manufacture or design of nuclear weapons.

<sup>282</sup>Hashim, 20.

electrical generation and distribution, the oil industry, and telecommunications and transportation have been particularly hit hard.<sup>283</sup> But even with these setbacks the Ba'thist government is attempting to restore some services and to rebuild what it can. Reports in the summer of 1991 had significant restoration work being done to the majority of basic service industries throughout Iraq.<sup>284</sup> Christine Helms goes so far as to say that "electricity was returned to 68 percent of its former capacity by October 1991 without ... the assistance of the US Army Corps of Engineers."<sup>285</sup>

The population of Iraq is clearly suffering from the sanctions imposed on it by the United Nations. But the continued rule of the Ba'thist leadership of Saddam Hussein has brought a certain amount restoration of life to the country. The more the Ba'thist regime is able to accomplish, the more likely the people will tolerate the type of rule they have endured for the last 25 years.

## **2. The Future**

Many knowledgeable people continue to claim that once Saddam Hussein has been ousted that Iraq, as well as the rest of the Middle East, will return to some version of

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<sup>283</sup>Ibid., 20, 21.

<sup>284</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>285</sup>Helms, 45.



"peace, security, and predictability."<sup>286</sup> These claims have gone on since early 1991 and cannot be proven to be true given that Saddam Hussein has not been removed from power and it appears that he is not likely to leave power any time soon. A variety of leadership choices for Iraq has been examined and written about. But, the fact remains that the Ba'th Party is still in control and is heavily entrenched in Iraq.

While the coalition forces continue to "punish" Iraq, the Ba'thist government has been trying to rebuild and provide the leadership needed to emerge from this state of affairs. The regime has cracked down on opposition groups and further consolidated its position by purging members of the party, the military, and the bureaucracy who may be suspect of having their own personal agenda and not that of the government.<sup>287</sup> Saddam Hussein has increased the roles played by family members and fellow Tikritis in the government and military in an attempt to ensure their loyalty at the highest levels.<sup>288</sup> The regime has also narrowed the party membership to include only those who are considered "ideologically pure" and the "old vanguard" to

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<sup>286</sup>Ibid., 39.

<sup>287</sup>Hashim, 22.

<sup>288</sup>Ibid.

ensure loyalty.<sup>289</sup> The Ba'th has been able to use the coalition attacks to bolster its position by claiming that the attacks are against the "people" of Iraq and thus shifting blame from the policies of the government to that of the coalition.<sup>290</sup>

The prospects for the demise of Saddam Hussein grow with every passing day, after all he is getting older, he turned 56 this year, and eventually he will die. The prospects for change, even with Saddam Hussein gone, in the near future are much less certain. The 25 years of leadership that the Ba'th Party has brought to Iraq has changed Iraqi society. The political, social, bureaucratic, and military institutions of Iraq are different now than when the Ba'th took over in 1968. The Ba'th Party can claim a certain amount of "pluralism by emphasizing the civilian nature of the party, aiming recruitment at the young, and stressing 'Iraqi identity' as opposed to disparate, conflicting communal affiliations"<sup>291</sup> as was done previously.

The Ba'th regime has done much to improve the standard of living in Iraq over the last 25 years and that progress will not be forgotten overnight. If the Ba'thist

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<sup>289</sup>Ibid.

<sup>290</sup>"A Short, Not Very Sharp, Punch," The Economist, 16-22 January 1993, 41.

<sup>291</sup>Helms, 42.

regime can restore some of the pre-war prosperity to the population, its power will be assured. The setbacks as a result of the war with the coalition forces have dramatically hurt and threatened the Ba'thist government in Baghdad, but that government has survived. The sanctions and embargo against Iraq are under more pressure daily to be lifted<sup>292</sup> or moderated and will not last forever. The United States cannot afford to impose the "No Fly" Zones in Iraq indefinitely and those too will not last forever. Iraq still has the vast oil resources that helped to bring about a better life, and with the world's supplies becoming ever more scarce while demand continues to rise, eventually, Iraq will be allowed to sell again.<sup>293</sup>

Just as people have been saying that Saddam Hussein is the root of all evils in Iraq, they go on to try to predict the successor regimes. Some notable choices have been the military, a resurgent Ba'th Party without Saddam Hussein, the Shi'as, the Kurds, the Communists, and the

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<sup>292</sup>"A Missile Too Many," The Economist, 23-29 January 1993, 38. The other countries of the Middle East, including Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt have been calling for restraint with regard to punishment for Iraq because of its destabilizing nature of both Iraq and the region and the failure of the West to impose measures like this against non-Middle Eastern countries, such as Serbia and Israel.

<sup>293</sup>Helms, 45. She notes that there have been reports that Iraq has arranged to sell oil to both Turkey and Jordan as well as other trade with Iran as of September 1992.

coalition of external opposition groups.<sup>294</sup> All of these groups have only one thing in common. They are assumed to not include Saddam Hussein and his tight band of Tikriti followers. The groups are generally made up of diverse opinions and they appear to have largely opposite views of the future of Iraq. There is widespread fear that should the Ba'th Party fall from power that Iraq would end up worse off than it is under the Ba'th.<sup>295</sup>

None of the predictions assumes that the resulting leadership may not call itself by the same name, but that it may act in entirely the same ways and be staffed with the same people. The present bureaucracy, military, and just about every other "middle-class" survivor in Iraq owes some of the wealth and status they have to the Ba'th regime and Saddam Hussein. If that regime should fall, there is great fear that the ensuing "bloodbath" of the oppressed classes will engulf them as well.<sup>296</sup> It is to their benefit to see that the current regime, or one that will ensure their place

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<sup>294</sup>Graham E. Fuller, Iraq in the Next Decade: Will Iraq Survive Until 2002? RAND Note N-3591-DAG (Santa Monica: RAND, 1993), 30-47. Both the Christine Helms and Ahmed Hashim articles point to similar conclusions about the future leadership.

<sup>295</sup>Helms, 43.

<sup>296</sup>Hashim, 22. It should be noted that with most of the previous changes in government in Iraq the well-to-do and those associated with the government have been subject to brutality and torture at the hands of the new governments.

in society, be in power in Baghdad. Should such a leadership emerge it would have plenty of examples to follow. The world has been faced with this scenario since the end of the Cold War with many of the former Communist regimes of Eastern Europe. If it worked for those regimes, there is no reason to believe that it would not work for the forces that control Iraq.

The Ba'th Party has worked very hard for the last 25 years to instill its version of government on the people of Iraq. The successes: economic prosperity, education, health, and a generally better life have not been lost on the population. The current setbacks due to the war with the coalition are dramatic, but not insurmountable. The Ba'th Party is firmly in control of most of the country, with the exception of some of the Kurdish areas, and the opposition has not been strong enough or organized enough to command any kind of mass response of the people. Should the Ba'thist government of Saddam Hussein fall, it is likely that someone with views very similar will take over. There are far too many people with far too much to lose for any other sort of government to emerge in the short term.

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