

The Iraqi quest for autonomy through military and diplomatic interventions, 1968-2003

by

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B.A., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012

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Abstract

This dissertation views the period of the Cold War and beyond through the eyes of Iraqi leaders, thanks to both the collections of the Conflict Records Research Center and the Ba‘thist regime documents now housed at Stanford University. This study not only shows the complexity of how the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union affected the Middle East; it also reveals how local and regional political, diplomatic, and military conditions played a crucial role in Iraq’s foreign policy initiatives and in its domestic security as well both before and after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

This work focuses on Iraqi foreign policy from 1968 through 2003. During this time period, the tension between the United States and the Soviet Union was intense and preoccupying—to them but not necessarily to all countries with whom they interacted. Various of those countries had their own agenda to pursue, and Iraq was one of them. This dissertation shows that Iraq was preoccupied first and foremost by its neighbors and the deep instabilities of the Middle East. Second, Baghdad was also fixated on regional concerns and extended its interests beyond the Arab world into the Horn of Africa.

This work also traces the trajectory of Iraq’s relationship with its primary ally, the Soviet Union, and later, the Russian Federation. Moscow and Baghdad’s relationship was marred by mistrust and betrayal yet remained a matter of convenience for both even after the U.S.S.R.’s collapse. But no matter the tension, these two states could never fully walk away from one another. After two decades of uneasiness in their friendship, the Ba‘thist regime and the successors to the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation, resumed relations in 1993, shortly after the dust had settled in Moscow. Given the exigencies of Iraq in the 1990s—isolated by a sanctions regime imposed at American initiative, but through U.N. auspices—Baghdad sought a

political alliance with Moscow. Thanks to Russia's seat on the U.N. Security Council, the Ba'athist regime believed Russia could bring tremendous benefit to an otherwise isolated and vulnerable Iraqi regime.

This study joins recent works that show how smaller, and less powerful, states managed their statecraft in a time of ever-increasing complexity. These states were certainly caught up in events stemming from the U.S.-U.S.S.R. divide, but more often than not, these states had to confront internal frictions and intense regional rivalries first. In some instances, these states operated in other ideologies outside of the traditionally understood struggle of communism versus democratic capitalism. In the case of Iraq, pan-Arabism and, to a lesser extent, non-alignment played important roles in the formulation of Iraq's foreign policy.

Iraqi foreign policy must be understood through more than just the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), the First Gulf War (1990-1991), or the run-up to Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (2003-2011). Instead, the Ba'athist regime concentrated on three components during the period from 1968 to its April 2003 demise: 1) campaigns against its neighbors, Syria and Iran, 2) managing U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations as they connected to Iraq, especially due to oil and geopolitical concerns and 3) Iraq's desire to lead the Arab world against Israel and the overreach of the superpowers into the Middle East.

However, Iraqi foreign policy was complicated. Certainly, some exploits were driven to spite Iraq's rivals, but this was not the key to all Iraqi foreign policy nor its main purpose. Rather, Iraq's desire for autonomy in local, regional, and international environments drove its foreign policy initiatives. Through their embassy organizations, the Iraqis were able to extend their influence well beyond Iraq's borders, reaching into a wide array of political, military, and diplomatic circles, Western and non-Western alike. Even the fall of the U.S.S.R. did not spell

the end of Iraqi diplomatic scheming, nor did the chaotic aftermath of the First Gulf War stop Iraqi diplomatic machinations.

In two case studies—Lebanon and East Africa—the Ba‘th Party archives provide further detail than previously available to scholars. As a context for the pre-existing scholarship, the Ba‘th documents provide scholars greater insight into Iraq’s commitments to pan-Arabism and a clearer sense of how actions like deploying “volunteer” forces in Lebanon were actually ways in which Saddam Hussein and the Ba‘th Party elite could exercise further control over Iraqis and thus strengthen the party’s domestic security. These two cases connect the domestic, regional, and international commitments of Iraqi foreign policy in the Cold War era and beyond.

This dissertation considers Iraqi foreign policy on Iraqi terms. It shows that the Iraqis had their own foreign policy interests free from superpower meddling or prodding. Iraq’s search for autonomy may disorient American ways of thinking about Iraqi foreign ambitions, but by considering Iraqi priorities first, scholars will have a better overall understanding of Iraqi military and diplomatic history.

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Approved by:

Major Professor
Dr. Donald Mrozek

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Table of Contents

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Acknowledgements | xiii |
| Dedication..... | xviii |
| Chapter 1 - Introduction | 1 |
| Literature | 6 |
| Sources | 11 |
| Chapter 2 - Iraqi Foreign Policy, 1968-1989..... | 16 |
| The Origins of Ba‘thist Iraq | 20 |
| After the 1968 Ba‘thist coup | 24 |
| Iraqi Communist Party | 30 |
| Technology and the West | 33 |
| Embassy Organizations and the Office of Organizations Outside the Region..... | 36 |
| EO Moscow | 40 |
| EOs in the Soviet Bloc | 50 |
| China..... | 57 |
| The Kurds | 64 |
| Syria..... | 72 |
| Iran-Iraq War | 78 |
| Conclusion of the Iran-Iraq War..... | 93 |
| Chapter 3 - Iraqi Intervention in the Lebanese Civil War, 1975-1990..... | 97 |
| Lebanon Collapses into Civil War | 98 |
| Civil War Intensifies..... | 109 |
| Domestic Implications..... | 131 |
| The Lebanese Civil War in the 1980s | 138 |
| The 1990’s | 148 |
| Chapter 4 - Iraqi Foreign Policy in East Africa..... | 154 |
| Iraq, Ethiopia, and Eritrea | 156 |
| Iraq and the Superpowers | 161 |
| Iraqi Embassy Organizations in East Africa | 173 |
| Iraq & Sudan..... | 178 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Arabs and the Horn of Africa | 189 |
| Players Outside the Horn..... | 194 |
| Iraq in East Africa in the 1990s..... | 198 |
| Somalia and Djibouti..... | 204 |
| Iraq and the Horn of Africa | 211 |
| Chapter 5 - Iraq and Russia in the 1990s..... | 216 |
| The End of Soviet Union..... | 217 |
| The First Gulf War (August 1990-February 1991) | 231 |
| After the Gulf War of 1990-1991 | 243 |
| Organizations of Iraqis | 255 |
| OI Moscow | 260 |
| The Reorientation of Russia | 272 |
| Coalition Building Against UNSCOM..... | 280 |
| Operation DESERT STRIKE (1996) to Operation DESERT FOX (1998) | 287 |
| Iraqi Observations of Kosovo..... | 291 |
| Old Enemies | 298 |
| A New Cold War | 301 |
| The New Millennium | 303 |
| Chapter 6 - The End of the Ba'athist Regime | 306 |
| America Rattles the Saber | 307 |
| Iraq's "Friends" | 313 |
| 1991 Redux?..... | 317 |
| Iraq After Saddam | 321 |
| Legacies..... | 324 |
| Bibliography | 327 |
| Primary Sources..... | 327 |
| Iraqi Sources..... | 327 |
| American Sources..... | 333 |
| Newspapers, Periodicals, etc. | 334 |
| British Sources..... | 335 |
| Secondary Sources..... | 335 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Articles, Books Chapters, & Monographs..... | 335 |
| Books | 339 |
| Appendix A - Abbreviations..... | 345 |
| Appendix B - Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the U.S.S.R. and Iraq..... | 346 |

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If I have forgotten anyone, it is neither because your contribution was so insignificant, I could not be bothered, nor because I do not like you anymore. Rather, it is more likely I am either an idiot or a graduate student whose brain is absolutely fried from this self-masochist pursuit of a Ph.D. I reckon it is probably both.

Dedication

To the Iraqi people, who have been through so much and who have suffered so much. I hope this dissertation is able to provide your country's experiences, in an era long dominated by the narrative of the two Cold War superpowers, their long overdue acknowledgement.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Historians of the Cold War era are continuing to push past conventional thinking by actively exploring alternatives to the longstanding paradigm of binary opposition between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. and their respective allies.¹ However, studies of the Middle East by people from outside the region have been limited by the challenge of mastering Arabic and the difficulty of getting access to archival materials. It is here that this dissertation is intended to contribute to historical scholarship. It views the Cold War and beyond through the eyes of Iraqi leaders, thanks to both the collections of the Conflict Records Research Center and the Ba‘thist regime documents now housed at Stanford University. During this time period, the tension between the United States and the Soviet Union was intense and preoccupying—to them but not necessarily to all countries with whom they interacted. Various of those countries had their own agenda to pursue, and Iraq was one of them.

During its tenure, the Ba‘th Party was the driver of Iraqi foreign policy.² The Ba‘th Party in Iraq came to power in 1968 after a decade of internal chaos. In 1958, the British installed

¹ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Artemy M. Kalinovsky and Sergey Radchenko, eds. *The End of the Cold War and the Third World*. (London: Routledge, 2013); Robert J. McMahon, ed. *The Cold War in the Third World*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Gregg A. Brazinsky, *Winning the Third World: Sino-American Rivalry During the Cold War*. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2017) Manu Bhagavan, ed. *India and the Cold War*. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Thomas C. Field Jr., Stella Krepp, and Vanni Pettina, eds. *Latin America and the Global Cold War*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2020).

² For this reason, this dissertation will be referring to Iraq and the Ba‘thists as if there were one and the same. Future scholarship and research (especially within the Ba‘th Party records at Stanford University) will have to flesh out the nuisances of this dynamic—for example, did the Foreign Ministry or the security services or military officials have more influence over the Ba‘thist elite and Saddam? See Pesach Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: A History of*

monarchy was violently overthrown and ten years of political instability followed. Successive governments were overthrown by coup d'états until 1968 when the Ba'ath finally gained power over the country.³ From then on, the Ba'ath gradually moved to assume control over all aspects of the government, military, and society through a system of rewards and patronage and through violence and intimidation.⁴ The authoritarian regime was removed only by American forces in 2003 during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.⁵

This dissertation puts considerable focus on the diplomatic and military relationship between the Soviet Union and Iraq from the 1970s throughout the 1990s, showing how this relationship was marred by mistrust and betrayal yet remained a matter of convenience for both even after the U.S.S.R.'s collapse. There were many disputes between Moscow and Baghdad. One centered on the quality of weapons and the timeliness of their delivery; Iraq's frustration

the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2017) for a preliminary discussion of this.

³ The Ba'ath had been thrown out of power and persecuted in the 1960s as well. For more see Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), 143-185.

⁴ Joseph Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989)

⁵ However, like many other authoritarian regimes, the Ba'ath was unable to cement complete control over all parts of society. In some cases, control was tenuous at best. See Aaron M. Faust, *The Ba'athification of Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Totalitarianism*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016) and Samuel Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion: The Authoritarian Roots of Saddam Hussein's Islam*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). For more on Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes see Eva Bellin, "Reconsidering the Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Lessons from the Arab Spring Comparative Politics," *Comparative Politics* 44, no. 2 (2012): 127-149; Lisa Blyaydes and James Lo, "One Man, One Vote, One Time? A Model of Democratization in the Middle East," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 24, (January 2012): 110-146; Lisa Anderson, "The State in the Middle East and North Africa," *Comparative Politics* 20, no. 1 (October 1987): 1-18; F. Gregory Gause, III, "The Middle East Academic Community and the "Winter of Arab Discontent": Why Did We Miss It? *Seismic Shift: Understanding the Change in the Middle East*, The Henry L. Stimson Center, (May 2011): 11-29, https://www.stimson.org/sites/default/files/Full_Pub-Seismic_Shift.pdf

with the Soviets in this regard prompted Iraq to turn to the West, a move Moscow did not welcome. Each country also sought better relations with countries hostile to the other. Moscow also refused to openly side with Iraq. Throughout the Cold War, the U.S.S.R. attempted to manipulate Iraq's internal affairs by pushing for the inclusion of the Kurds and the Iraqi Communist Party into the Ba'athist apparatus.

However, no matter the tension, these two states could never fully walk away from one another. After two decades of uneasiness in their friendship, the Ba'athist regime and the successors to the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation, resumed relations in 1993, shortly after the dust had settled in Moscow. For Iraq, it was as if the Cold War had never ended. The Iraqi regime desperately tried to preserve its relationship with the Russians, eager to benefit from the Russian Federation's vote in the Security Council as means to counter United Nations sanctions and growing American domination in the Middle East. At the same time, the Russian Federation was eager to keep a former client in its corner—different entities in the Federation had different reasons—and therefore it assumed a role of leadership in attempts to limit and even nullify United Nations sanctions against Iraq during the Clinton administration. Yet, no matter what change of regime occurred in Moscow, this paradoxical relationship—mistrust and convenience—remained between the two.

This study joins recent works that show how smaller, and less powerful, states managed their statecraft in a time of ever-increasing complexity. These states were certainly caught up in events stemming from the U.S.-U.S.S.R. divide, but more often than not, these states had to confront internal frictions and intense regional rivalries first. In some instances, these states operated in other ideologies outside of the traditionally understood struggle of communism versus democratic capitalism. In the case of Iraq, Baghdad was preoccupied first and foremost by

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However, Iraqi foreign policy was complicated. Certainly, some exploits were driven to spite Iraq's rivals, but this was not the key to all Iraqi foreign policy nor its main purpose. Rather, Iraq's desire for autonomy in local, regional, and international environments drove its foreign policy initiatives. Using organizations that operated through their embassies, the Iraqis were able to extend their influence well beyond Iraq's border, reaching into a wide array of political, military, and diplomatic circles, Western and non-Western alike. Even the fall of the U.S.S.R. did not spell the end of Iraqi diplomatic scheming, nor did the chaotic aftermath of the First Gulf War stop Iraqi diplomatic machinations. Political, military, and diplomatic operations, both covert and overt, continued.

In two case studies—Lebanon and East Africa—the Ba'ath Party archives provide further detail than previously available to scholars. The Iraqis intervened in the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), framing this as its *national mission*. This framework served two purposes for the

Iraqi Ba‘thists. In terms of foreign policy, Iraq used the civil war to counter Syrian and Iranian influence in the Levant with rhetoric and force while simultaneously attempting to bolster credibility with the Palestinians. Of course, differences between expectations and reality arose in the effort to achieve these goals. No matter, foreign intervention allowed Iraqi leadership—Saddam, really—to grow, check, and control members of the Ba‘th party, both in the party apparatus and within the Popular Army.

The Iraqis were very much involved in affairs outside the Middle East. To illustrate this point, this dissertation also examines Iraq’s role in the Horn of Africa. The Iraqis were heavily involved in the military and diplomatic affairs of Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. These interventions were predicated on three objectives: bolstering their regional achievements, promoting their credentials as a leading element among the Arabs, and showing that they were neither passive clients nor simply puppets of the Soviet Union. This case study, nevertheless, demonstrates that Iraqi diplomacy had unintended consequences. Not all Iraqi missions were successful, and, at times, they created messes that they had not originally intended to create. These missions reveal some of the limitations of Iraqi foreign policy and, as in its intervention in Lebanon, the gaps in between rhetoric and real results.

An analysis of Lebanon and East Africa reveal how the Iraqis sought out their own foreign policy interests, free from superpower meddling or prodding. They support the argument made in this dissertation that Iraq maintained a considerable amount of agency in this era. These two cases also connect the domestic, regional, and international commitments of Iraqi foreign policy in the Cold War era and beyond.

Literature

Hanna Batatu's *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'athists, and Free Officers* and Kanan Makiya's *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq* were for some time arguably the most important works for a general understanding of the Ba'athist regime.⁶ Both books are critical to understand the creation of the Ba'athist party and its exertion of control over all parts of Iraqi society. However, more recent books, including Joseph Sassoon's *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime* and Aaron Faust's *The Ba'athification of Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Totalitarianism*, have raised the benchmark for scholars in that they use available documents of the Ba'ath party housed in the United States to provide a deep examination of the regime through the eyes of the party itself.⁷ To consolidate control, Sassoon argues, the Ba'athist regime was able to create a system of rewards and punishments, a system in which ordinary citizens were willing or unwilling participants, while Faust sees the regime as exercising totalitarian power.

Malcom Kerr's seminal work *The Arab Cold War: Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958–1970* illustrates the dynamics and different patterns in relations among Arab states, which were acting independently of the machinations of the superpowers.⁸ In this sense, there were regional struggles, outside the scope of the Cold War, a separate Cold War within the Arab

⁶ Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'athists, and Free Officers*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978); Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*.

⁷ Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*.; Faust, *The Ba'athification of Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Totalitarianism*.

⁸ Malcom Kerr, *The Arab Cold War: Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958–1970*, 3rd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

World.⁹ Kerr's work inspired others, like Efraim Karsh and Eberhard Kienle to examine the relationships among Arab states, as well as relationships between Arab states and the superpowers, but through an Arab lens. Karsh is focused on Syria—his works include *Soviet Policy towards Syria since 1970* and *The Soviet Union and Syria*.¹⁰ Eberhard Kienle expands on Kerr's study and examines the friction between Syria and Iraq in *Ba'th v. Ba'th: The Conflict Between Syria and Iraq, 1968-1989*.¹¹ Kienle analyzes the ever important origins and roots of the division of the Ba'th Party, illustrating how the Ba'th party at its start ranged across national boundaries but then split into regional commands. This schism gradually developed into a fight between opposing elements in Syria and in Iraq.

These works and others heavily rely on newspapers, official party publications, and interviews with party members, thus providing invaluable resources for scholars who may not have access to these materials. They do, however, tend to stress the roles of the elites and to present their narratives as if these elites were primarily driven by regional ambitions. Although Iraq had clear regional ambitions, it was not necessarily limited by these desires. Even then, Arab agency and initiative did not mean that the superpowers had no interest in events and did not watch them unfold. Unfortunately for many Arabs who sought to break away from foreign domination, they were never quite able to do so. Many of these works are now a bit dated, and more attention is needed on events in the 1990s.

⁹ Fred H. Lawson, "The Resurgence of The Arab Cold War." *Review of Middle East Studies* 49, no. 2 (2015): 163-172.

¹⁰ Efraim Karsh, *Soviet Policy towards Syria since 1970*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Efraim Karsh, *The Soviet Union and Syria*. (London: Routledge, 2016).

¹¹ Eberhard Kienle, *Ba'th v. Ba'th: The Conflict between Syria and Iraq, 1968-1989*. (London: Tauris, 1990).

This work follows Oles M. and Bettie Smolansky who, in their book *The U.S.S.R. and Iraq: The Soviet Quest for Influence*, argued that the Soviet Union could not avoid a “dialectical contradiction”: the more the Soviets gave to Iraq in order to preserve their relationship, the less leverage Moscow actually had with which to sway events and policy in Baghdad. Essentially, the cost of breaking off relations with Iraq would be too much for the Kremlin to stomach; too much time and effort would have been lost for nothing.¹² Haim Shemesh’s *Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988: In the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict* also influenced this dissertation, providing an examination in depth of the Soviet-Iraqi relationship by utilizing numerous broadcasts, periodicals, and official government media publications from Soviet, Iraqi, and Western sources.¹³ His work follows lines like those of the Smolanskys demonstrating Iraqi agency in the period he studies. Although these books are meticulously researched, both the Smolanskys and Shemesh do not use documents of the Ba‘thist regime itself beyond the media publications. For that matter, these studies are also limited in time, only reaching 1988, both barely scratching the surface of Gorbachev’s era. Recent scholarship has begun to demonstrate the connections between Soviet satellite states and the Arab world before 1991. Sometimes these connections were initiated without the Kremlin’s urging, and often they even ran counter to the policy that Moscow wanted. For example, Jeffery Herf’s *Undeclared Wars with Israel: East Germany and the West German Far Left, 1967-1989* shows the ways in which East Germany influenced Arab groups, among them various armed Palestinian organizations and revolutionary fronts.¹⁴ This

¹² Oles M. and Bettie Smolansky, *The U.S.S.R. and Iraq: The Soviet Quest for Influence*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 289.

¹³ Haim Shemesh, *Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988: in the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict*. (Boulder, Co.: Rienner, 1992).

¹⁴ Jeffrey Herf, *Undeclared Wars with Israel: East Germany and the West German Far Left, 1967-1989*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2015).

dissertation shows Iraq's attempts to court the Soviet bloc as an attempt both to expand influence within the Soviet bloc and to test Moscow's resolve.

Historians such as Lawrence Freedman, Rick Atkinson, Michael Gordon, and General Bernard Trainor have explored in depth the Iraq-Iraq War, the First Gulf War, and Operation Iraqi Freedom.¹⁵ Many of these works heavily rely on American sources and interviews of those who were involved in the conflicts. Early in the 2000s, works began to appear that gave perspectives other than those of Americans. These include Nigel Ashton and Bryan R. Gibson's *The Iran-Iraq War: New International Perspectives* and COL Joel Rayburn's *Iraq After America: Strongmen, Sectarians, and Resistance*. Works by Iraqis, including Ali A. Allawi's *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*, were also being published and circulated within the West.¹⁶ Kevin Woods and Kenneth Pollack worked extensively on the Iran-Iraq War and First Gulf War, respectively, taking advantage of captured Iraqi documents, Saddam Hussein's interviews during his reign and subsequent imprisonment, and information obtained through Iraqi defectors and prisoners of war.¹⁷ Pollack, Woods—who has worked

¹⁵ Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf*. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995); Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*. (New York: Vintage, 2007); Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh. *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Endgame: The Hidden History of Americas Struggle to Build Democracy in Iraq*. (New York: Pantheon, 2012); Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2007); Rick Atkinson, *In the Company of Soldiers: A Chronicle of Combat*. (New York: Henry Holt, 2004).

¹⁶ Nigel John Ashton and Bryan R. Gibson. *The Iran-Iraq War: New International Perspectives*. (London: Routledge, 2014); Joel Rayburn. *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*. (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2014); Ali A. Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).

¹⁷ Williamson Murray and Kevin M. Woods, *The Iran-Iraq War: A Military and Strategic History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2014); Kevin M. Woods, *The Mother of All Battles: Saddam Hussein's Strategic Plan for the*

extensively on the Saddam tapes¹⁸—and other scholars including Joseph Sassoon and Pierre Razoux have had access to the Captured Records Research Center (CRRC); this archive, formerly located in Washington D.C., housed thousands of captured Iraqi state records. By and large, in the first decades of the 2000s, studies in Iraqi military history were still dominated by an American perspective or shaped in a way focused on American efforts in the region. However, new works were gradually appearing that followed Sassoon’s and Woods’s initiatives in using Ba‘thist sources as primary evidence.

Razoux’s book *The Iran-Iraq War* exemplifies Cold War studies of the 2010s.¹⁹ Although Razoux also relied on the CRRC, he conducted the bulk of his research at the Historical Department of the Ministry of Defense in France. Razoux’s work shows the complexities of the era of the Cold War outside the Soviet-American paradigm, and it highlights especially the global competition among arms manufacturers to supply both Iran and Iraq. Razoux’s work supports the argument made in this dissertation that events in the Middle East

Persian Gulf War. (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2008); Kevin M. Woods, Williamson Murray, and Thomas Holaday with Mounir Elkhamri, *Saddam's War an Iraqi Military Perspective of the Iran-Iraq War*. (Washington, D.C.: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 2009); Kevin Woods. et al. *Iraqi Perspectives Project: A View of Operation Iraqi Freedom from Saddam's Senior Leadership*. (Washington D.C.: Institute for Defense Analysis, 2007); Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq*. 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 2002); Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Kenneth M. Pollack, *Armies of Sand: The Past, Present, and Future of Arab Military Effectiveness*. (Oxford: Oxford University, 2019).

¹⁸ Like President Richard Nixon, Saddam Hussein secretly recorded meetings, phone calls, and conferences, amassing thousands of hours of recorded conversations. These tapes were subsequently captured by coalition forces after the 2003 invasion. For transcripts and annotations of many of these tapes, see Kevin M. Woods, David D. D. Palkki, and Mark E. E. Stout. *The Saddam Tapes: The Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978–2001*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁹ Pierre Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015).

reveal the many cold wars within the Cold War—there were several competing interests, rivalries, and claims with which both superpowers and non-superpowers had to reckon.

This study draws connections between the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. Iraq's perspective on the chaos and confusion caused by the Kremlin's fall suggests that the conditions created by the Cold War continued to persist well into the 1990's. This dissertation delves deeper into this relationship between the Russian Federation and Iraq during and after the First Gulf War, illustrating how Iraq navigated this period, in which it bet that the new Russian Federation would eventually reconnect with Iraq. However, learning from their own experience, the Iraqis were not about to count solely on Russia for support in an era of American hegemony.

Sources

The bulk of this study rests on two Iraqi sources: the Conflict Records Research Center (CRRC) and the papers of the Hizb al-Ba'th al-'Arabī al-Ishtirākī, or the Ba'th Arab Socialist Party of Iraq, a collection housed at the Hoover Institution Library and Archives at Stanford University. Both are products of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, amassed by U.S. forces and brought back to the United States upon their capture. The former was created under the auspices of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' Minerva Initiative; this collection houses captured Ba'th records such as interviews with Iraqi generals, audio recordings of Saddam Hussein and his close associates, battle plans, and more. The archive opened at Fort McNair's National Defense University in Washington, D.C. in 2010. However, operations were closed when funding for the CRRC was cut-off in 2015.²⁰ The Ba'th Arab Socialist Party of Iraq collection was brought to

²⁰ U.S. officials have yet to announce which civilian institution will house them next. Michael Gordon, "Archive of Captured Enemy Documents Closes," *New York Times*, 21 June 2015, <https://nyti.ms/1GBm491>. ; Bruce P.

Stanford in 2008.²¹ This archive may afford the greatest insight into Iraq under Saddam Hussein. Eleven million original documents include everything from photographs, official government documents, foreign communications, and more.

Scholars such as Joseph Sassoon, Aaron Faust, Lisa Blaydes, Samuel Helfont, and Dina Rizk Khoury all paved the way with their books and research derived from the Hizb al-Ba‘th al-‘Arabī al-Ishtirākī collection.²² Their works, respectively, examine topics ranging from the development and organization of the Iraqi Ba‘thist party, the state’s domestic control apparatus, the role of religion as means for state control, and memorialization of wars. Helfont also published on Iraqi political operations and the use of the embassy organizations to control Iraqis abroad.²³ This dissertation adds to the historiography of Iraq by using these documents to show Iraqi perspectives in foreign policy and strategic objectives during the Cold War era and after it.

This dissertation uses three of the larger datasets within the Hizb al-Ba‘th records: the Ba‘th Regional Command Collection (BRCC), the North Iraqi Dataset, (NIDS) and the Kuwaiti Dataset (KDS). According to the Hoover Institution, the documents within the North Iraqi

Montgomery and Michael P. Brill, “The Ghosts of Past Wars Live on in A Critical Archive,” *War On The Rocks*, 11 September 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/09/The-Ghosts-Of-Past-Wars-Live-On-In-A-Critical-Archive/>

²¹ Adam Gorlick, “Saddam Hussein’s papers, along with controversy, find a temporary home with the Hoover Institution,” *Stanford Report*, June 18, 2008, <https://news.stanford.edu/news/2008/june18/iraq-061808.html>

²² Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*; Aaron M. Faust, *The Ba‘thification of Iraq: Saddam Hussein’s Totalitarianism*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016); Makiya, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*; Dina Rizk Khoury, *Iraq in Wartime Soldiering, Martyrdom, and Remembrance*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Samuel Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion: The Authoritarian Roots of Saddam Hussein’s Islam*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Lisa Blaydes *State of Repression: Iraq under Saddam Hussein*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

²³ Samuel Helfont. “Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba‘th Party as a Transnational Actor,” *The Middle East Journal* 72. No 2. (2018): 229-245. Samuel Helfont. “Iraq’s Real Weapons of Mass Destruction were ‘Political Operations,’” *War On The Rocks*, 26 February 2018. <https://warontherocks.com/2018/02/iraqs-real-weapons-mass-destruction-political-operations/>

Dataset (NIDS) “were created by security, intelligence, military, Ba‘th Party, and other government agency offices in northern Iraq, primarily in the three northern governates (provinces) of Sulaymānīyah, Dahūk, and Irbīl. Focusing on these governates, this series covers the period of the consolidation of power of the regime of Saddam Hussein, the Iran-Iraq war, the Kurdish insurgency, the Anfal operations of 1987-1988, and the prelude to the second Gulf War. The NIDS provides documentation of the bureaucratic apparatus of the Iraqi State.” This dataset contains 2,394,562 documents. Representatives of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) collected these documents and turned them over to U.S. officials when the U.N. enforced a no-fly zone over northern Iraq in the aftermath of the First Gulf War. The U.S. Department of Defense then digitized these records.²⁴

The documents within the Kuwaiti Dataset (KIDS) “were created by Iraqi military and political agencies and were gathered by the Coalition forces after the retreat of the Iraqi military from Kuwait in 1991. They document the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait from 1990 to 1991, including the conduct of the war and the treatment of the civilian population. Personal documents left behind by Iraqi soldiers and operatives are included.” There are over 725,000 pages, in PDF and JPEG formats, of documents within this dataset.²⁵

However, there are several issues with this archive. For one, the documents are all written in Arabic. While most documents are typed, there are handfuls of handwritten documents—many from Saddam Hussein himself, given his penchant for micro-managing just about everything

²⁴ Sometimes only the sheet file remains—the page which notes the basic information of what the document details, how it was collected, etc.—and the entire document itself is removed. Whenever something was deemed classified by the Americans, the entire document was removed from the file, leaving just an identification sheet behind. This process was carried out by the U.S. Department of Defense, not the staff or affiliates of the Hoover Institution. For more information, see <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c84j0cg3/dsc/?query=Iraq#c01-1.2.9.2>

²⁵ For more information, see: <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/c84j0cg3/dsc/?query=Iraq#c01-1.2.9.3>

until after the First Gulf War. Sometimes the script is very difficult to read; even native Arabic speakers can struggle trying to decipher the handwriting.

Second, the nature in which the collection was acquired presents two challenges in itself. These documents were captured by members of the U.S. military and the U.S. government without permission of the Ba‘thist regime, the coalition-formed Iraqi government, or the individuals whose information is part of the dataset. Therefore, photographs of the documents are forbidden in order to protect the personally identifiable information (PII). The Hoover Institution and Stanford University are required by law to protect the PII inside the collection. The Iraqi government has also asked that these documents be returned to Iraq, and some archivists and librarians have called the American possession of these documents “illegal” and a violation of the 1907 Hague Convention.²⁶

Finally, the collection itself is massive and relatively unprocessed. The entire collection contains around 11 million documents, with 2.7 million pages, over 6,400 boxfiles, just within the BRCC dataset alone. Even then, there are over a thousand markers for the Soviet Union and Russia in those 2.7 million pages. Documents are sorted into unorganized batches, with the finding aid only indicating what the entire batch contains. Sometimes these batches contain over 900 photos, and the only option is to scroll past every document to find the one that was originally desired. In some cases, documents pertaining to Russia were located within documents ear-marked for the documents related to “Eritrea,” for example. In other words, these documents

²⁶ John Gravois, “Disputed Iraqi Archives Find a Home at the Hoover Institution,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 23 January 2008, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Disputed-Iraqi-Archives-Find-a/426>; Hugh Eakin, “Iraqi Files in U.S.: Plunder or Rescue?,” *NYT*, July 1, 2008, <https://nyti.ms/2pCzq3v>; Michelle Caswell, ““Thank You Very Much, Now Give Them Back”: Cultural Property and the Fight over the Iraqi Ba‘th Party Records.” *The American Archivist* 74, no. 1 (2011): 211-40.

had not been identified by any markers specifically related to Russia elsewhere. A decade after they became available, these archival materials had scarcely been touched.

However, as with the records of any authoritarian regime, one must not take Iraqi sources at face value. Therefore, this work uses the documents available in *Foreign Relations of the United States of America* (FRUSA) and records in the Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, G.H.W. Bush, and Clinton presidential libraries as means to support or counter the Ba'ath documents. This work also uses recently digitized and declassified C.I.A documents that were made available online in January 2017. Although the position of the U.S. government is generally peripheral, an important aim of this dissertation is to also consider the American position on this Iraqi-Soviet relationship.

Scholars are continuing to advance Middle Eastern perspectives of the Cold War.²⁷ The Iraqi documents presented in this dissertation will help to provide Iraq's viewpoint about this era. Iraq's search for autonomy may disorient American ways of thinking about Iraqi foreign ambitions, but by considering Iraqi priorities first, scholars will have a better overall understanding of Iraqi military and diplomatic history.

²⁷ Salim Yaqub. *Containing Arab Nationalism: the Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East*. United States: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005; Mohammed Lakhdar Ghetta, *Algeria and the Cold War: International Relations and the Struggle for Autonomy*, (London & NY: I. B. Tauris, 2017); Asher Orkaby, *Beyond the Arab Cold War: The International History of the Yemen Civil War, 1962-68*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Efraim Karsh, *Soviet Policy towards Syria since 1970*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Efraim Karsh, *The Soviet Union and Syria*. (London: Routledge, 2016); Nigel Ashton, ed. *The Cold War in the Middle East: Regional Conflict and Superpowers, 1967-1973*. (New York: Routledge, 2007); Kenneth M. Pollack, *Armies of Sand: The Past, Present, and Future of Arab Military Effectiveness*. (Oxford: Oxford University, 2019). Dina Rezk, *The Arab World and Western Intelligence: Analysing the Middle East, 1956-1981*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

Chapter 2 - Iraqi Foreign Policy, 1968-1989

The relationship between Iraq and the Soviet Union in 1968-1989 is more complicated than previously recognized. An outdated Cold War narrative argued that the superpowers—the U.S. and U.S.S.R.—maintained a cohort of client states. Many of these client states were located in the Third World, and they were usually emerging from the shadows of colonialism. This narrative then argued that the superpowers supposedly used and dominated the client states in pursuit of their own agendas. However, recent analysis and scholarship have challenged this way of thinking. Instead, scholars continue to demonstrate the high levels of autonomy and agency exhibited by these so-called client states.²⁸ An examination of the Iraqi-Soviet relationship from Iraq's perspective of this time supports these new interpretations.

Iraq's relationship with the Soviet Union resembled other relationships between the Soviet Union and Third World states. Whereas the U.S. used *democracy* as its rhetoric abroad, the U.S.S.R. used *anti-imperialism* and *anti-Zionism* especially in the Middle East, to justify its expansion of the Third World.²⁹ Soviet rhetoric seemed to fit in with the Middle East, because

²⁸ See Federico Romero, "Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads," *Cold War History*, 14: (2014): 685-703; Odd Arne Westad, "The New International History of the Cold War: Three (Possible) Paradigms." *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 4 (2000): 551-65; Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds. *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*. Vol. 1-3. The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010; Melvyn P. Leffler. "The Cold War: What Do "We Now Know"?" *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (1999): 501-24.

²⁹ The C.I.A. wagered that the Soviets would have to tread carefully. Giving Soviet arms and weapons helped secure allegiances quickly, but the Soviets had to worry that these weapons would be stockpiled for another round of fighting with the Israelis. As the C.I.A. argued, the Soviets will have to "dispel any Arab notions that the Soviet arms, training, and military doctrine were responsible for the last defeat" and "make the Arabs aware that the excellence of Soviet arms will not in itself bring victory against Israel." Unfortunately for the Soviets, this fear came to fruition in the October 1973 war. Weekly Review: Soviet relations with the Ba'athists in Iraq and Syria, June 1969, FOIA (C.I.A.), https://U.S.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000772106.pdf. For more see Isabelle Ginor

the 1950s, in the shadow of European decolonialization and the creation of the Jewish state in 1947, saw an explosion of support for Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism, as championed by Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser. Overthrowing the British-backed government in Cairo in 1952, Nasser's ideology was inherently anti-imperialistic, anti-Western, and pro-Arab, calling for all Arabs to unite as one state to combat and drive out all would-be conquerors.

The ideology of Pan-Arabism included elements of socialism, further tempting the Soviets to support numerous Arab independence movements. Yet Pan-Arabism, although certainly influenced by Marxism-Leninism or international socialism, was not governed by it. According to Odd Arne Westad, Nasser himself believed in a "vague form of socialism," but he believed that the ideology should be guided by Arab and Islamic principles.³⁰ Michel Aflaq, a Syrian Orthodox Christian who helped to found the Hizb al-Ba'ath al'Arabi al'Ishtiraki (the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party), promoted socialism as a way to liberate all Arabs from the West's imperialistic and capitalistic tendencies.³¹ Separated from these evils, the Arab world could then redistribute to the Arabs the land and property previously held by Westerners or their stooges in the Middle East. Aflaq's followers, the Ba'athists did not call for the complete restructuring or

and Gideon Remez, *The Soviet-Israeli War, 1967-1973: the U.S.S.R.'s Military Intervention in the Egyptian-Israeli Conflict*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017).

³⁰ Odd Arne Westad. *The Cold War: A World History*. (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 453.

³¹ Although a Christian, Aflaq believed that Islam was an integral part of the Arab identity, so much so that he argued "the force of Islam" had reemerged "with a new appearance: which is Arab nationalism." According to Kanan Makiya, Aflaq believed that "Arabism is a body 'whose spirit is Islam.'" Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear: the Politics of Modern Iraq*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 197-199. Aflaq is alleged to have converted to Islam before his death in 1989. However, this conversion is heavily disputed. Salem-Babikian, Norma. "Michel 'Aflaq: A Biographic Outline." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (1980): 162-79; John F. Devlin. "The Ba'ath Party: Rise and Metamorphosis." *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 5 (1991): 1396-407. Reuters, "Michel Aflaq Dies in Paris at 79; Founder of Iraq's Ba'athist Party," *NYT*, June 25, 1989, <https://nyti.ms/29yLzhR>

reorganization of society. Instead, socialism most importantly offered to free Arab society, peoples, and land from foreign meddling.³²

This split between Western and Arab socialism would later incense Moscow and remain a key divider between the U.S.S.R. and its Arab client states. For the Soviets, according to Kanan Makiya, “it was a weird mix of socialism that [they were] not used to.”³³ Although the Soviets saw Pan-Arabism as a pathway to communism, many Arab states—including Syria, Egypt, and Iraq—began to target anyone or anything connected with communist elements, such as political parties. Communist Party members in Iraq, for example, were hunted down and executed throughout the Ba‘th regime’s tenure. Even then, some Arab communist parties, like the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), were also very nationalistic, a tenet not officially espoused by the communists in Moscow.³⁴

³² For more on this, see Paul Salem, *Bitter Legacy: Ideology and Politics in the Arab World*. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1994); Eberhard Kienle, *Ba‘th v. Ba‘th: the Conflict between Syria and Iraq, 1968-1989*. (London: Tauris, 1990); Hashim S.H. Behbehani, *The Soviet Union and Arab Nationalism, 1917-1966*. (London: Kegan & Paul, 1987); Halim Isber Barakat, *The Arab World: Society, Culture, and State*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba‘thists, and Free Officers*. (Princeton: Princeton University, 1978).

³³ Makiya, *Republic of Fear: the Politics of Modern Iraq*, 248-249.

³⁴ Some historians believe that the Soviets wanted to use Arab nationalism for their own interests and were therefore “willing to override the interests of the Arab communist movement.” See Hashim S.H. Behbehani, *The Soviet Union and Arab Nationalism, 1917-1966*, (London: Kegan & Paul, 1987), 185. So complicated was the relationship among socialists, communists, and Arab nationalists that in 1970 the U.S State Department prophesied that “the U.S.S.R hardly expects, nor would it necessarily even welcome, the emergence of an Arab communist regime at this stage, a development which could bring serious entanglements and burdens for Moscow.” Airgram from the Department of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union, Washington D.C., 17 December 1969, in *FRUSA, 1969-1976, Volume XXIV, Middle East Region and Arabian Peninsula, 1969-1972; Jordan, September 1970*. Document 16.

Iraq, a former British mandate, had only shaken off its colonial yoke in 1958, when the monarchy set up by the British was overthrown and King Faisal II was murdered in a bloody takeover.³⁵ Moscow was drawn to Baghdad given the anti-colonial and pro-nationalistic rhetoric now emerging from Iraq; the new Iraqi government also admired the Soviet Union's anti-imperialism.³⁶ The Soviet government sent messages celebrating Iraq's new independence and its anti-Zionist stance, and soon Baghdad received Moscow's promises of diplomatic, military, political, and economic support. However, Iraq was more than just a client. It had its own goals, ambitions, needs and wants. Iraq knew it was the lesser partner, the smaller and less advantaged. Yet Baghdad still attempted to exploit and manipulate this relationship. Throughout the years of the Ba'athist regime from 1968 through 1991, the Soviets and Iraqis played a game of give and take. At times, the relationship was extremely tense. The Soviets tried to two-time the Iraqis in that Moscow wanted alliances and working relationships with the ICP, Syria, Kurds, and Iranians—relationships that Baghdad could not tolerate whatsoever. Moscow also wanted Baghdad to rely solely on the goods and services that the U.S.S.R. provided, but this did not stop Iraq from seeking more and better quality elsewhere.

However, the relationship was never completely severed because Baghdad and Moscow were too important to one another to walk away entirely. The relationship between the Soviet

³⁵ For description of the coup, see BBC News, "Coup in Iraq sparks jitters in Middle East," *The BBC*, 14 July 1958. http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/july/14/newsid_3736000/3736391.stm

³⁶ See Mark N. Katz, "The Soviet Union and the Third World," *Current History* (October 1986): 329-339. <http://eboot.gmu.edu/bitstream/handle/1920/3128/Soviet%20Union%20and%20the%20Third%20World.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>; Mark N. Katz, ed. *The USSR and Marxist Revolutions in the Third World* (Cambridge University Press/Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1990); Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy. A History of Socialism in Russia 1917-1991*. (New York: Free Press, 1996). Odd Arne Westad, "The Empire of Justice: Soviet Ideology and Foreign Interventions," in *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 39-72.

Union and Iraq can be best characterized as one steeped in mistrust and convenience. Both regimes had their own goals and interests, and both consistently stabbed each another in the back while relying on one another at the same time. Despite knowing that it was the smaller, less powerful country, Baghdad consistently sought to exploit its relationship with Moscow throughout these decades. Iraq's client status neither diminished its agency nor weakened its resolve to test Soviet patience.

The Origins of Ba' thist Iraq

On 17 July 1968, the Ba' thists succeeded in overthrowing the government of Iraqi President Abdul Rahman Arif in a bloodless coup. Ever since the monarchy installed by the British was overthrown in July 1958, Iraq had been plagued by weak governments, revolts in the north, and successive coup d'états. To those outside Iraq, news of the latest coup in July 1968 did come as a surprise, and, if anything, it prevented many foreign governments from seeking relations with the Ba' thists in charge.³⁷ In particular, for the Americans, who had no diplomatic relations with Iraq following the Six-Day War in 1967, Iraq's latest coup was hard to assess.³⁸ Wagering the high probability of yet another coup, the Americans hedged that a "counter-coup

³⁷ According to the C.I.A., Soviet press reports suggested that "Moscow is in the dark once again regarding current trends in Damascus and Baghdad, and has decided to wait out still another difficult period in relationships that have known many vicissitudes." Weekly Review: Soviet relations with the Ba' thists in Iraq and Syria, June 1969, FOIA (C.I.A.), https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000772106.pdf.

³⁸ In October 1972, a U.S. Interests Section opened in Baghdad within the Belgian Embassy. It was to be staffed by only two officers. The U.S. did not interpret this approval by Iraq of the opening of the Interests Section to be "evidence of desiring improved relations with the U.S." Diplomatic relations were not fully restored until 1984. Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, 31 March 1973, "Country Assessment for Iraq," Document 208, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

tomorrow is conceivable.”³⁹ Less than a year later, U.S. officials labeled Iraq a “radical state,” and, because of the “basic instability” in the country, State Department officials advocated “not to be quick and resume relations until regime changes.”⁴⁰

Before the coup in 1968, Iraq had been a persistent cause of headaches for the Soviets. Following the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958, the new Iraqi leader, Major-General Abdul Karim al-Qasim, turned to the Soviets for economic and political support, and he welcomed communists into his government. The relationship between the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) and Qasim was uneasy at times. He feared that the Communists would try to usurp too much power or be perceived as a threat to Qasim’s other allies. Nevertheless, he viewed the ICP as “a useful ally,” a group that could “counterbalance” the rise of Arab nationalists and Islamist forces developing within Iraq.⁴¹ As long as Qasim maintained this delicate balance, the Soviets supplied economic assistance. But this somewhat happy dynamic between the Iraqis and the Soviets ended when Qasim was overthrown by a combination of Ba‘thist and military elements in 1963. Then, in 1968, seeking total control, the Ba‘thists removed the military elements of the government and consolidated control over Iraq.⁴² The Soviets were quick to establish relations with the new regime, but, according to the C.I.A., unfortunately for the Soviets, they would

³⁹ U.S. officials were already hedging bets against the new Ba‘thist regime, referring to them as “more difficult than their predecessors...no one knows how radical they will be.” Memorandum from John W. Foster of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Special Assistant (Rostow), “The Iraqi Coup,” Washington, 17 July 1968, *FRUSA*, 1964–1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region; Arabian Peninsula, Document 199.

⁴⁰ Minutes of a National Security Meeting, Washington D.C., 1 February 1969, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976, Volume XXIV, Middle East Region and Arabian Peninsula, 1969-1972; Jordan, September 1970. Document 3.

⁴¹ Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), 148-157.

⁴² For the best narrative on Iraq’s tumultuous history, see Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*.

eventually have more “trouble with the Ba‘thists than [with] any leftist regimes in the Middle East.”⁴³

Soviet interest in Iraq rested on certain goals. For one, Iraqi oil reserves and markets were certainly enticing. Some historians have pointed to Soviet geopolitical concerns; Moscow was concerned that it could be outflanked by U.S. influence and military presence in the Persian Gulf. Keeping a strong relationship with Iraq was part of the Kremlin’s attempt to expand its influence in the Arabian peninsula.⁴⁴ Other historians have argued that Soviet policy was not centered on oil interests or military bases in the Middle East but rather that it was to “challenge Western position, in a region of importance to the West, and to counter Western challenges to the U.S.S.R [in the region].”⁴⁵ Having a foundation in Iraq also gave the Soviets a chance to influence regional events within the Middle East, including involvement in the complicated and perilous Arab-Israeli conflict.⁴⁶

Iraq was among the emerging states of the Third World that were shaking themselves free from their colonial overlords; and Moscow was enthusiastic to win the loyalty of another Third World state. In the Middle East, as elsewhere, the superpowers vied for influence. The region was highly volatile, with revolutions and coups in such places as Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt,

⁴³ Weekly Review: Soviet relations with the Ba‘thists in Iraq and Syria, June 1969, FOIA (C.I.A.),

https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000772106.pdf

⁴⁴ George W. Breslauer, “On Collaborative Competition,” in *Soviet Strategy in the Middle East*. George W. Breslauer, editor. (London: Routledge, 1990), 10.

⁴⁵ M.E. Yapp, *The Near East Since the First World War*. (London: Longman Group United Kingdom. 1991), 412

⁴⁶ For more, see Uri Bar-Noi, “The Soviet Union and the Six Day War: Revelations from the Polish Archives,” *Cold War International History Project via the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*, July 7, 2011, accessed online, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/the-soviet-union-and-the-six-day-war-revelations-the-polish-archives>, Galia Golan, “The Soviet Union and the Israeli Action in Lebanon.” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 59, no. 1 (1982): 7-16. Galia Golan, “The Soviet Union and the Palestinian Issue,” in *Soviet Strategy in the Middle East*. George W. Breslauer, editor. (London: Routledge, 1990).

Yemen (Aden), Oman (Muscat), and Turkey. This left the region open to influence, and, as Odd Arne Westad argues, Moscow hoped that the new “radical nationalists would break away from capitalistic control and form alliances” with the Kremlin.⁴⁷ However, the Soviets were not the only ones interested in this region. As the U.S. State Department saw it, “the Soviets still prefer to avoid peaks of tension in the area...the Kremlin dislikes unpredictability in the Middle East, and in Eastern Europe, at a time when Communist China promises to remain a major headache for the Soviet Union for the foreseeable future.”⁴⁸

Iraq was important for the Soviet Union for providing access to oil, geographic security, and a chance to further Soviet credentials in the anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist circles of the world. Iraq was at the center of many key issues in the region: it had a booming global oil industry, it was a major player in Arab-Iranian rivalry, and it was a vocal opponent of Israel. Influence within Iraq could affect events, states, decisions, and playmakers in the Persian Gulf. Setting aside debates on the Soviets’ true motivation for expanding in the Third World, Iraq seemed to offer all the potential for which the Soviets could dream.

Nevertheless, this potential proved difficult for the Soviets to use to their advantage. The Ba‘thists were stubborn in chasing after their own ambitions, which included confronting their neighbors and rivals. At the same time that the Soviets were engaged with Iraq, they also had to play a restraining role. They did not want Iraq to feel so emboldened that Baghdad might

⁴⁷ Westad, *The Cold War: A World History*, 450.

⁴⁸ Airgram from the Department of State to the Embassy in the Soviet Union, Washington D.C., 17 December 1969, in *FRUSA*, 1969-1976, Volume XXIV, Middle East Region and Arabian Peninsula, 1969-1972; Jordan, September 1970. Document 16.

engage in conflict that could jeopardize the stability of the Ba‘thist regime. The Soviets also did not want to see Iraq succeed to such a point that it weakened Soviet influence altogether.⁴⁹

After the 1968 Ba‘thist coup

In January 1968, as part of “an overall rearrangement of priorities,” the British announced their intention to “terminate or renegotiate” all commitments in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the Trucial States (modern day United Arab Emirates), and Oman; this action was to be completed by the end of the end of 1971.⁵⁰ The Americans did not expect this withdrawal to draw the Soviets into “greater involvement” in the region, but they did believe any potential Soviet action would be “harmful to our interests.” If anything, the U.S. government believed Iran to be the clear beneficiary of Britain’s action. The Shah of Iran wanted to replace the British, and, according to the Nixon administration, the Iraqis were too “weak and pre-occupied with the Arab-Israeli issue” and “occupied with Shatt-al-Arab waterway” to resist the Shah effectively.⁵¹

In 1969, the Nixon administration defined basic U.S. interests in the Middle East. Along with the “independence and integrity” of NATO, it defined the security of Greece, Turkey, and Iran as its “vital interests.” As for the Soviets, the Nixon administration argued that, although the

⁴⁹ Research Department Memorandum, “Iraqi-Soviet Relations, 1968-1973,” 25 January 1974, FCO 51/358, Research Middle East: Iraq-Soviet Relations, 1968-1973, The National Archives at Kew Gardens, London, United Kingdom (hereinafter TNA).

⁵⁰ Some of the U.S. government’s proposals to curry favor and influence in the new independent Gulf states included cultural programs, scholarships, exchange fellowships, “salary topping,” technical assistance, and promoting private industry (“encouraging American companies to invest, relocate, open offices, etc. send advisors, and consultants”). See Future Assistance to Persian Gulf in Cultural/Education and Technical Areas, circa 1970, NSDM 92 [1 of 2], Box H-220, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

⁵¹ The British were only estimated to have saved £12 million annually with this withdrawal. Persian Gulf: Summary of IG Response to NSSM 66, NSSM 90 [part 3], Box H-044, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

Soviet threat remained, “powerful indigenous and self-limiting forces make it unlikely the U.S.S.R. can ever totally dominate the area, [yet] the high-water mark of its potential influence has by no means been reached.” Even then, Soviet interests in the Middle East stemmed more from “geopolitical factors and considerations of national security and power politics than from communist ideology or desire for raw materials or markets. The Soviet threat is...politico-economic rather than narrowly military.”⁵²

At the start of the new decade, the Nixon administration faced three major issues in the Middle East: the Arab-Israeli conflict, the British withdrawal from the Persian Gulf, and the outbreak of Kurdish-Iraqi hostilities. The Nixon administration also saw, however, the growing strength of the relationship between Iraq and the U.S.S.R. This culminated on 9 April 1972 when the Iraqis and U.S.S.R. signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. Both countries pledged “to cooperate in the political, economic, scientific, and military fields” and to jointly fight against Israel. The signatory parties said that they “[would] continue to wage unrelenting struggle against imperialism and Zionism.”⁵³ The treaty also included the term “unbreakable friendship,”⁵⁴ a slight implication that Iraq would “be unable to release itself from Moscow’s friendship.”⁵⁵ Yet, even though the U.S. government believed this treaty reflected “recent Soviet advances in these areas and reflects the considerable and increasing Soviet presence in Iraq,” the Americans also noted that it was not quite on par with the 1971 Egyptian-Soviet Treaty; that treaty explicitly stated that both countries would strive for “cooperation in the field

⁵² NEA Staff Study, “U.S. Interests in the Middle East,” 24 January 1969, NSC Meeting, Middle East, 2/1/69, Box H-020, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

⁵³ See Appendix B.

⁵⁴ This phrase is from the Russian translation. Haim Shemesh, *Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988: In the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict*. (Boulder, Co.: Rienner, 1992), 71 n109.

⁵⁵ Shemesh, *Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988: In the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict*, 71.

of strengthening the defensive capabilities of each.”⁵⁶ In other words, the Soviet military commitment to Iraq was not on par with its military commitment to Egypt.

According to Haim Shemesh, the 1972 treaty was part of the “Soviet global policy of [maintaining] embodied in treaties, with developing countries struggling against ‘imperialism’ and for ‘social progress.’”⁵⁷ Geopolitically speaking, Iraq provided an alternative oil source, separate from the West and Eastern Europe; and Iraq granted the Soviets access to naval ports (at Umm Qasr). Consolidating this relationship with Iraq was crucial for the Soviets, especially at a time when Egyptian-Soviet relations were proving troublesome.⁵⁸ For Iraq, having Soviet support for its political and economic ambitions, including the removal of remaining Western influences within the country, galvanized Iraq to move. This was the case in June 1972, shortly after the 1972 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was signed, when the Iraqis nationalized the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC), a Western conglomerate of British, Dutch, American, and French oil companies which controlled most of Iraqi oil production.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Memo for HAK, from Theodore L. Eliot, Jr. (Executive Secretary), 13 April 1972, “Preliminary Analysis of Iraqi-U.S.S.R. treaty,” Iraq, Iran Vol V. May 73-Dec 73 to Iraq Vol 1. Box 603, NSC Files, Country Files—Middle East, RMNL.

⁵⁷ There would be 12 treaties similar to by the time Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev’s tenure ended. Shemesh, *Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988: In the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict*, 70-71.

⁵⁸ For more, Isabelle Ginor and Gideon Remez, *The Soviet-Israeli War, 1967-1973: the U.S.S.R.’s Military Intervention in the Egyptian-Israeli Conflict*. Memo to the President from HAK, “Current Egyptian/Soviet Relations,” 10 January 1975, (C.I.A.), <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/LOC-HAK-558-16-1-4.pdf>; Hassan Elbahtimy “Allies at arm’s length: Redefining Egyptian–Soviet relations in the 1967 Arab–Israeli war,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 42:1, (2019) 91-113.

⁵⁹ For more on this dispute, which started well before the Ba’thist regime, see Michael E. Brown, “The Nationalization of the Iraqi Petroleum Company.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 10, no. 1 (1979): 107-24.

The removal of Western imperialism was one goal, for the reduction of Western power in Iraq gave Baghdad room to maneuver regionally. The Iraqis were concerned with several key players in the area—notably, those involving the Kurds and the Iranians. In this regard, Baghdad hoped the treaty would signal Moscow’s willingness to side with Iraq instead of its neighbors. Unfortunately for the Ba’thists, the treaty did not have this effect. Although both the U.S.S.R. and Iraq were concerned about Iran, Moscow was more troubled by the growing strength of the U.S.-Iranian relationship than it was with Iraq’s concerns over Iranian support for the Kurds and Iranian aspirations within the Gulf. Even then, the Soviets tried to keep their support of Iraq balanced by comparable support of Iran.⁶⁰ The Soviets informed Iraq that the treaty was “not aimed at another country,” hoping to signal to Iran that it would like to “improve relations with both Baghdad and Tehran simultaneously.”⁶¹

Even before the 1972 treaty was signed, the Soviets were involved in many economic and industrial projects within Iraq. The C.I.A. estimated that the Soviets had radio stations, dams, pharmaceutical plants, irrigation projects, railroad workshops, glassware factories, garment factories, telephone exchanges, agricultural machinery plants, canning factories, railroad construction sites, electrical equipment factories, grain elevators, and cotton textile mills spread throughout the country.⁶² Soviet economic, political, and military assistance expanded

⁶⁰ Memo for HAK, from Theodore L. Eliot, Jr. (Executive Secretary), 13 April 1972, “Preliminary Analysis of Iraqi-U.S.S.R. treaty,” Iraq, Iran Vol V. May 73-Dec 73 to Iraq Vol 1. Box 603, NSC Files, Country Files—Middle East, RMNL.

⁶¹ The USG believed that the “Shah will see through this...[confirming] of his fears about long-term Soviet intentions in the area.” Memo for HAK, from Theodore L. Eliot, Jr. (Executive Secretary), 13 April 1972, “Preliminary Analysis of Iraqi-U.S.S.R. treaty,” Iraq, Iran Vol V. May 73-Dec 73 to Iraq Vol 1. Box 603, NSC Files, Country Files—Middle East, RMNL.

⁶² Recent Trends in Communist Economic and Military Aid to Iraq, March 1972, CREST: General C.I.A. Records, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/C.I.A.-RDP85T00875R001700030031-3.pdf>

substantially following the signing of the 1972 treaty including the delivery of military aircraft, such as the TU-22 supersonic bomber. Soviet advisors were also deployed to help Iraq develop its oil infrastructure, irrigation systems, and merchant and fishing fleets.⁶³ Sometimes aid was accompanied by high-level visits from the Soviets. For example, in March 1974, Marshal Andrei Grechko visited Iraq in March 1974, and Soviet military aid was delivered around the same time; this included tanks, aircraft, and missiles.⁶⁴

Soviet advisors were also sent to help the Ba‘th Party structure its own government. According to U.S. officials in Tehran, the Iraqis asked for Soviet assistance to help “reorganize [the] Iraqi Ministry of Interior and to overhaul [the] governmental administrative system.” The Soviets were also looking to coordinate Iraqi trade unions and cooperatives with organizations in the U.S.S.R.⁶⁵ Elements of the KGB were dispatched to Baghdad to help establish the Ba‘th security apparatus—the very apparatus that Saddam Hussein would use to terrorize his enemies and his own people.⁶⁶ The relationship between the KGB and Iraqi intelligence became so

⁶³ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, 31 March 1973, “Country Assessment for Iraq,” Document 208, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

⁶⁴ Christopher Wren, “Grechko Soviet Defense Chief, Dies at 72,” *NYT*, April 27, 1976, <https://nyti.ms/1RDTJDx>

⁶⁵ Telegram from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State, June 25, 1973, “Increased Iraq-Soviet Ties,” Document 218, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976. However, according to Telegram From the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, 1 July 1973, “Iraqi-Soviet Ties,” Document 219, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976, the figure of 1,000 Soviet advisors in Iraq was argued to be “as a good a guess as any.”

⁶⁶ Not all security services within the Soviet bloc or among Soviet client states were the same. Even then, not all security services in single-party autocracies mirrored each other. For example, Bulgaria’s security apparatus slowly de-Stalinized, shifting from “massive repression to surveillance and targeted repression,” but the Iraqi security apparatus remained “consistently high and totalistic,” only overthrown in 2003 by the Americans. Martin K. Dimitrov and Joseph Sassoon, “State Security, Information, and Repression: A Comparison of Communist Bulgaria and Ba‘thist Iraq,” *Journal of Cold Studies*.16 (2) (Spring 2014), 3-31: 4-5.

entwined that Iraq “became ‘the only country in the non-communist world where Soviet espionage was discontinued.’”⁶⁷

Although the 1972 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signaled Iraq’s intent to ally itself with the Soviet Union, it did not mean that Iraq had any wish to transform into a Soviet stooge. For one thing, despite Soviet assistance, the Iraqis remained suspicious of all Soviet policies and ambitions in Iraq and throughout the region, for that matter. The Iraqis questioned how meaningful this relationship truly was since the Soviets refused to staunchly defend and support Iraq in its disputes with Syria, Iran, and the Kurds.⁶⁸ The Iraqis resented Soviet overtures to the ICP and the Kurds, especially since the 1972 treaty called for “non-interferences in each other’s internal affairs.”⁶⁹ The Ba’thists were furious over Moscow’s desire for these groups to be incorporated into the Iraqi government. Despite being the smaller party in the relationship, the Iraqis were not about to let Moscow dictate its policies. The Iraqis had their own policies and agendas, many of which were “objectionable to the Soviets,” including the campaign against the ICP, confrontation with Syria, isolation of the Kurds, territorial disputes with Iran, and criticism of the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations.⁷⁰

To commemorate the first anniversary of the signing of the 1972 treaty, the Iraqis invited the Soviets to Baghdad for celebrations. Much to Saddam’s disappointment, and taken as a

⁶⁷ Artemy Kalinovsky, “The Soviet Union and the Iran-Iraq War” in *The Iran-Iraq War: New International Perspectives*, Nigel Ashton and Bryan Gibson, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 233. For more on the security apparatus structure, see Joseph Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba’th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002).

⁶⁸ Research Study Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, 23 August 1973, “U.S.S.R.-Iraq: The Lines of Tension,” Document 230, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

⁶⁹ This can be found in Article 1. See Appendix B.

⁷⁰ The Soviets in the Persian Gulf/Arabian Peninsula—Assets and Prospects, December 1976, CREST: General C.I.A. Records, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/C.I.A.-RDP79T00889A000900070001-3.pdf>

slight, the Soviets did not send members of the highest levels of Soviet leadership but Soviet Naval Commander in Chief Admiral Gorshkov, along with a cruiser and two destroyers, who arrived in March 1973. As the Soviets were arriving, the Iraqis launched a cross-border raid into Kuwait, in what is now referred to as the Samita border skirmish.⁷¹ The Americans dismissed any possibility of Soviet participation in the border clashes. U.S. embassy officials in Baghdad calculated that “the Ba‘th are cleverly using the Soviets rather than vice-versa.” The Iraqis were using the visit to make it seem that the Soviets supported Iraqi ambitions in the Gulf.⁷²

This instance along with many more to come illustrated Iraq’s agency in this regard. Although Iraq knew that the Soviets were the superpower, the 1972 treaty did not terminate Iraq’s independence. If anything, the fact that the Soviets had put pen to paper had enhanced Iraq’s resolve to maneuver in the Gulf region. The Soviets did have the upper hand in that they were the major supplier of arms and weapons to Iraq, but this did not stop the Iraqis from operating beyond Soviet ambitions. As Syria’s Hafiz al-Assad summarized to the Americans, when he was generalizing about Arab states and their independence, “there is no reason for the Arabs to be in the role of the beggar.”⁷³

Iraqi Communist Party

The relationship between the Ba‘th and the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) was a key source of contention between Iraq and the Soviet Union. The Ba‘thists and ICP had a long and

⁷¹ Juan de Onis, “Iraq-Kuwait Talk on Boundary Due,” *NYT*, April 5, 1973, <https://nyti.ms/1GPuzRU>

⁷² Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, 9 April 1973, “Iraq-Kuwait Border Clash,” Document 210, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

⁷³ Memo of Conversation, 9 March 1975, Damascus, Syria. Hafiz al-Assad and Kissinger, Box 3, (7-22 March 1975, Kissinger’s Trip—Vol. I (2), NSA, U.S.S.R., China, and Middle East Discussions, GFL.

tumultuous history, one that dated back before Saddam's reign. Whether it be differences over ideology or over foreign support, the tension between these two parties ultimately boiled down to who had the power and who was the threat.⁷⁴ After the 1968 coup, the Ba'athists moved to purge the Communists from the government and the military, placing the ICP under constant surveillance, with many ICP members arrested and tortured. However, by 1972-73, the Ba'athists invited the ICP to join the National Patriotic Front, which was posed as an attempt to establish cooperation among the ICP, Ba'athists, and Kurds; two ICP members were even given posts within the government, although these positions were limited in power. However, this program was really nothing but a ploy for the Ba'ath Party to use to consolidate their power even more so. For one thing, the Front split the ICP, with some factions refusing to join, allowing the Ba'athists to divide and conquer. By bringing in the ICP, the Front also helped the new regime to "[ingratiate]" itself with the U.S.S.R., a prospect Moscow certainly welcomed.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, despite the agreement, the Ba'athists began moving on the Communists, arresting and forcing

⁷⁴ For more on the communism in Iraq, including the Iraqi Communist Party, see Tareq Y. Ismael, *The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Iraq*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) and Johan Franzén, *Red Star Over Iraq: Iraqi Communism Before Saddam*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). In another of his articles, "Revolutionary critique from exile: Revitalizing the Iraqi communist movement" *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 11.3 (September 2017): 177-204, Ismael argues that the ICP became their own "Iraqi nationalist party," rather than merely a Soviet stooge, which offers another explanation for the tension and competition between the two parties. Franzén instead argues that the ICP's devotion to Soviet ideology and its inability to lead, rather than be co-opted, led to its ultimate bloody demise. The two authors engaged in a vicious debate over the merits of Franzén's book in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. It is worth the read given the level of sass and snark directed towards each other in a prominent journal. Franzén, Johan. "A Response to Tareq Ismael's review of "Red Star Over Iraq: Iraqi Communism Before Saddam." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45, no. 2 (2013): 414-16.

⁷⁵ Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 164-185, 189-191.

members into exile; Communist members were even executed in 1978, accused of treason. The Ba‘th Party even ordered the death penalty for any Ba‘thist who joined the ICP.⁷⁶

Connections between the ICP and Moscow confirmed Ba‘th suspicions of Moscow’s intent to meddle in Iraqi internal affairs. Iraqi intelligence sources within the ICP informed the Ba‘thists that various ICP leaders were in communication with Moscow and had plans to travel to the Soviet Union, if they were able to leave Iraq unmolested.⁷⁷ Those ICP members who had connections with Moscow were subject to surveillance and arrest, while Iraqi authorities also closed Soviet-linked civil societies including cultural centers and newspapers.⁷⁸ The Ba‘th Party always remained cautious of Soviet intentions with the ICP. As American officials in Baghdad noted, “for [the Ba‘th Party’s] most feared domestic enemy are the Communists,” and the granting of two ministerial positions within the Front to Communists was done at the urging of the Soviets.⁷⁹

Soviet criticism of the treatment of communists in Iraq predated the 1968 Ba‘thist coup. Moscow called the 1963 anti-communist purges, for example, a “bloody terror” and labeled ‘Abd al-Salam ‘Arif’s government a “fascist” regime.⁸⁰ The Ba‘thists of the 1968 coup learned from their 1963 predecessors; and, in order to avoid Soviet wrath, they did not move to

⁷⁶ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State and the Embassy in Iran, 6 November 1976, “Iraqi-Soviet Relations,” Document 319, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

⁷⁷ This source also indicated that the ICP was in talks with the Syrian Communist Party, including Iraqis living in exile. “Information,” sent on 21 April 1988, to the Directorate of General Security, CRRC SH-PDWN-D-000-678, Various Memoranda Relating to the Iraqi Use of Chemical Weapons against Halabja and other Kurdish Villages, 1988.

⁷⁸ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, 12 April 1976, “Saudi Query about Soviets in Iraq,” Document 305, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

⁷⁹ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, 31 March 1973, “Country Assessment for Iraq,” Document 208, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

⁸⁰ Shemesh, *Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988: in the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict*, 6.

exterminate the ICP. This, however, did not stop the Ba‘thists from moving on the ICP by other means.⁸¹ Soviet voicing of support for the ICP became ever hollower throughout the decade, even as the Ba‘th Party increasingly moved on the ICP. Whereas communist states such as East Germany would alter their policies in response to Iraq’s anti-ICP campaign, the Soviets remained ambivalent towards the plight of the ICP.⁸² Moscow even signed the 1972 Treaty knowing that the Ba‘thists were at best non-committal about resolving the ICP issue. Throughout the Cold War, the Soviets would protest the ICP’s ill-treatment, but serious retaliation against the Ba‘th rarely materialized. Moscow’s geopolitical interests in Iraq outweighed its interests in the fate of Communist elements in the country.

Technology and the West

A factor contributing to the divisions between the Soviets and Iraqis was the quality of Soviet hardware and training. In particular, apart from the ZSU system and SA-7’s, the Iraqis believed that most Soviet air defense equipment was ineffective.⁸³ As the U.S. government noted, because of “quality, reliability and maintenance problems of equipment, and the adequacy of supplies,” the Iraqis were vocal in diplomatic channels in their criticisms of what the Soviets

⁸¹ Shemesh, *Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988: in the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict*, 19-20. Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 164-185, 189-191.

⁸² As for the East Germans, Joseph Sassoon argues the Stasi were “not under any illusions” regarding the Ba‘thist stance towards communism. Interviews conducted by Sassoon with former East Germans suggest that international Marxism was more important for smaller communist states, like East Germany, than it was for larger communist states. Joseph Sassoon, “The East German Ministry for State Security and Iraq, 1968-1989,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*. 16 (1), Winter 2014, 4-23: 12.

⁸³ Untitled Iraq-Soviet study, circa February 1986, Iran-Iraq War [February 1986] (5) Box 90192, OA 91834, 01840, 91843, William Burns Files, RRPL.

provided.⁸⁴ Seeking better equipment, the Iraqis turned the West and East Europe for arms and other supplies. They also sought foreign investment from France, Japan, West Germany, Great Britain, Italy, and even the United States.⁸⁵ In one case the Iraqis refused to purchase Soviet made Tu-154s and instead opted to purchase American-made Boeing aircraft.⁸⁶ The French sold Iraq helicopters, armored personnel carriers, and light tanks.⁸⁷

By March 1973, Iraq reached a settlement agreement with the Iraqi Petroleum Company.⁸⁸ Compensation included around \$300 million USD from the company whereas Iraq would pay about \$70 million as repayment for previous loans. Since the French-controlled Compagnie Francaise des Pétroles (CFP) was the lead mediator on this deal, the CFP also secured new contracts and access to low-cost oil. As the U.S. government noted, this mediation “[removed] a major irritant to Iraqi relations with the West, and may open the door to increased western commercial activity as well as development of Iraq’s large undeveloped oil reserves.”⁸⁹ After the 1973 IPC settlement, Western companies, including Shell, CFP (known today as Total), and Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI) rushed to invest in Iraqi oil and agriculture

⁸⁴ Untitled Iraq-Soviet study, circa February 1986, Iran-Iraq War [February 1986] (5) Box 90192, OA 91834, 01840, 91843, William Burns Files, RRPL

⁸⁵ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, 31 March 1973, “Country Assessment for Iraq,” Document 208, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

⁸⁶ Telegram from Baghdad USINT to the Secretary of State, 2 August 1974, Iraq, Iran Vol V. May 73-Dec 73 to Iraq Vol 1. Box 603, NSC Files, Country Files—Middle East, RMNL.

⁸⁷ Paper Prepared in the Office of Current Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, May 1, 1975, “The Implications of The Iran–Iraq Agreement,” Document 286, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

⁸⁸ No author listed, “Oil Take-over Pact Announced by Iraq,” *NYT*, March 1, 1973, <https://nyti.ms/1MNXgkv>

⁸⁹ Memo for HAK from State, 3 March 1973, “Settlement to Iraqi Oil Dispute,” Iraq, Iran Vol V. May 73-Dec 73 to Iraq Vol 1. Box 603, NSC Files, Country Files—Middle East, RMNL.

projects.⁹⁰ At the same time that Soviet media praised the settlements, calling Iraq's nationalization "a complete victory," the Soviets attempted to pressure Iraq against accepting Western investments, to no avail.⁹¹ Although the Soviets welcomed Iraqi control over its own oil, Moscow did not have the capacity to replace all Western companies if the West was to embargo Iraq in retaliation for Baghdad's nationalization of the IPC. But Moscow was now worried that Western companies would be welcomed back into Iraq with open arms, lessening the Kremlin's sway over Baghdad.⁹² As oil prices continued to rise, the cooperation between Westerners and Iraqis in the oil industry continued to frustrate Soviet ambitions in Baghdad.

The quantity of arms sent to Baghdad from Moscow fluctuated as tensions between the two ebbed and flowed. Moscow was aware of Iraq's pursuit of Western arms, and it was concerned, knowing that acquiring Western arms weakened Iraq's dependence on the Soviet Union. But the Kremlin was patient. It did not rush to fulfil all Iraqi orders or inundate Iraq with more material—in some cases, delays were implemented on agreements and orders coming from Baghdad as means to punish Iraq and as a way to avoid being manipulated by the Ba'athists. When the Kurds rebelled in 1974, the Iraqis desperately turned to Moscow for aid, and Moscow was willing to give it, provided that certain political conditions were met in return. But when Moscow delayed its response to Iraqi requests, Iraq concluded that it could not depend on just

⁹⁰ Although, at first, American companies were "pointedly snubbed by the Iraqis throughout the negotiations." Memo for HAK from State, 3 March 1973, "Settlement to Iraqi Oil Dispute," Iraq, Iran Vol V. May 73-Dec 73 to Iraq Vol 1. Box 603, NSC Files, Country Files—Middle East, RMNL.

⁹¹ Telegram from Baghdad USINT to the Secretary of State, 2 August 1974, Iraq, Iran Vol V. May 73-Dec 73 to Iraq Vol 1. Box 603, NSC Files, Country Files—Middle East, RMNL. Oles M. Smolansky and Bettie M Smolansky, *The U.S.S.R and Iraq: The Soviet Quest for Influence*. (Durham: Duke University, 1991), 58-59.

⁹² Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, 31 March 1973, "Country Assessment for Iraq," Document 208, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

one state for its economic and military needs.⁹³ However, despite being trapped in this perpetual cycle of tension—of give and get—neither party walked away entirely from the other, and the U.S.S.R. remained the major supplier of weapons to Iraq throughout the Cold War. Neither could walk away without hurting itself economically and without risking damage to what U.S. officials in Baghdad called the “prestige of [its] great power relationship.”⁹⁴

Embassy Organizations and the Office of Organizations Outside the Region

The Office of Organizations Outside the Region (OOR) was important among the foreign and domestic apparatuses of the Ba‘th Party. Originally named the Bureau Office of Arabs Outside the Homeland, it underwent organizational restructuring, including a name change, in 1982.⁹⁵ But the structure and missions remained largely intact. The OOR was the

⁹³ Paper Prepared in the Office of Current Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, May 1, 1975, “The Implications of The Iran–Iraq Agreement,” Document 286, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

⁹⁴Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, May 9, 1975, Assessment of Iraqi Regime After Rapprochement with Iran and End of Kurdish War, Document 288, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

⁹⁵ In 1982, the Regional Command of the Ba‘thist government was given control over foreign Iraqis by means of the embassies stationed in those countries. Branch Command (which ran second to Regional Command in terms of superiority) was now responsible for everything that occurred in its respective country and was required to report the regional secretariat. The reasons for the change in 1982, as postulated by Samuel Helfont, stem from three reasons. First, Michael Aflaq, the founder of the Ba‘th Party, was technically still in control of the National Command whereas Saddam controlled the Regional Command. Second, around this time, Saddam was shifting away from pan-Arab ethnic nationalism towards Iraqi-centric territorial nationalism. Lastly, the number of Iraqis living outside Iraq had increased substantially with Saddam’s official ascendancy to the Presidency and the turmoil of the Iran-Iraq War. There were two separate Regional Commands—Syria and Iraq—with hopes that one day the parties would reunite. Ba‘th Party hierarchy was divided first by local party divisions (which controlled neighborhoods or districts), then sections (which controlled small to medium sized cities), then branches (similar to governates), and finally to the regional command. Samuel Helfont, “Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba‘th Party as a Transnational Actor,” *The Middle East Journal* 72. No 2. (2018): 229-245: 222-223, 235.

umbrella institution for all Embassy Organizations (EO) housed in the Iraqi embassies abroad. Iraqis were able to conduct specific diplomatic and political missions, such as the courting of local media, influential politicians, and soft-power groups such as women's and student groups. These types of political operations were designed to influence foreign governments and non-state actors to support Iraqi causes across the globe. As the EOs ran operations to garner favor with officials in the government, the Iraqis were also seeking soft-power support in countries where their embassies were located.

By the end of the Cold War, the Iraqis had 69 EOs running out of various embassies.⁹⁶ Political and media personalities, political parties, elections, election systems, political movements, and important events were tracked and reported in depth by the EOs; these reports were then transmitted throughout the bureaucracy of the Ba'ath Party, not through diplomatic Ba'ath Party channels. These activities were conducted in many countries. The BRCC dataset in the Hizb al-Ba'ath records includes information on EO operations in Austria, Turkey, Indonesia, France, Pakistan, Malaysia, Belgium, Netherlands, Romania, Poland, Spain, East Germany, Kenya, Bangladesh, Cuba, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Sweden, Vietnam, Hungary, Australia, New Zealand, and the U.S.S.R.⁹⁷ The BRCC dataset also shows the

⁹⁶ A list of all countries can be found within the BRCC dataset. See "Untitled," 0718, BRCC 003-4-2, HB, HIA. Also cited in Helfont, "Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba'ath Party as a Transnational Actor," 223. A list of all countries with student branches can be found within the BRCC dataset. See "Untitled," 1993, 0605, BRCC 033-4-2, HB, HIA. Also cited in Helfont, "Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba'ath Party as a Transnational Actor," 237. Helfont notes an anomaly with Russia—the branch in Russia reported to a branch in the regional command secretariat, not directly to the regional command secretariat itself. For more, see Helfont, "Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba'ath Party as a Transnational Actor," 235n31.

⁹⁷ Researchers interested in the EOs should really consult Box 2099-0000 within the BRCC. For Great Britain see (0313-0342) France (0416-0425), Pakistan (0435-0447), Finland (0465-0469), Romania (0488-0502), for example. See also Activities Report, 1990/2/14, 0277-0284, BRCC 3268-0002, HB, HIA. There are many more countries and EO reports throughout the BRCC dataset, many of whom are not listed in this section.

complicated ways in which the bureaucracy of the EOs functioned; debates over party membership, promotions, and policy were all recorded in the documents.⁹⁸ The Ba‘thist regime’s bureaucracy reigned supreme in Baghdad and abroad.

Iraqi students were crucial in these operations. Iraqi students were organized by the Ba‘th into the “National Union of Students and Youth of Iraq.” In many cases, the student groups operated on foreign campuses, including a few in the United States, and they published their own newsletters and pamphlets.⁹⁹ Many of the Iraqi students studying abroad were able to do so because of grants and scholarships from various ministries of the government. Failure to do well in school or failure to uphold their mission could result in termination of the grant and a forced return to Iraq. The Ba‘th organized Iraqi women into the “General Union of Iraqi Women,” which also had foreign chapters operating abroad.¹⁰⁰ Supposedly, these groups operated independently from the Iraqi government as they collaborated with local groups to promote Iraqi interests within their respective countries. The truth, however, is that they were controlled by the party.

⁹⁸ Telegraph Cable, 1986/5/15 (0114), 1986/5/13 (0115) 1986/5/13 (0116), and Party Badge, 1986/6/15 (0120), 1986/5/6 (0126, 0127), 0114-0116, 0120, 0126-0127, BRCC 2807-0002, HB, HIA.

⁹⁹ For example, a Ba‘thist agent was working on Mississippi State University’s campus in Starkville, MS in 1989. See 0722, Box 3342-0003, HB, HIA. Newspaper, 1986/5/12, 0073-0074, BRCC 3863-000, HB, HIA. In Russia, for example, the student organization was so large that it was able to form its own party section within the EO. “[Name redacted] letter to United Russia Section Command to Founding Leader Branch Command,” 24 June 2002, 0183, BRCC 2382-0002. HB, HIA. For more on the student and women’s groups, see Helfont, “Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba‘th Party as a Transnational Actor,” 229-245: 237-239.

¹⁰⁰ For example, see Activities of the General Federation of Iraqi Women in Moscow, 1985/1/22, 0261-0262, BRCC 3885-0001, HB, HIA. For a list of the chapters as of 1993 see Information, 1/30/1993, 0561-0564, BRCC, 033-4-2, HB, HIA. Also cited in Helfont, “Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba‘th Party as a Transnational Actor,” 229-245: 238n50.

The EOs collected intelligence and information on any potential opposition to the Ba‘thist regime such as dissidents and communists.¹⁰¹ Through their embassies and the EOs, they carried out surveillance operations against their own fellow citizens, political opponents, persons of interest, and just about anyone or anything the Iraqi state viewed as important. They also organized kidnappings, committed assassinations, and employed other forms of violence to intimidate and terrorize both non-Iraqis and Iraqi citizens.¹⁰² Intelligence collected through the EO was used to control Iraqis abroad and at home. Intelligence collected at home was also sent to the respective EOs to force Iraqis abroad to be compliant.

Saddam justified the use of the EOs as means to help Iraqis living outside Iraq. According to Samuel Helfont, Saddam believed that the EOs could “stop” the problems of Iraqis living abroad and be able “to find suitable solutions for them.”¹⁰³ However, the truth of the matter ran much deeper. The EOs reflected the metastasis of the Ba‘th Party’s bureaucracy abroad, with the internal bureaucracy of the party replicating itself abroad in the countries’ embassies. Using a combination of “carrots and sticks,” Saddam and the Ba‘thists in Iraq were able to “[extend] their authoritarian system beyond its borders in an attempt to control Iraqis wherever they may reside.” However, the mere fact of Iraqis living abroad was dangerous for the Ba‘thist regime. The Ba‘th Party worried that this growing expatriate population created a poor image of Iraq abroad. As Helfont argues, the concern was that the high number of Iraqi

¹⁰¹ “Activities of the union branches outside of the region,” 23 August 1986, 0464-0530, BRCC, 3796-0001, HB, HIA, and “Hostile Publications,” 9 July 1986, 0573, BRCC, 3796-0001, HB, HIA, as cited in Helfont, “Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba‘th Party as a Transnational Actor,” 238n48, 238n49.

¹⁰² In East Germany, for example, the Stasi believed the Iraqis were recruiting and using Palestinian students to carry out attacks. Sassoon, “The East German Ministry for State Security and Iraq, 1968-1989,” 10-11.

¹⁰³ “Iraqis Residing Abroad,” 23 June 2001, 0048, BRCC 2382-0002, HB, HIA, as cited in Samuel Helfont, “Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba‘th Party as a Transnational Actor,” 229-245: 243n76.

emigrants “reflected poorly on the conditions” created by the Ba‘thist regime at home. In other words, if conditions were good at home, why were so many Iraqis leaving the country? Worse, these Iraqis could now access and even transmit dangerous information about the regime among themselves. Iraqis were also now capable of bringing in uncensored news from the outside world into Iraq.¹⁰⁴

EO Moscow

The Out of Country Organization Soviet Union was established in Moscow in 1976. EO Moscow was in charge of Iraqis in Moscow and Leningrad, but it also served as the hub for Iraq’s operations in the rest of the Soviet republics as well. There were external liaison centers operating in Baku, Tashkent, Odessa, and Kiev.¹⁰⁵ Iraqi students, civilian and military, were placed throughout the Soviet Union including Moscow, Baku, Astrakhan (a city located southeast of Volgograd), and many others.¹⁰⁶ EO Moscow was able to relay intelligence back to Baghdad from foreign sources, such as dissidents or those with pro-Iraq sentiments. For example, in 1983, in Kiev, Ukraine, a Libyan student passed along information to Iraqi intelligence, suggesting that Libyan students were standing with Iraq in its war with Iran. He also passed along intelligence that certain members of the Libyan armed forces, including Air Force commanders and other officers, had been exiled or executed for their pro-Iraqi stances. The information the student offered does not appear to have been well vetted. He claimed that he

¹⁰⁴ Helfont, “Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba‘th Party as a Transnational Actor,” 244, 245.

¹⁰⁵ Party summary of [comrade name withheld], 1992/7/15, 0033-0034, BRCC 3869-0002, HB, HIA. Party relations, 1986/3/24, 0115, BRCC 3854-0002, HB, HIA. New Regulations for Organizations, 1978/12/28, 0035-0036, BRCC 006-2-4, HB, HIA.

¹⁰⁶ Thanks, and report, 1984/8/10, 0064-0065, BRCC 2449-0002, HB, HIA. Report, 1985/7/14, 0038, BRCC 2760-0001, HB, HIA.

could not make this claim publicly, since doing so would cost him employment opportunities back home. Nonetheless, EO Moscow recommended passing along his information to Iraqi intelligence services in hopes of making contact with other Libyan officers who also held pro-Iraqi sentiments.¹⁰⁷

EO Moscow's satellite operations in the Soviet republics were also crucial for intelligence purposes, and they often confirmed Iraqi suspicions of self-contradiction in Soviet policy. During the Iran-Iraq War, for example, Iraqi intelligence picked up news—the alleged source was an Azerbaijani customs agent—that the U.S.S.R. was allowing the “passage of goods, food and weapons sent to Iran from North Korea and socialist countries to pass through [the Republic of Azerbaijan].”¹⁰⁸

The Iraqi military received training from the Soviet Union and members of the Soviet bloc. By the end of 1971, over 1,825 Iraqis had received training at various command and staff schools in the U.S.S.R., according to C.I.A. estimates.¹⁰⁹ In 1976, the C.I.A. also estimated that over 2,500 Soviet and East Europeans civilian technicians were working in Iraq, as well as about 1,000 Soviet military advisors.¹¹⁰ Iraqi pilots received training on Tu-22 bombers that were delivered to Iraq after the 1972 Friendship Treaty and the 1973 IPC agreement.¹¹¹ Although

¹⁰⁷ Information, 1983/5/31, 0133, 0134, BRCC 2958-0002, HB, HIA.

¹⁰⁸ Information, 1983/12/15, 0083-0085, BRCC 2498-0002, HB, HIA.

¹⁰⁹ Recent Trends in Communist Economic and Military Aid to Iraq, March 1972, CREST: General C.I.A. Records, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/C.I.A.-RDP85T00875R001700030031-3.pdf>

¹¹⁰ The Soviets in the Persian Gulf/Arabian Peninsula – Assets and Prospects, December 1976, CREST: General C.I.A. Records, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/C.I.A.-RDP79T00889A000900070001-3.pdf>. However, according to Telegram From the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, 1 July 1973, “Iraqi-Soviet Ties,” Document 219, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976, the figure of “1,000” Soviet advisors in Iraq was argued to be “as a good a guess as any.”

¹¹¹ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Iran, 4 October 1973, “TU-22 Bombers in Iraq,” Document 234, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

members of the Iraqi military trained in both the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc nations, the quality of their training was sometimes questionable.¹¹² The substandard quality of Soviet equipment, as compared with what was produced by Western sources, frustrated the Iraqis as well.¹¹³

Documents captured by American forces in Kuwait following the withdrawal of Iraqi forces in February-March 1991 detail how much the Iraqis relied on Soviet technology and training throughout the 1980s and into the First Gulf War. For example, technical manuals with details for building and running mobile chemical factories were captured as part of what is now the Kuwaiti dataset of the Iraqi Ba‘thist records housed at the Hoover Institution. Although the manual was published in Russia, handwritten Arabic translations are included. The manual details the truck’s purpose—to serve as a mobile chemical factory that could also be used to carry equipment for determining chemical concentrations and levels of nuclear radiation—and it also provides detailed graphics and illustrations showing the truck’s construction.¹¹⁴ Other records include Soviet artillery instructions, manuals, firing tables, and handbooks for weapons including 122mm gun howitzers, 120 mm M-75 Yugoslav-Soviet mortars, 120mm M-38 Russian mortars, as well as student notebooks containing notes on how to maneuver Soviet tanks.¹¹⁵

¹¹² For example, Iraqi pilots received little training in night flying and flying in all-weather conditions while being trained in the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. This information was provided by the C.I.A. to the United States Air Force regarding Iraqi and Iranian air forces. CRRC SH-GMID-D-000-840, Correspondence Discussing Cooperation between Iran and Syria, July 1981-October 1981.

¹¹³ Untitled Iraq-Soviet study, circa February 1986, Iran-Iraq War [February 1986] (5) Box 90192, OA 91834, 01840, 91843, William Burns Files, RRPL.

¹¹⁴ The manual captured was only the first part of a twelve-volume set. Russian handwriting can be seen on page 43 of the 55-page PDF document. Mobile Chemical Factory, September 1982, 06386, KIDS, HIA.

¹¹⁵ 122mm gun howitzer, June 1981, 07387, 120mm M-38 Russian mortars, March 1985, 07500, 12mm Soviet Mark 38 mortars, March 1985, 07386. Soviet tanks, circa August 1990, 06540, KIDS, HIA.

Four volumes of *The Military Anthologies Journal*—a military publication compiled predominantly from articles in Soviet and French military magazines—were also collected in Kuwait.¹¹⁶

Documents captured in northern Iraq also show the reliance of the Iraqis on Soviet training and technology. Police units in and around Sulaymānīyah were issued Soviet armaments, including Soviet-made pistols.¹¹⁷ Soviet and Yugoslav instructors taught Iraqi officers on various types of nuclear and chemical weapons, how to wear gas masks, and how to behave properly as officers, especially around civilian workers.¹¹⁸ To the frustration of Ba‘thist officials, Russian weapons such as Kalashnikovs also ended up in the hands of the Peshmerga, the Kurdish-controlled security forces operating in northern Iraq. This was because they were either stolen or neglected by the officers to whom they had been issued or else because the Soviets, and their Iranian allies, were also occasionally supplying the Kurds.¹¹⁹

Many Iraqi officers, including engineers, colonels, brigadier generals and major generals, studied in Moscow, taking engineering and science courses.¹²⁰ Military education

¹¹⁶ One article from the September 1980 issue, entitled “Psychological Warfare Planning and Psychological Operations Managing,” stressed the importance of youth conscription. *The Military Anthologies Journal*, 1983-1985, 07476 and 07516, KIDS, HIA.

¹¹⁷ The entire document was not scanned as of February 2019, and it remains bound in the original collection (Box 412, Document 4). Inventory of light weapons, 1983, NIDS, 1415918, PUK 18826, HIA.

¹¹⁸ Russian and Yugoslav instructors, NIDS, 0745044-0745074, PUK 01844, HIA.

¹¹⁹ Historians Joseph Sassoon and Aaron Faust have demonstrated the lack of discipline which plagued Iraqi military and police units in the northern. Problems ranged from theft—so much so that the military camps were forced to move outside cities to combat the crime rate—to forged military cards and to black markets. See Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*, 146-147; Aaron M. Faust, *The Ba‘thification of Iraq: Saddam Hussein’s Totalitarianism*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 109-110.

¹²⁰ Transfer voucher, 1985/2/10, 0428, BRCC 2540-003, HB, HIA, and Transfer Voucher, 1985/9/9, 0511, BRCC 2540-0003, HB, HIA. Enrollment, 1984/8/30, 0001-0002, BRCC 3372-0001, HB, HIA. Transfer voucher, 1985/2/10, 0428, BRCC 2540-003, HB, HIA, and Transfer Voucher, 1985/9/9, 0511, BRCC 2540-0003, HB, HIA.

abroad often centered on technical support elements, such as chemical engineering, mechanical engineering, and other scientific training.¹²¹ One student's diploma indicates that he attended Mikhailovskaya Kalinin Military Artillery Academy in Leningrad, graduating with his Master of Science in Engineering. He also received "excellent marks" on his diploma project, "Design of a Stationary Ordnance Repair Shop."¹²² Not all Iraqis had training this extensive. Sometimes courses and instruction in vocational training centers and engineering centers only lasted 15 days.¹²³ Some courses focused only on equipment repairs such as tank repairs. Officers could petition for further studies in the Soviet Union, often in post-graduate courses or other curriculum.¹²⁴ The same officer who graduated with his Master in Engineering in 1977 returned to the U.S.S.R. for specialization training in 1984.¹²⁵

Military officers could also enhance their career prospects by studying in the U.S.S.R. One officer who studied in the U.S.S.R. under a military grant rose through the ranks, becoming

¹²¹ Enrollment/Military Attaché, 1984/8/30, 0003-0004, BRCC 3372-0001, HB, HIA. Evaluation Certificate, 1978/4/18, Photo 0181, BRCC 3372-0001, HB, HIA. Officer Engineer Grant, 1978/9/12, Photo 0159, BRCC 3372-0001, HB, HIA.

¹²² He also completed courses and training in tactics, field artillery firing, higher math, physics, chemistry, Russian language, theoretical mechanics, descriptive geometry and drawing, electrical engineering, strength of materials, theory of mechanisms and machines and machine parts, fundamentals of thermometric, design and maintenance of artillery pieces, field artillery survey and fire control instruments, missile weaponry, powder charges, explosives, and ammunition, interior ballistics, exterior ballistics, theory, design and development, repair of field artillery pieces, radio engineering materials, technology of material processing, practical work on repairs of FA pieces, troop duty practice, and theory course projects. Diploma, M. Kalinin Military Artillery Academy, 23 June 1977, 0054-0055, 0329, BRCC 3372-0001, HB, HIA.

¹²³ Subject line scratched out, 1984/9/13, 0280-0281, BRCC 3372-0001, HB, HIA.

¹²⁴ Officer Petition, 1979/2/14, 0117, BRCC 3372-0001, HB, HIA. Military Training and education record, 1979/2/7, 0123-0124, BRCC 3372-0001, HB, HIA. Officer Engineer Grant, 1978/9/12, Photo 0159, BRCC 3372-0001, HB, HIA. Officer Petition, 1979/2/7, 0397-0298, BRCC 3372-0001, HB, HIA.

¹²⁵ Delegation to Soviet Union, 1984/8/7, 0284-0285, BRCC 3372-0001, HB, HIA.

a military attaché and then a party administrator.¹²⁶ Former military officers found themselves working for the embassy in Moscow and then back in Baghdad, transferred between the two offices; with their enhanced resumes, these officers also found their way through the Ba‘th Party’s bureaucracy, acquiring party membership and then working as military attachés.¹²⁷ In other instances, officers who worked with EOs as military officers returned to assume leadership of the military office within an EO as civilians later in their careers.¹²⁸ Some study grants were awarded as political prizes as well. For example, one officer was awarded a military grant to study in the U.S.S.R. because of his courage during the Iran-Iraq War.¹²⁹

The Iraqis, through their EOs, monitored and kept intelligence reports on both the status of their students and the operational practices of the schools in the Soviet Union.¹³⁰ Everything—absences, late arrivals, disciplinary actions, curriculum, library facilities, tutoring, teacher quality, and grade levels—was monitored and reported back to Baghdad.¹³¹ Students’ “partisan” and “union” activities were also tracked.¹³² Some students were expelled for poor academic performance; these decisions were made by either Soviet or Iraqi authorities, depending on the

¹²⁶ Transfer, 1983/8/24, 0167-0168, BRCC 2878-0000, HB, HIA.

¹²⁷ Transfer voucher, 1985/6/2, 0415-0416, BRCC 2540-0003, HB, HIA. Comrade name withheld], 1985/12/3, 0047-0048, BRCC 2449-0002, HB, HIA.

¹²⁷ Nomination, Basics, Delegation, 1982/5/25 (0060), 1981/2/22 (0064), 1981/2/18 (0069), 1976/8/31 (0074), 0060, 0064, 0069, 0074, BRCC 2936-0004, HB, HIA.

¹²⁸ Party summary of [comrade name withheld], 1992/7/15, 0033-0034, BRCC 3869-0002, HB, HIA.

¹²⁹ Evaluation Form, 1986/5/11, 0146-0147, BRCC 2878-0000, HB, HIA.

¹³⁰ Committee Decision, 1980/1/24, 0079-0080, BRCC 3372-0001, HB, HIA. Report, 1985/12/1, 0042-0045, BRCC 2449-0002, HB, HIA.

¹³¹ Iraqi Students in Moscow/ Response, 1986/1/9, 0037, BRCC 2449-0002, HB, HIA. Report, 1985/12/1, 0042-0045, BRCC 2449-0002, HB, HIA.

¹³² Report, 1985/12/1, 0042-0045, BRCC 2449-0002, HB, HIA.

circumstances.¹³³ Iraqi students were always under some sort of surveillance. The Soviets often vetted and monitored the students sent to Moscow, while Iraqi authorities remained suspicious of their students abroad. In some cases, ICP members were suspected of working with the Soviets, possibly in conflict with Ba‘thist interests—some of these accusations led to these students being recalled to Iraq, their passports being seized upon their return.¹³⁴

A paradox existed in Iraq’s wanting to send students abroad. Although they were important for soft-power influence and intelligence purposes, they also were dangerous in that they might also be corrupted by foreign manipulation. Worse, their performance and behavior could tarnish the image that Baghdad wanted their citizens and party members to project abroad. After completing his studies in Moscow, one student was accused of having engaged in activity deemed hostile towards Iraq. Another student began operating in the black market in the Soviet Union, which frustrated both the Iraqis and his Soviet hosts. A third student, based in Baku, Azerbaijan, physically attacked another colleague and was acting like a “playboy.” For their actions, all three had their passports revoked by Ba‘thist authorities. Nonetheless, after investigations and promises of future good behavior, all three had their passports returned. In the case of the student in Baku, the consulate was none too pleased with his passport being reinstated and with his return to Baku. The unhappiness in the consulate is yet another revelation of the bureaucracy and infighting between Baghdad and its satellite operations.¹³⁵

¹³³ Report, 1985/ 7 (?)/19, 0038-0039, BRCC 2449-0002, HB, HIA.

¹³⁴ Passport withdrawals, February 1990, 0398, BRCC 2490-0001, HB, HIA. For party bureaucracy and infighting over the decision and debates over the returning of passports, see Passport withdrawals, February 1990, 0399-0400, 0409-0412 BRCC 2490-0001, and Passport withdrawals, 1976/1-2/17-18, 0426, 0429, BRCC 2490-0001, HB, HIA

¹³⁵ Communist Soviet intelligence agents, 1975 or 1976/5/21, 0439-0440, BRCC 2490-0001, HB, HIA. Passport withdrawals, March 1990, 0388-0392, BRCC 2490-0001, HB, HIA. Passport withdrawals and returned passport, 1978/11/7 and 1978/9/7-26, 0415-0418, BRCC 2490-0001, HB, HIA.

Paranoia within the Ba‘th Party existed both in Baghdad and abroad. Party members constantly looked for collaborators, provocateurs, and saboteurs within the party organization and party memberships.¹³⁶ The Ba‘thist security apparatus relied on an excessive amount of bureaucracy. As Martin K. Dimitrov and Joseph Sassoon illustrate, streamlined printed forms served as the crucial means to “document, administer, and control” the Iraqi population. The apparatus relied on the Iraqi public to inform on one another. Informants and collaborators came from all socio-economic backgrounds and conditions—some did it for pay, some did it to save their own skins or the lives of their family members, while others were desperate for social privilege or elevation, such as licenses or permits. Information was often short on specifics and heavy emphasis and credence were given to rumors. Failing to report activity, even if the activity itself was not viewed as suspicious by the observers, was deemed suspicious in itself, thus continuing a cycle of family members, neighbors, colleagues, and others reporting on one another. All of this made repression less discriminate amongst the Iraqi populace, given the

¹³⁶ The Iraqis were also paranoid about diplomats within their own country and required all diplomats to obtain permission to travel outside Baghdad. Even then, these diplomats had to navigate Iraqi bureaucracy. According to American officials in Baghdad, “the procedure requires an application two weeks in advance, and the reply seldom comes earlier than one day before the planned travel. All too frequently, there are bureaucratic delays and the reply is received one day after the planned departure date, thus invalidating the permission.” American officials in Baghdad also noted that it was not just Western states who were enduring this but “embassies from countries considered to have excellent relations with Iraq.” As the U.S. government’s representatives in Baghdad remarked: “Delays of six weeks or longer are now routine as the volume of visa requests increases along with the accumulations of paper in the in-boxes of security officials. Approvals for trade missions and working level governmental delegations are also taking more and more time and several Embassies have had to cancel official delegations at the last minute for lack of official [Government of Iraq] sanction even though the planned visits had been originated by informal requests from the [Government of Iraq].” Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, 27 April 1976, “Problems in Implementation of Iraq’s ‘Openness’ Policy.” Document 307, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

quality of information against alleged targets.¹³⁷ Intelligence studies and reports were conducted on members of the Ba‘th Party, including those working within the EO. Often, investigations were carried out against members who had family members outside of Iraq or were eligible to obtain citizenship elsewhere —ties to Syria and Iran were considered the most dangerous. For example, an eleven-page security report on a Ba‘thist comrade working in Jordan who also had family members in Syria can be found within the BRCC dataset, and there were many others.¹³⁸

Students of Iranian and Syrian descent were especially problematic for the Ba‘thist regime, given the tensions Iraq had with both countries. These students were often viewed with even more suspicion, and Iraqi authorities often waited for their “inevitable” treachery. Two students were expelled from the Public Institute of Fish by Soviet authorities, prompting the Iraqis to cry foul.¹³⁹ EO Moscow reported that “the facts contradict with the Soviet Union commitment to failing students as the Union has deported a number of failing students out of the country. This contradicts with the communist nature of the Soviet Union.” Ironically, though, the first student, who was also Iranian, left the U.S.S.R. and probably headed to Iran after his family was forced out of Iraq. The second student was failing his classes and left for Syria; he did return to the U.S.S.R. on a Syrian passport to complete his studies.¹⁴⁰ The fact that these students were connected to Syria and Iran, respectively, more than likely confirmed Iraqi suspicions of their supposed subterfuge.

¹³⁷Dimitrov and Sassoon, “State Security, Information, and Repression: A Comparison of Communist Bulgaria and Ba‘thist Iraq,” 22-23, 27.

¹³⁸ Investigation, 1981/8/10, 0163-0173 (also see 0175-0186), BRCC 3166-0000, HB, HIA.

¹³⁹ This may have been at Kaliningrad State Technical University, which was originally the Moscow Technical Institute for the Fishery Industry.

¹⁴⁰ Report, 1985/12/1, 0042-0045, BRCC 2449-0002, HB, HIA.

In another instance, a student of Iranian descent, with his family based in Najaf, did not return to the U.S.S.R. after he was ordered by Ba‘thist officials to do so in the early 1980s. Iraqi intelligence tracked his family’s travels to Iran; and, when he neither completed his studies nor returned to Iraq, his passport was revoked, and his teaching fellowship was terminated.¹⁴¹ This student had traveled to the U.S.S.R. in 1976, when he was awarded a five-year grant to complete his studies including learning Russian. When the Ministry of Education urged that he return to Iraq, he refused, citing his wife’s health. Iraqi intelligence further alleged that his brother, who was in Iraq, sent him a letter warning him not to return home.¹⁴² A year later the former student was tracked down to Syria, where he had settled after his defection and was working as a private citizen. Most likely raising even more alarm bells in Baghdad was the fact that Syrian intelligence agents allegedly had begun feeding Iraqi Ba‘thists some information on this former student. The Ba‘thists were confused—was this information true or a ploy to lead the Iraqis on a wild goose chase? Although some Ba‘thist authorities believed this to be a plot to “create some kind of suspicion within the ranks of our party,” they also viewed these accusations as having some credibility because of the student’s family ties and defection.¹⁴³

Interactions with foreigners also worried the Ba‘thists, especially those who had military connections with Syria and Iran.¹⁴⁴ One case in particular saw EO Moscow alerting Baghdad that a Syrian colonel was studying at the same military academy where Iraqi officers were

¹⁴¹ Inquiry, 1983/1/9, 0061-0062, BRCC 006-2-4, HB, HIA. [Comrade Name Withheld], 1982/7/30, 0068-0069, BRCC 006-2-4, HB, HIA. Termination of Fellowship, 1982/7/7, 0105-0107, BRCC 006-2-4, HB, HIA. Family Report of [Comrade Name withheld], student fellowship/information, 1981/12/14, 0116-0117, BRCC 006-2-4, HB, HIA.

¹⁴² Information, 1983/3/24, 0056-0058, BRCC 006-2-4, HB, HIA.

¹⁴³ [Comrade Name Withheld], 1983/11/10, 0022, BRCC 006-2-4, HB, HIA.

¹⁴⁴ Information, 1981/4/6, 0412, BRCC 2958-0002, HB, HIA.

studying. However, in this case, the Syrian was willing to cooperate with the Iraqis as he “[complained]” about the current situation in Syria.” The Syrian even offered to help locate “Syrian infiltrators within our party.” EO Moscow was able to coordinate a meeting with the Syrian, who informed them that there were more officers like him who were willing to assist Iraq. He also confirmed that Iranians were being trained in Syria, and some training focused on preparation for operations along Iraq’s borders. The Syrian offered to coordinate future meetings, and he also confirmed Iraq’s worst fear. According to Ba’th Party reports, “the relationship between the Syrian regime and the Soviet Union is very strong and such strength was demonstrated with the camouflage of the just Iraqi war against the Persians.”¹⁴⁵

EOs in the Soviet Bloc

The states of the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe welcomed a relationship with Iraq as much as the Soviet Union did. This was partly because it satisfied their overlords in Moscow. Soviet leaders wanted Iraq’s relationships with these satellite states to further Soviet legitimacy. But officials in the Eastern bloc nations also had their own ambitions. This created an interesting paradox for the Soviets: Although they approved of Iraqi dependency on the Soviet Union, they would later wrestle with their bloc states’ initiatives to arrange separate deals with countries in the Arab world apart from what Moscow described.¹⁴⁶ When the Iraqis grew frustrated with the

¹⁴⁵ The Syrian officer also alleged that the Syrian regime was behind a plot to assassinate the Jordanian Prime Minister. Report, 1982/11/3 (0407)- 1982/11/21 (0403), 0404-0406, BRCC 2958-0002, HB, HIA. Information, March 1981, 0413-0414, BRCC 2958-0002, HB, HIA. Colonel [Name withheld], 1982/3/31, 0411, BRCC 2958-0002, HB, HIA.

¹⁴⁶ Isabelle Ginor and Gideon Remez, *The Soviet-Israeli War, 1967-1973: the U.S.S.R.’s Military Intervention in the Egyptian-Israeli Conflict*; Herf, Jeffrey. *Undeclared Wars with Israel: East Germany and the West German Far Left, 1967-1989*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

quality of Soviet technology, they turned to both the West and to Eastern European states instead, and the latter were often more than willing to fill the void. In some periods, especially in the mid-1970s, more contracts were going to Eastern European than to the Soviets.¹⁴⁷

The Soviets were pleased when in 1969, Iraq became the first Arab and the first non-communist country to recognize East Germany's legitimacy. East Germany had been looking, separately from the Soviet Union, for recognition among Third World countries.¹⁴⁸ Iraq's recognition of East Germany was predicated on the Ba'athists' desire for allies to stabilize their regime both internally and externally. In 1969, Iraq was embroiled in disputes over the territorial waters—the Shatt al'Arab waterway—with Iran. East Germany repaid Iraq's generosity not only by openly supporting Iraq's claims to the Shatt al-Ara waterway but also by sending East German intelligence agents, from the Stasi, to help the Iraqis develop their security apparatus.¹⁴⁹ A September 1969 Stasi report illustrated the difficulties ahead:

The Iraqi security apparatus is in no way up to the challenges and tasks of the new regime. So far the security apparatus was exclusively content with monitoring political parties in the country, like the Ba'ath Party and the Iraqi Communist Party. There was no department within the security directorate concerned with espionage and diversionary activities by imperialist countries against Iraq.¹⁵⁰

As the Iraqis became more dependent on the Stasi's assistance and requested more, such as bugging devices and training on how to run secret operations, the East Germans ran into the same difficulties that the Soviets had faced earlier. The East Germans were sympathetic towards

¹⁴⁷ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, 12 April 1976, "Saudi Query about Soviets in Iraq," Document 305, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

¹⁴⁸ Sassoon, "The East German Ministry for State Security and Iraq, 1968-1989," 6.

¹⁴⁹ The Soviets, for their part, did not support Iraq in this 1969 water dispute, choosing to remain neutral as means to maintain relationships with both Iran and Iraq. Shemesh, *Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988: in the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict*, 28-31.

¹⁵⁰ Sassoon, "The East German Ministry for State Security and Iraq, 1968-1989," 7.

the ICP, the very group on which the Ba‘thists were so keen to unleash their new capabilities. The East Germans were also not pleased with the May 1978 execution of 21 ICP members who had been accused of plotting treason. The Stasi began holding back on sharing some intelligence techniques; and, by the 1980s, citing the constraints and conditions of the time, the Stasi began “[engaging] in delaying tactics” as means to avoid explicitly rejecting Iraq’s requests.¹⁵¹

Beyond having effects on Iraq’s diplomatic relations and internal security, the Soviet bloc was also critically important for Iraqi trade, investments, and commodity exchanges. By 1976, the C.I.A. estimated, over 60% of Iraq’s foreign exchange holdings were deposited in the U.S.S.R., Hungary, East Germany, and Poland.¹⁵² East Europeans also contributed to Iraqi industry; for example, the Poles had sugar refineries in Mosul, while the East Germans owned a shipyard in Basra.¹⁵³ The Eastern bloc also served as an important arms conduit for the Iraqis as well.¹⁵⁴

It is no surprise then that the Soviet bloc also received attention from the Iraqis. By 1980, there were over 950 Iraqi students studying in 33 Soviet cities. Scholars estimate that just over half of these students were affiliated with the Iraqi Communist Party, while the other half were

¹⁵¹ The Ba‘thists also wanted the Stasi to share intelligence techniques, a request that was balked at since the East Germans were also assisting other Arab states. Sassoon, “The East German Ministry for State Security and Iraq, 1968-1989,” 8, 18.

¹⁵² The West, in comparison, held the other 40%, including 5% in New York City alone. Research Study Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, November 1976, Document 317, “Iraq Under Ba‘th Rule, 1968-1976,” *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

¹⁵³ Recent Trends in Communist Economic and Military Aid to Iraq, March 1972, CREST: General C.I.A. Records, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/C.I.A.-RDP85T00875R001700030031-3.pdf>

¹⁵⁴ Telegram to the Secretary of State, 04/27/82 from USINT Baghdad (Eagleton), Iraq, 1/20/81-12/31/83 [2 of 4], Iraq, Box 37, Executive Secretariat, National Security Council: Country File: Near East and South Asia (Middle East), RRPL.

affiliated with the Ba‘th Party.¹⁵⁵ Through the EOs, the Iraqis, continued to make inroads in diplomatic relations with members of the Soviet bloc. In part, this was meant to strengthen their influence in the Soviet sphere, but it also helped to secure support from individual members of the Soviet bloc, most notably East Germany and Czechoslovakia, both of which had their own diplomatic and political ambitions in spite of Moscow’s agenda.¹⁵⁶

However, this mutual understanding—of trying to bypass Soviet control—did not prevent tensions arising between Baghdad and the Eastern bloc. When Baghdad began pursuing Western goods and technology, especially in the aftermath of the 1972-1973 Iraqi Petroleum Company nationalization, many East Europeans were furious, even going so far as to complain to the French ambassador about Paris’ involvement with Iraq.¹⁵⁷ But the tensions were most notable within the borders of the Soviet bloc. Often, the Iraqis ran afoul of the host nations by attempting to carry out Iraqi domestic policy—the targeting and eliminating of communists and other undesirable political elements—abroad. The Iraqi regime, especially Saddam, saw the communists—both foreign and domestic—as tools of foreign intervention. As Saddam came closer to ascending to the presidency, he was convinced that there was a communist plot to overthrow him and the Ba‘thist regime.¹⁵⁸ In May 1978, 21 ICP members were arrested and quickly executed, accused of plotting and organizing subversive activities among the Iraqi military. Those killed included three Iraqis who had prior experience working in the Soviet

¹⁵⁵ See Dimitrov and Sassoon, “State Security, Information, and Repression: A Comparison of Communist Bulgaria and Ba‘thist Iraq.”

¹⁵⁶ For more on East Germany ambitions, see Herf, *Undeclared Wars with Israel: East Germany and the West German Far Left, 1967-1989*.

¹⁵⁷ Telegram from Baghdad USINT to the Secretary of State, 2 August 1974, Iraq, Iran Vol V. May 73-Dec 73 to Iraq Vol 1., Box 603, NSC Files, Country Files—Middle East. RMNL.

¹⁵⁸ Saddam did not assume the role officially until 1979, but long ran the country behind President Ahmed al-Bakr.

bloc; they were the former heads of the Iraqi missions to the Soviet Union, East Germany, and Hungary.¹⁵⁹ The Iraqis believed that the Soviets also had a hand in the affair, leading to even more tension between the two countries.¹⁶⁰

In December 1979, five Iraqi students were killed in Sofia, Bulgaria, when clashes between Iraqi communists and Ba‘thists broke out. In another example, in Tashkent (in what was then the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic) in March 1980, fights broke out between Iraqi communists and Ba‘thist students in the streets. Attacks were also carried out by Iraqi students in East Germany—there were over 108 Iraqi students in the country—who also targeted Iraqi communists and dissidents. In the summer of 1981, Iraqi “diplomats” with cars bearing diplomatic plates tried to kidnap an Iraqi dissident off the street; the dissident was only saved when a passerby intervened.¹⁶¹

Both Bulgarian and East German security and intelligence services believed these attacks were sanctioned by the Iraqi embassy, and this belief prompted them to provide protection for Iraqi students, dissidents, and even Kurds.¹⁶² But even this state-sponsored protection did not stop the Iraqi state from pursuing its domestic agenda abroad. Attacks often coincided with Baghdad’s displeasure with the state of relations. In 1985, for example, Iraqi students attacked

¹⁵⁹ Iraq-U.S.S.R.: A Downturn in Relations, February 1980, FOIA (C.I.A.),

https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001255354.pdf

¹⁶⁰ Ihsan A. Hijazi, “Iraq Cool to Soviet After Report of Communist Plot,” *NYT*, June 11, 1978,

<https://nyti.ms/1LxjZv3>. Special to the *NYT*, “Iraq Said to Execute 14 as Strain with Reds Grows,” *NYT*, May 27, 1978, <https://nyti.ms/1kiYTtC>

¹⁶¹ Sassoon, “The East German Ministry for State Security and Iraq, 1968-1989,” 9, 11.

¹⁶² Sassoon, “The East German Ministry for State Security and Iraq, 1968-1989,” 11. For a comparison of Bulgarian and Iraqi security services, see Dimitrov and Sassoon, “State Security, Information, and Repression: A Comparison of Communist Bulgaria and Ba‘thist Iraq.”

Iraqi communists in Dresden, after prompting from the Iraqi embassy to exert more pressure on East Germany.¹⁶³

These types of attacks also occurred in Czechoslovakia, another member of the Soviet bloc in which the Iraqis sought better economic relations and enhancement of the weapons trade.¹⁶⁴ In 1978, the Iraqi embassy initiated meetings with the Vice Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia in Prague to “help economic relations [and to] fill an economic gap.”¹⁶⁵ The embassy’s initiative was supported by the Foreign Ministry in Baghdad, illustrating the way in which embassies and EOs were granted considerable leeway by Baghdad to carry out missions that the embassy deemed appropriate.

Following incidents of Iraqi students clashing with Iraqi communists and dissidents in Czechoslovakia, the reactions from the country’s news agencies coupled with outrage in the Czech government over the violence spurred Iraqi Minister of the Interior Saadun Shakir to visit the country in March 1980. His visit was barely mentioned in the Czech press, which focused instead on a visit by Afghan officials. According to British intelligence, the Iraqis essentially invited themselves to the country and Prague had agreed only “reluctantly.” Even after Skahir left, the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) assessed that the “Czechoslovak response was none too enthusiastic in the aftermath of the fairly sticky talks about the Iraqi

¹⁶³ Sassoon, “The East German Ministry for State Security and Iraq, 1968-1989,” 19.

¹⁶⁴ The Iraqis supported the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in the 1968 Prague Spring. Shemesh, *Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988: in the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict*, 24. See also, Office of the Historian, “Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia, 1968,” Milestones: 1961–1968, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/soviet-invasion-czechoslavkia>

¹⁶⁵ Meeting with Vice Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia, 1978/1/30, 0158-0160, BRCC 3512-0002, HB, HIA.

emigres.”¹⁶⁶ The Iraqis tried again, this time with Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, the Vice Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council, who visited the country in May 1980 to discuss oil and refinery deals. The British FCO believed that Iraq was also concerned to maintain good relations with other members of the Soviet bloc and was therefore “anxious to mend fences with Czechoslovakia.”¹⁶⁷ Despite this concern, however, Saddam himself did not journey to Prague, a visit the latter very much wanted; instead he sent al-Douri as a compromise.¹⁶⁸

Just as they did in other Soviet bloc states, the Iraqis continued attacks in Czechoslovakia. In 1983, for example, students associated with the Iraqi Communist Party held celebrations in Prague to commemorate the July 14 Revolution—when the Iraqi monarchy was overthrown in 1958. EO Prague and the Iraqi embassy mobilized to label the ICP as provocateurs, alerting the Czech authorities that “an attack” was coming. The Iraqis even asked the Czechs to help end this celebration out of “respect [for the] relations between the two countries,” according to Ba‘th Party reports. When Czech authorities refused to block the celebration, EO Prague deployed their own forces, including students and other agents, to attack the communists. In the words of the embassy, there was a “shocked confrontation” and several communists and other Iraqis wounded. The police arrested one of the EO’s men and allowed the communists to hold their ceremony under the supervision of the police. In the end, the Iraqis were able to track down the Communist members who had participated in the riots, around 34 individuals, while members of the EO were congratulated by Baghdad for their participation.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Visit of Iraqi Minister of the Interior to Czechoslovakia, 30 April 1980, FCO 28/4082, Iraqi/Czechoslovak Relations, TNA.

¹⁶⁷ Iraq/Czechoslovakia, 1 June 1980, FCO 28/4082, Iraq/Czechoslovak Relations, TNA.

¹⁶⁸ Iraq/Czechoslovakia, 20 June 1980, FCO 28/4082, Iraq/Czechoslovak Relations, TNA.

¹⁶⁹ Skirmish, 1983/8/14-15 0267-0268, BRCC 3411-0003, HB, HIA. The full report is 0269-0273 (dated 1983/7/19). The list of members can be found on 272.

Saddam was informed of the events, and he even personally authorized the hospital treatment of Ba‘th members who were injured in the skirmish.¹⁷⁰

Throughout the decade, the Iraqis continued to monitor and attack members of the ICP. Party members were sent to represent the Ba‘th Arab Socialist Party at the 16th Communist Party of Czechoslovakia conference in 1986, for example. This attendance was merely for the sake of appearances, as the Ba‘thists were more interested in who was attending rather than in the conference program.¹⁷¹ Frustrations between the two states only continued to fester, especially after the end of the Iran-Iraq War. In a visit to Iraq, the Vice Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia pressured Iraq on its evasion of repayment of loans due to Prague. The Iraqis pressed the Czechs to agree to joint committee discussions about current debts and future economic relations, seeking to avoid a stall in relations because of Iraq’s unpaid debts.¹⁷²

China

The Iraqis did not focus only on the Soviet Union. Iraq actively sought relations with China, another communist superpower, to offset the influence of the U.S.S.R. Although Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr declared in Iraqi media that the U.S.S.R. occupied “‘first place’ in Iraq’s foreign policy,” the Ba‘thists also began looking to China as well.¹⁷³ Baghdad sought economic ties with Beijing, hoping the two states could work together in agricultural and industrial projects. As they did in the U.S.S.R., the Ba‘th Party created similar party organizations in China including an EO,

¹⁷⁰ Skirmish, 1983/8/2, 0300-0301, BRCC 3411-0003, HB, HIA.

¹⁷¹ Participation, 1986/3/4, 0003, BRCC 2895-0001, HB, HIA.

¹⁷² Visit of Czechoslovakia Prime Minister to Iraq and the meetings of the Iraqi-Czechoslovakian joint committee, 1989/11/19, 0260-0261, BRCC 3809-0001, HB, HIA.

¹⁷³ The Ba‘thists also did not side with either the Soviets or Chinese during the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s. Shemesh, *Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988: in the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict*, 24-25.

the Iraqi-Chinese Friendship Society, and other soft-power associations.¹⁷⁴ Since the ICP had supported the U.S.S.R. in its ideological battle against China in the 1960s, the Iraqis had little reason to worry about potential Sino-ICP cooperation, but their concern over ICP cooperation with the Soviet Union had been constant.¹⁷⁵ Iraqi-Chinese relations started slowly, largely due to issues outside Baghdad's and Beijing's control. In the 1960s, amid the internal turmoil caused by the Cultural Revolution, most Chinese ambassadors were recalled from the Arab world. The Chinese did not send a new ambassador to Iraq until December 1970.¹⁷⁶ At the same time that economic and trade relations were re-established in 1971, cooperation was originally limited. In the words of the C.I.A., the Chinese viewed the Ba'ath Party to be "bourgeois/fascist" and Ba'athist leadership to be "Soviet lackeys."¹⁷⁷

However, the relationship between the Chinese and Iraqis continued to develop throughout the 1970s for a variety of reasons. For one thing, the Iraqis were already frustrated with Soviet interference and with the relatively poor quality of Soviet technology. Second, the Syrians were also seeking assistance from the Chinese. The Syrians had been seeking Chinese aid since 1969, and they continued to do so especially in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War (October War) in 1973.¹⁷⁸ Iraqi intelligence reported that the Soviets had refused the Syrians' request for more weapons and other military aid unless they "enter in discussions with the

¹⁷⁴ Iraqi-Soviet and Iraqi-Chinese Friendship Societies, 1977/6/12, 0183, BRCC 024-4-4, HB, HIA. Invitation, 1977/10/23, 0416, BRCC 3119-0001, HB, HIA.

¹⁷⁵ Shemesh, *Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988: in the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict*, 8.

¹⁷⁶ The United Arab Republic was the sole exception to this mass recall. Shemesh, *Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988: in the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict*, 48n39.

¹⁷⁷ Research Study Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, November 1976, Document 317, "Iraq Under Ba'ath Rule, 1968-1976," *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

¹⁷⁸ Weekly Review: Soviet relations with the Ba'athists in Iraq and Syria, June 1969, FOIA (C.I.A.), https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000772106.pdf

Zionist enemy.” Furious, the Syrians instead went to the Chinese, raising alarm bells in Iraq and in the U.S.S.R.¹⁷⁹ According to the U.S. State Department, the Chinese were also concerned with potential Soviet “encirclement” over the region; if the Soviets secured the Middle East and India (which it had supported in its war with Pakistan in 1971), Moscow could control the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. With Moscow’s control over Central Asia, China feared that the Soviets would continue encroaching on China’s geopolitical interests and borders as well.¹⁸⁰

In a meeting between Chinese and Iraqi officials in China in 1974, the Chinese expressed anger that the Soviets and the Americans were so active in Europe and accused the superpowers of conspiring against them, hoping to reverse the revolution in China. They also attacked the U.S.S.R., criticizing it for its version of socialism and for its deployment of armed forces along its border with China. It saw the U.S. and U.S.S.R. as much the same, accusing both of having tried to prevent China from developing effectively. Beijing cited the superpowers’ opposition to China’s acquisition of the atomic bomb in the 1960s, and it alleged that Soviets had even moved factories from northern China into the U.S.S.R. in the aftermath of World War II.¹⁸¹ The aim was to keep China, in the words of the Ba’th Party, a “backward agricultural country.” In response, the Iraqis expressed sympathy and argued that they shared similar histories given their “socialist transformations,” including the nationalization of the IPC. The Chinese stated that they viewed the Soviet Union with more concern than they viewed the United States, and they argued

¹⁷⁹ Syria and Russian Aid, 1974/2/17, 0257, BRCC 3378-0000, HB, HIA.

¹⁸⁰ Memo for HAK from Harold H. Saunders and Richard T. Kennedy, 12 July 1973, “SRG Meeting on NSSM 182—“Implications for U.S. Policy on Probably Line of Soviet Strategy and Policy in the Eastern Mediterranean, Near East, Arabian Peninsula, and South Asia,” SRG Meeting—Soviet Strategy in Near East/South Asia, NSSM 182, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

¹⁸¹ Seymour Topping, “China Tests Atomic Bomb, Asks Summit Talk on Ban; Johnson Minimizes Peril,” *NYT*, October 16, 1964.

that any country's efforts to repair its relationship with U.S.S.R. had to be seen as detrimental to Chinese interests.¹⁸²

Iraqi officials were visiting China in 1974, hoping to secure more military assistance, citing Baghdad's need to protect itself from "conspiracies."¹⁸³ Although the Iraqis criticized the poor quality of airplanes that they had already received from the U.S.S.R., China put off making concrete promises to provide more military aid but did promise future talks. The disappointment of the Iraqis may have redoubled when the Chinese informed them that they wanted good relations with both Iran and Iraq and that they hoped for peace between the two, peace which would prevent foreigners from interfering in the affairs of both Iran and Iraq and in the affairs of the region more broadly. Iraq rejected these Chinese wishes for peace, arguing that Iran was "always trying to provoke and attack us unjustifiably, and the latest attack on our territory is only one of the series of aggressive Iranian plans against us." However, the Chinese government did not change its view, instead countering that Iran was a friend and that China would not attack Iran merely for the sake of Iraq.¹⁸⁴

This prompted the Iraqis to reply heatedly that since Iran had attacked Iraq—here Iraq was most likely arguing that Iran was "attacking" Iraq by supporting Kurdish groups in the northern part of Iraq, as well as by making claims for the Shatt al-Arab waterway—China should at least denounce Iran.¹⁸⁵ China responded that they could handle all different nationalities within their borders and questioned why Iraq was having so much trouble with just the Kurds.

¹⁸² Report on visit to China, 1974/2/16, 0078-0089, BRCC 3378-000, HB, HIA.

¹⁸³ These conspiracies likely included the Kurdish-Iranian-Israeli-American conspiracy that the Iraqis long believed was working against them.

¹⁸⁴ Report on visit to China, 1974/2/16, 0078-0089, BRCC 3378-000, HB, HIA.

¹⁸⁵ Juan de Onis, "Iraqi Says He'd Welcome Better Relations with U.S.," *NYT*, 15 July 1973,

<https://nyti.ms/1HiOGI7>

The Iraqis interpreted this response to be a cheap shot. They shot back, arguing that the Kurds did have legal rights and that it was merely Mullah Mustafa Barzani of the Kurdish Democratic Party who was causing the trouble, not the Kurdish people as a whole.¹⁸⁶ In their fight with the Kurds, the Iraqis were frustrated to find that the Chinese would not support them with the military hardware they requested in this meeting; however, there was some solace in the fact that the Chinese did not provide military assistance to the Kurds, either.¹⁸⁷

Although the Soviets had the upper hand over the Chinese in the region, Moscow would struggle in the 1970s and 1980s to ensure that it remained that way, always fearful that China could usurp its position. China was content remaining in the shadows, willing to wait for Arab states to come to them, whenever they were frustrated or disillusioned with the Soviets. As shown above, the fact that Syria sought Chinese assistance following its disaffection over Soviet terms for weapons trade, the threat was there. Despite the American embargo on weapons and goods imposed on Tehran following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the Chinese and Soviets, in the words of the British Foreign & Commonwealth Office, were “[vying] with each other for influence in Tehran by ensuring arms get through despite an embargo....”¹⁸⁸ As the British government saw it, even in the latter stages of the Iran-Iraq War, “the Russians are unlikely to leave the field to [the Chinese].”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Report on visit to China, 1974/2/16, 0078-0089, BRCC 3378-000, HB, HIA.

¹⁸⁷ The C.I.A. did believe, however, that China might have provided some under the table financial assistance to the Kurds. Research Study Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, November 1976, “Iraq Under Ba’th Rule, 1968-1976,” *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 317.

¹⁸⁸ The Superpowers in the Gulf and Arabia, 19 October 1987, FCO 8/6767, The Superpowers in the Gulf and Arabia, TNA.

¹⁸⁹ The Superpowers in the Gulf and Arabia, 19 October 1987, FCO 8/6767, The Superpowers in the Gulf and Arabia, TNA.

Even though the Chinese had not provided weapons to the Iraqis during their war with the Kurds, the Iraqis still sought Chinese arms and weapons. As the Iraqis grew more and more discontent with Soviet interference in Iraqi domestic affairs, the Iraqis moved closer to China by the end of the 1970s, continuing to buy weapons from them as well as from Yugoslavia, Romania, India, Vietnam, and Western European nations, most notably France. The C.I.A. interpreted the developing Sino-Iraqi relationship to be an attempt by Iraq to break away from Moscow and to instigate anger in Moscow as well.¹⁹⁰

After the talks with the Chinese back in 1974, Iraqi officials reported back to Baghdad that Iran was also aware of rivalry between the Chinese and Soviets, noting that the Shah had visited both the U.S.S.R. and China so that neither country would be upset.¹⁹¹ Unfortunately for the Iraqis, the Chinese also had great interest in Iran's economic and political potential. With the outbreak of hostilities between Iran and Iraq in September 1980, the Chinese attempted to remain "neutral," just as the Soviets had, refusing to pick sides openly but still providing both countries with weapons and other military equipment. Part of this stemmed from China's standing policy to avoid Soviet "encirclement" of the region, a fear that prompted the Chinese to support the now-deposed Shah in the 1970s.¹⁹² Toward the end of this war, the Chinese continued to shower both Iranian and Iraqi delegations with equal pleasantries, not hinting at which side they

¹⁹⁰ Iraq-U.S.S.R.: A Downturn in Relations, February 1980, FOIA (C.I.A.), https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001255354.pdf

¹⁹¹ Report on visit to China, 1974/2/16, 0078-0089, BRCC 3378-000, HB, HIA.

¹⁹² Memo for HAK from Harold H. Saunders and Richard T. Kennedy, 12 July 1973, "SRG Meeting on NSSM 182—"Implications for U.S. Policy on Probably Line of Soviet Strategy and Policy in the Eastern Mediterranean, Near East, Arabian Peninsula, and South Asia," SRG Meeting—Soviet Strategy in Near East/South Asia, NSSM 182, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

avored.¹⁹³ As the war was near ending in August 1988, the Chinese media even broadcast that China was seeking to “exploit new commercial/economic opportunities in both Iran and Iraq.”¹⁹⁴

The Chinese, with North Korea not far behind, were the largest foreign supplier of weapons to Iran during the Iran-Iraq War, supplying around \$3 billion USD worth military equipment, including 200 T-59/T-69 Tanks, 80 F-6/F-7 fighters, CSSC-2 Silkworm anti-ship missile batteries, surface-to-air missiles, and other equipment. The U.S.S.R. provided Iran only about \$1.5 billion USD throughout the war.¹⁹⁵ Despite China’s official statements denying that it was assisting Iran, Iraqi intelligence, as is clear in the BRCC dataset, was well aware that Iranians and Chinese were working together.¹⁹⁶

China blamed the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. for the region’s turmoil—at the U.N., the Chinese delegation argued that “the ambitious hegemonists, with a covetous eye on this strategically important region, are seeking every opening to sept up their infiltration and expansion there.” Yet the Chinese continued to furnish Iraq with weapons and supplies.¹⁹⁷ Still, China supplied Iraq with about \$6 billion USD of military hardware, including 1,500 T-59/T-69 tanks, 300 Type-59 towed field guns, 30 F-7 fighters, CSSC-2 Silkworm anti-ship missile batteries, surface-to-air missiles, and other equipment. They were third to the U.S.S.R. (\$30-45

¹⁹³ Visit by Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, 23 February 1988, FCO 21/3965, Sino/Iran+ Iraq [sic], TNA.

¹⁹⁴ Chinese visit to Iran, 19 August 1988, FCO 21/3965, Sino/Iran+ Iraq [sic], TNA.

¹⁹⁵ Pierre Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015), Appendix F (Foreign Military Assistance), 551-553. See also Pesach Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: A History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2017), 452, 459, 477-479.

¹⁹⁶ See Handwritten document, 0403, BRCC 3791-0002, HB, HIA. Rob Johnson, “Mustazafin and Taghutti: Iran and the war, 1980-1988” in *The Iran-Iraq War: New International Perspectives*. Nigel Ashton and Bryan Gibson, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 68.

¹⁹⁷ China/Iran: Reaction to the Airbus incident, 20 July 1988, FCO 21/3965, Sino/Iran+ Iraq [sic], TNA.

billion USD) and France (\$17 billion USD).¹⁹⁸ Meanwhile Iraq kept trying to work with the Chinese, sending high-level party delegations to China in hopes of securing future economic and military agreements.¹⁹⁹ Iraqi officials alleged that, while they were on a state visit to China in 1987, the Chinese told the Iraqis that they were alarmed by the global support for Iran and by the portrayal of Chinese material support for Iran as it was being given in the global media. Not buying this dodge, the Ba‘th delegation reminded them that “we sincerely doubt the Chinese position.”²⁰⁰

The Kurds

Located in the northern part of Iraq, the Kurdish people had been in conflict with the Iraqi government since well before the Ba‘thists staged their coup in 1968.²⁰¹ After withstanding Ottoman domination, the Kurds were given numerous promises and assurances of self-determination by the British. However, the British betrayed the Kurds and incorporated them into Iraq after World War I.²⁰² Instead of self-determination, London saw the Kurds as a means

¹⁹⁸ Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, 546. See also Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: A History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 452, 459, 477-479.

¹⁹⁹ Party delegation visit to Vietnam and China, 1986/4/29, 0680, BRCC 008-5-3, HB, HIA.

²⁰⁰ During the same state visit, the Iraqis tried to also court Vietnamese support. The Vietnamese informed the Iraqis that the Iranians had asked to buy American weapons left behind from the Vietnam War, but Vietnam has refused to do so. The Iraqis were also interested in political factions within the Vietnamese Communist Party, specifically between the Prime Minister’s factions and other military factions. The Vietnamese told Iraq that it too wanted to balance forces between China and U.S.S.R. Iraq wanted to invite certain Vietnamese members to Iraq, but it was waiting on turmoil within the Vietnamese Communist Party to settle down first. Country Visit Invite (Vietnam), 1987/2/26, 0351-0353, BRCC 3358-0000, HB, HIA. Ba‘th delegation visit to China and Vietnam, 1986/8/5, (trip occurred 1986/6/14-23) 0354-0355, BRCC 3358-0000, HB, HIA.

²⁰¹ Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: A History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 62-65.

²⁰² For more, see Reeva Spector Simon and Eleanor H. Tejirian, eds. *The Creation of Iraq, 1914-1921*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

to bolster the strength of Britain's control over Iraqi territory and to prevent Turkish encroachment into northern Iraq. According to David McDowall, the British used the idea of self-determination as a way to "[run] a quasi-colony without the expense."²⁰³ And yet, the Kurds, who are not ethnically Arab, struggled under this new Arab dominated regime. They resisted the new regime's centralization efforts (including the conscription of young Kurdish men into the Iraqi Army) and they resented the imbalance of power—in the favor of Sunni Arabs—in Baghdad. In the words of Eugene Rogan, the Kurds "presented a particular challenge to the integrity and identity of the Iraqi state."²⁰⁴

Tensions between the Arabs and Kurds escalated after the overthrow of the British-installed monarchy in 1958. Seeking autonomy from Baghdad, the Kurds rose in 1960 against the Iraqi government, then under Major-General Abdul Karim al-Qasim's tenure, in a rebellion that ultimately stalled the Iraqi Army. The rebellion ultimately contributed to Qasim's downfall and overthrow in 1963. After years of fighting, in 1970, the Iraqis and Kurds reached a ceasefire agreement that granted Kurdistan some regional autonomy and limited self-governance. However, shortly after, the Ba'athists launched an Arabization campaign in the north, in which Baghdad attempted to alter the demographics of the region by force, moving Arabs to the north and displacing non-Arab ethnic groups such as the Kurds and the Yezidis. By April 1974, the Kurds could take no more and launched their second major rebellion.²⁰⁵

Tensions with the Kurds coincided with the burgeoning of the Iraqi-Soviet relationship. The Soviets used the buildup and eventual outbreak of hostilities with the Kurds to deepen

²⁰³ David McDowall. *A Modern History of the Kurds*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 163. For more on the British betrayal, also McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 151-183.

²⁰⁴ Eugene Rogan, *The Arabs: A History*. (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 190.

²⁰⁵ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 302-322, 322-342.

involvement with Baghdad and Kurdistan, manipulating both entities' ambitions—stability and independence, respectively—for Moscow's gain. Aware of the Soviets' pursuit of a new treaty with Iraq—what would come to be the 1972 Friendship and Cooperation Treaty—and Soviet pressure on the Kurds to cooperate with Baghdad, the SAVAK, the Iranian intelligence apparatus, told C.I.A. officials that Iraq was “falling increasingly under Soviet domination.” These Soviet “inroads into Iraq” posed new concerns for the Shah's regime, as he also sought domination over the Gulf region.²⁰⁶

Although the Soviets had supported the Kurds since 1946, having an affinity for their leftist and nationalistic elements, Moscow wanted the Kurds and Baghdad to cooperate by joining the National Pact as means to stabilize the Ba'athist regime.²⁰⁷ The Soviets also wanted the Kurds to allow Iraqi military troops into the region. The Soviets were double-crossing the Kurds in that Moscow was promoting communism within Kurdistan while also trying to push for Iraqi-Kurdish cooperation. Soviet delegations were dispatched to the region, including a visit in November 1973 by Boris Ponomarev, the Chairman of Foreign Relations Department of the

²⁰⁶ Intention of Kurdish leader al-Barzani to approach the United States government for assistance; Iranian intelligence request for expression of United States government willingness to overthrow the Ba'ath regime of Iraq, March 1972, FOIA (C.I.A.), https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0005715730.pdf

²⁰⁷ Research Department Memorandum, “Iraqi-Soviet Relations, 1968-1973,” 25 January 1974, FCO 51/358, Research Middle East: Iraq-Soviet Relations, 1968-1973, TNA. Memo to HAK, 7 May 1974, “The Situation in Kurdistan,” Kurdish Problem VOL 2. February-July 1974, Country Files—Middle East, Box 138, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, RMNL. See also Henri J. Barkey, “The Kurdish Awakening: Unity, Betrayal, and the Future of the Middle East,” *Foreign Affairs*, 98 (2), (March/April 2019). For more on Soviet support for nationalistic movements see Donald S. Carlisle, “Stalin's Postwar Foreign Policy and the National Liberation Movement.” *The Review of Politics* 27, no. 3 (1965): 334-63.; Galia Golan, “Moscow And Third World National Liberation Movements: The Soviet Role.” *Journal of International Affairs* 40, no. 2 (1987): 303-24.; Yahia H. Zoubir, “The United States, the Soviet Union and Decolonization of the Maghreb, 1945-62.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 31, no. 1 (1995): 58-84.; Hashim Behbehani, *The Soviet Union and Arab Nationalism, 1917-1966*. (London: Kegan & Paul. 1987).

Soviet Central Committee, as means to keep ties strong.²⁰⁸ However, the Soviets wanted a stabilized Iraqi regime first, and so their support for Kurdish independence was sidelined. But even Baghdad was not able to have its cake and eat it too. According to Lebanese sources, the Iraqis ran to Moscow immediately after the Kurdish rebellion broke out, seeking weapons such as the MIG-23 fighter and Sukhoi-class aircraft along with other materiel. In return, the government in Baghdad professed to be willing to cooperate with Moscow-affiliated communists.²⁰⁹ In giving military assistance to the Iraqis, the Soviets actively jammed Kurdish radio and assisted in Iraq's air campaign.²¹⁰

Fearing that the Kurds were in danger and with the Soviet Union refusing to help them, Mustafa al-Barzani sought assistance from the Americans and the Israelis.²¹¹ The Americans would arm and supply the Kurds, under the guise of refugee relief, by diverting arms and finances through Iran.²¹² The National Security Council saw the Kurdish rebellion as an

²⁰⁸ Memo to HAK, 7 May 1974, "The Situation in Kurdistan," Kurdish Problem VOL 2. February-July 1974, Country Files—Middle East, Box 138, NSC Files, HAK Office Files. RMNL.

²⁰⁹ Article, 1974/3/20, 0173, BRCC 3378-0000, HB, HIA.

²¹⁰ Memo to HAK, 7 May 1974, "The Situation in Kurdistan," Kurdish Problem VOL 2. February-July 1974, Country Files—Middle East, Box 138, NSC Files, HAK Office Files. RMNL. However, according to Kenneth Pollack, the Iraqis had also "abandoned many of the Soviet methods it had acquired." After the October 1973 War, the Iraqis sent many Soviet instructors home, electing to only keep Soviet instructors who were needed to teach weapon and technical matters. As Pollack argues, "in most cases the Iraqis went back to their original British-based doctrine..." Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*, 177-178.

²¹¹ Intention of Kurdish leader al-Barzani to approach the United States government for assistance; Iranian intelligence request for expression of United States government willingness to overthrow the Ba'ath regime of Iraq, March 1972, FOIA (C.I.A.), https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0005715730.pdf

²¹² Telegram from Ambassador Helms in Tehran to General Scowcroft, 20 March 1974 and Memo from the President from HAK, 11 April 1974, "Further Support for the Kurds," Kurdish Problem VOL 2. February-July 1974, Country Files—Middle East, Box 138, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, RMNL. See also Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, 29 March 1973, "Continued Covert Support for the Kurds," Document 207, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976. See also

opportunity for the Soviet-Iraqi relationship to strengthen, arguing that “Baghdad and Moscow’s freedom of manoeuvre in the region will grow and the Iraqi regime, with Soviet backing, will be able to resume and expand its subversive activity in Iran, Kuwait, and other countries in the region.”²¹³ The Americans supported the Kurds because they feared a dangerous and radical Iraq that could threaten Iran, their favored ally in the region, and that could help bring the Soviets deeper into the region.

In March 1975, the Iraqis and Iranians signed the Algiers Accord, an agreement that granted the latter control of the Shatt al-Arab waterway in return for ceasing to provide arms and other assistance to the Kurds. Each side rationalized that the course of the Kurdish rebellion would not alter any time soon—barring any drastic change in foreign support—and so both Baghdad and Tehran sought to come to an agreement that would at least give one another something to show for as a result of this conflict.²¹⁴ In this sense, the Shah betrayed the Kurds in order to get extended control over the deepest parts of the Shatt al-Arab. This betrayal prompted thousands of Kurdish refugees to flee to Iran and Turkey, and it all but crushed the Kurdish rebellion. Even with Iranian support of the Kurds withdrawn, however, the Iraqi army still struggled in their campaign in the north, as the Kurds adopted guerilla-style tactics. By 1979, the

Bryan R. Gibson. *Sold Out? U.S. Foreign Policy, Iraq, the Kurds, and the Cold War*, 2015. Matthews C. Weldon, “The Kennedy administration and Arms Transfers to Ba’thist Iraq,” *Diplomatic History*, Volume 43, Issue 3, (June 2019): 469–492.

²¹³ Memo to HAK, 7 May 1974, “The Situation in Kurdistan,” Kurdish Problem VOL 2. February-July 1974, Country Files—Middle East, Box 138, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, RMNL.

²¹⁴ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 338-339.

Iraqis had lost over 16,000 dead.²¹⁵ When Saddam officially assumed the Presidency in 1979, he called for talks with the Kurds, thus ending this stage of rebellion.²¹⁶

For their part, the Soviets were not “enthusiastic” about the Algiers Accord as well, fearing that it created a stronger Iraq and a precedent for future Iraqi-Iranian cooperation.²¹⁷ The Americans judged that, because of the Accord, the Soviets could no longer take their relationship with Iraq for granted and that the Iraqis were going to maneuver beyond the realm of the 1972 treaty.²¹⁸ As the C.I.A. also argued, the Accord signaled the potential for “a different power balance in the Persian Gulf.” For the Soviets this could “further limit [their] influence in the area.”²¹⁹ The Syrians had a similar apprehension. At first, in late March, Hafiz al-Assad told the Americans that this agreement “has liberated a considerable portion of Iraq’s potential, and

²¹⁵ No author listed, “Kurds, Lacking Iran's Aid, Shift to Guerrilla Tactics,” *NYT*, March 12, 1975, <https://nyti.ms/1XVLgz6>. The Kurds were continuously harassed, targeted, and murdered by Ba’thist authorities in this period. USINT sources told the State Department that “approximately, two weeks ago six Kurdish professional men, including a professor at Sulaimaniyah University, were tried and executed for forming a secret political organization. Executions took place in the jail at Kirkuk, and in accordance with Iraqi customs, the families were informed and asked to pick up the bodies.” Adding to the tension, was the arrest of a Kurdish ICP member, who “was arrested and tortured in prison during the Kurdish uprising. He had been partly paralyzed as a result and had been kept in a prison hospital in Baghdad in recent months.” Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, December 11, 1976, “Situation in Northern Iraq,” Document 322, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

²¹⁶ Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: A History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 69-70.

²¹⁷ Research Study Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, November 1976, Document 317, “Iraq Under Ba’th Rule, 1968-1976,” *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

²¹⁸ Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Saudi Arabia, 12 April 1976, “Saudi Query about Soviets in Iraq,” Document 305, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

²¹⁹ Paper Prepared in the Office of Current Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, May 1, 1975, “The Implications Of The Iran–Iraq Agreement,” Document 286, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976. The Americans also believed this agreement, without Soviet initiative, illustrated that Iraq was not merely a satellite but that it sought to “act on [its] own principles.” Memorandum of Conversation, December 17, 1975, Document 302, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

even some of Iran's potential as a Moslem country.... There are certain other things which still exist among the Arabs, but the fact is there are no longer any basic problems among the Arabs...."²²⁰ But this sentiment was short-lived as the Syrians came to realize that they preferred Iraq to be embroiled in a Kurdish insurgency because freedom from its problems with the Kurds allowed Baghdad to resume its anti-Syrian propaganda and anti-Syrian agenda in the region.²²¹

After the Kurdish rebellion settled down, the north remained a key area of concern for Iraq. Its population—mostly Kurds—and its geographical location made the north a significant security risk for the Ba'athist regime. Bordering on Syria, Turkey, and Iran, with Central Asia and Soviet Union within reach as well, the north was a prime zone for weapons, arms, and human smugglers. Iraqi intelligence reports reinforced fears of foreign entities using the porous borders to weaken the Iraqi regime. One of the great fears was that Communists and Kurds were using foreigners to boost their cause. Those ICP members who had survived the numerous Ba'athist purges were reported to have ties with the Soviets.²²² Intelligence reported PUK founder Jalal al-Talabani's ties with China, France, Syria, America, Israel, and Great Britain as he attempted to garner international support for the Kurdish independence movement; his Syrian connections were particularly alarming for the Ba'athist regime given the legacy of hatred between Syria and Iraq.²²³

²²⁰ Memo of Conversation, 9 March 1975, Damascus, Syria. Hafiz al-Assad and Kissinger, Box 3, (7-22 March 1975, Kissinger's Trip—Vol. I (2), NSA, U.S.S.R., China, and Middle East Discussions, GFL.

²²¹ Paper Prepared in the Office of Current Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, May 1, 1975, "The Implications of The Iran-Iraq Agreement," *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 286.

²²² Jalal Talabani, report commissioned March 1989, NIDS, 1065978, PUK 11329, HIA.

²²³ Jalal Talabani, report commissioned March 1989, NIDS, 1065983, 1065991-992, 106596-77, PUK 11329, HIA.

Throughout Iraq's conflict with the Kurds, the Soviets supported Baghdad's efforts to quell the rebellion as means to prop up and protect a regime it saw as important in the region. In private, however, the Soviets were not thrilled by Ba' thist efforts to make peace with the Kurds. According to U.S. officials in Baghdad, Moscow saw the "benefits of keeping [the] Kurdish revolt alive as means of pressure on Baghdad."²²⁴ The more the Kurds threatened the Ba' thists, the more latter would lean on the Soviets, according to the thinking in the Kremlin. To maintain influence, Moscow still maintained connections with Kurdish national and communist groups throughout the 1970s and 1980s, a relationship the Ba' thists thoroughly resented.

In the latter stages of the Iran-Iraq War, Iraqi forces again moved on Kurdish groups in the north, carrying out campaigns of extermination and genocide, including the massacre at Halabja which saw villages massacred with chemical gas.²²⁵ Iraqi intelligence detected that "turncoat" Jalal al-Talabani had corresponded with the ICP, relaying information about the Iraqi army's use of poison gas to murder women, children, elderly, and Peshmerga. He asked the ICP to "implore the Socialist countries and the Communist Parties to condemn this heinous crime and request of the Soviet Union to protest and intervene to prohibit the Saddamite Gang from continuing its war of extermination against the Kurdish people, and ask them to stop the supply

²²⁴ The Soviets also believed that "there are powerful influences in Iraq at work to impede any significant turn away from Moscow." Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, October 24, 1974, "Resurgence of Soviet Activity in Iraq," Document 263, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976. Paper Prepared in the Office of Current Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, May 1, 1975, "The Implications Of The Iran-Iraq Agreement," Document 286, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

²²⁵ Williamson Murray and Kevin M. Woods. *The Iran-Iraq War: a Military and Strategic History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 332-335; Razoux. *The Iran-Iraq War*, 433-442; Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: A History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 368-373; McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 343-367.

of weapons to this criminal gang."²²⁶ Unfortunately for the Kurds, aid from Moscow, and the international community, was minimal at best.²²⁷

Syria

A key and constant source of tension between Moscow and Baghdad was Moscow's relationship with Damascus. The relationship between Iraq and Syria was already strained during the formation and development of the Ba'ath Party in the 1950s. After regional tensions and personal ambitions led the party to split between 1963 and 1966, the rivalry and hatred for one another only intensified as Saddam Hussein and Hafez al-Assad ascended to power in their respective countries. Their personalities and motivations clashed to the point that, allegedly, Saddam added Assad to his list of enemies.²²⁸

Wanting good relations with both Arab states, the Soviets had to draw a fine line, since neither Iraq nor Syria was happy with its patron also helping the enemy next door. Following the Ba'athist coup in Iraq in 1968, the C.I.A. predicted that Moscow would need to take a "carrot and stick" approach with both states. But since Baghdad and Damascus were so hostile towards one another, the agency continued, "it will behoove the Soviets not to take sides in their political struggles."²²⁹ At the same time that the Soviets attempted to remain neutral, especially trying to

²²⁶ CRRC SH-IDGS-D-000-718, Information about Iraq using chemical weapons against Kurdish villages, April 1987.

²²⁷ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 361-363. UNSCR 612 and UNSCR 620 were unanimously voted on, but little came from these. See <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/612> and <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/620>

²²⁸ Murray and Woods, *The Iran-Iraq War: a Military and Strategic History*, 34, 208. See Chapter 3: Iraqi Intervention in the Lebanese Civil War, 1975-1990.

²²⁹ The C.I.A. also wagered that more high level visits were possible, but that the Soviets would still "probably defer any decision on additional arms agreements" Weekly Review: Soviet relations with the Ba'athists in Iraq and Syria, June 1969, FOIA (C.I.A.), https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000772106.pdf

preserve ties after the 1972 agreement with Iraq, they did actively try to improve relations between the two.²³⁰ Moscow's pushes for reconciliation between Damascus and Baghdad were centered on protecting its bargaining power in the region.²³¹

In October 1973, during the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, the Syrians and Egyptians launched a surprise attack on Israel. Caught off-guard at first, the Israelis were able to push back, and the fighting ended with a U.N. ceasefire on 25 October.²³² This invasion did not catch the Soviets flat-footed. Between 1967 and 1973, they had been actively involved in Egyptian military buildups and, according to Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez, were “party to determining the date and operational outline” for the war to begin on 6 October.²³³ The Soviets so feared nuclear-armed Israel as an extension of the American nuclear threat that Soviet policy became “containment, then reversal of the Israeli gains by military means.”²³⁴ New scholarship suggests that the Egyptian government's expulsion of Soviet advisors—long characterized as the final nail in the coffin for the Egyptian-Soviet relationship—was merely a ruse to hide the number of Soviets within the country.²³⁵ But tensions over deployments, rising costs, blame over the course of the war, and the American push for peace ultimately led to the real “expulsion” of

²³⁰ Memo to HAK, 7 May 1974, “The Situation in Kurdistan,” Kurdish Problem VOL 2. February-July 1974, Country Files—Middle East, Box 138, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, RMNL.

²³¹ Kienle in *Ba‘th v Ba‘th: The Conflict Between Syria and Iraq, 1968-1989*, 1991, 151.

²³² For a quick recap, see <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/arab-israeli-war-1973>

²³³ Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez, *The Soviet-Israeli War, 1967-1973: the U.S.S.R.'s Military Intervention in the Egyptian-Israeli Conflict*, xv.

²³⁴ Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez, *The Soviet-Israeli War, 1967-1973: the U.S.S.R.'s Military Intervention in the Egyptian-Israeli Conflict*, 13.

²³⁵ Edward R. F. Sheehan, “Why Sadat packed off the Russians,” *NYT*, August 6, 1972, <https://nyti.ms/1kNjsPo>. In *The Soviet-Israel War, 1967-1973: The U.S.S.R.'s Military Intervention in the Egyptian-Israel Conflict*, Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez argue that the Americans had sanctioned this “expulsion” of Soviet advisors beforehand.

the Soviets from Egypt. In the words of Ginor and Remez, “1972 was mostly a feint, after 1973 it became a reality.”²³⁶

The Syrians were humiliated in this war. The Israeli military pushed Syrian forces beyond their original starting positions and reached locations from which they could easily shell Damascus. The Israelis even occupied more territory on the Golan Heights after the war. Soviet advisors worked with the Syrians during this war, but tensions existed between Soviet officers and Syrian soldiers – the latter were frustrated with the former’s sense of superiority. This was especially hard to reconcile given just how ineffective Soviet training and arms were against the Israeli forces by the war’s end. Following the ceasefire, Syria refused to participate in the peace talks in Geneva. Iraqi intelligence picked up that the Soviets had refused Syrian requests for more weapons and other military aid unless they “enter in discussions with the Zionist enemy.” Furious, the Syrians instead went to the Chinese, raising alarms bells in Iraq and the U.S.S.R.²³⁷

Since the Yom Kippur War, the Americans had been pushing for a formalized peace deal among the Arabs and Israelis. The Soviets resented these initiatives led by the U.S. government to mediate peace, especially between Egypt and Israel—in what later culminated in the Camp David Accords—viewing this as an American attempt to assume control over the Arab world.²³⁸ In attempts to subvert the U.S. effort, the Soviets sought to encourage Iraqi-Syrian friendship,

²³⁶ Isabelle Ginor and Gideon Remez, *The Soviet-Israeli War, 1967-1973: the U.S.S.R.’s Military Intervention in the Egyptian-Israeli Conflict*, 357.

²³⁷ Syria and Russian Aid, 1974/2/17, 0257, BRCC 3378-0000, HB, HIA.

²³⁸ The Soviets were trapped in this regard—if they supported the peace process, they risked upsetting Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Syria’s Assad while also giving the Americans more influence in the region. If they did not support the peace process, they risked another war, as well an end to the U.S.-U.S.S.R. détente in the Middle East. Telegram, “Syrian-Soviet Relations”, from Damascus, circa April 1974, Syria, Saudi Arabia Vol V. Jan 1974-April 1974 to Syria Vol 1. Box 631, NSC Files, Country Files—Middle East, RMNL.

angling for their unity to create a “united eastern front.”²³⁹ Syrian and Iraqi military delegations were invited to the U.S.S.R., and the Soviets even arranged for a meeting between Assad and Saddam in Moscow. The Iraqis were also probing the chances for reconciliation, since they too sought the mantle of leadership within the Arab world.²⁴⁰ Given Syria’s frustrations with the war in Lebanon, the Golan Heights occupation, and tensions with Israel, some observers wagered that Damascus would pursue Baghdad as a partner in confronting these issues together.²⁴¹ Unfortunately for the Soviets, things were not this simple. Around the same time, Iraq was also carrying out another round of anti-communist purges and was urging the Syrians to reject UNSCR 242.²⁴² There were other concerns, too. The Soviets did not want an emboldened alliance of Syria and Iraq to increase tensions along the Israeli border, because the last thing the Soviets wanted was another Arab-Israeli war.²⁴³

The Americans all but rejoiced in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, since the war severely damaged the credibility of Soviet offers of military assistance and Soviet diplomacy. State Department officials in Damascus argued that “[the] future for the West and particularly the United States is bright because in the long run the main enemy of the Soviets in the Middle

²³⁹ Appraisal of Soviet attitude on Syria Iraq rapprochement, November 1978, CREST: General C.I.A. Records, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/C.I.A.-RDP81B00401R002300200003-5.pdf>

²⁴⁰ Telegram from the Department of State to the United States Interests Section in Baghdad, 24 March 1979, “Iraq: An Anglo-American Perspective,” Document 136, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVIII, Middle East Region; Arabian Peninsula. Also, see Chapter 3: Iraqi Intervention in the Lebanese Civil War, 1975-1990.

²⁴¹ Telegraph to Secretary of State Washington DC, from Ambassador in Damascus, Subject: “Syrian Pessimism,” Box 3, (7-22 March 1975, Kissinger’s Trip—Vol. I (8), NSA, U.S.S.R., China, and Middle East Discussions, GFL.

²⁴² This UNSCR was issued following the 1967 Six Day War. It called for Israel to withdraw from conquered territories in exchange for peace, a condition the Arab states saw as granting recognition of Israel, something many could not accept. For more see, UNSCR 242, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/242>

²⁴³ Appraisal of Soviet attitude on Syria Iraq rapprochement, November 1978, CREST: General C.I.A. Records, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/C.I.A.-RDP81B00401R002300200003-5.pdf>

East will be the Soviet system itself and the Arabs are well aware of this fact.”²⁴⁴ Despite high-level visits, arms sales, economic assistance, and infrastructure projects along the Euphrates River, the Soviets could not control, pressure, or manipulate Assad into joining the Arab-Israeli negotiations. As the Syrians relayed to the Americans, “We are masters in our own house and both the Soviets and the Americans should understand and believe this.”²⁴⁵

Both the Syrians and the Iraqis began moving to keep their distance from Moscow. Soviet support for the Syrians, including Soviet “acquiescence in the Syrian intervention in [the Lebanese Civil War]” and Soviet refusal to side with Iraq in its dispute with Syria over dams along the Euphrates River, left Iraq feeling especially frustrated and disappointed with the progress of the relationship with Moscow.²⁴⁶ In fact, there was some speculation by U.S. officials in Baghdad that the Soviets were “tacitly supporting Syria in the Euphrates water conflict to show their disgruntlement with Iraq” when Iraq began opting for Western arms and supplies over what the Soviet Union offered.²⁴⁷ Nor did it help that the Soviets were selling Iraqi oil to Eastern and Western Europe for hard currency and doing so at prices higher than what the

²⁴⁴ The gloating continued, with the USG believing the Soviets must know in “their heart of hearts” nothing can be certain in the Middle East, no matter what the Arabs tell them.” Telegram, “Syrian-Soviet Relations”, from Damascus, circa April 1974, Syria, Saudi Arabia Vol V. Jan 1974-April 1974 to Syria Vol 1. Box 631, NSC Files, Country Files—Middle East, RMNL.

²⁴⁵ The American government also believed that Soviets would not be that desperate to orchestrate an assassination or coup d’état. Even then, his military protection and domestic prestige would likely prevent any positive outcome for the Soviets. Telegram, “Syrian-Soviet Relations,” from Damascus, circa April 1974, Syria, Saudi Arabia Vol V. Jan 1974-April 1974 to Syria Vol 1. Box 631, NSC Files, Country Files—Middle East, RMNL.

²⁴⁶ See Chapter 3: Iraqi Intervention in the Lebanese Civil War, 1975-1990.

²⁴⁷ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, May 9, 1975, Assessment of Iraqi Regime After Rapprochement with Iran and End of Kurdish War, Document 288, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

Iraqis had sold it for, taking advantage of the oil crisis that followed the Yom Kippur War.²⁴⁸ As U.S. officials in Baghdad noted, the “Iraqi regime has pushed hard for more Soviet support in its bitter dispute with the Syrian regime but has little to show for its efforts.”²⁴⁹ There was little the Soviets could do because, if they decided to cut off assistance, they risked a loss of hard currency (generated through arms sales), access to oil, and influence in the region. Baghdad was furious with Soviet overtures towards Damascus, viewing Moscow’s advances as evidence of double-crossing. But Iraq did not compromise its ambitions in the region. Instead, it refused to yield to Soviet demands and to beg for more of Moscow’s attention because Baghdad knew that the Soviets would neither completely abandon Iraq nor remained satisfied with just Damascus in hand. By attempting to play off two rivals, the Soviets boxed themselves into a very difficult position, one from which they could not properly escape without damaging relations with one or both rivals.

²⁴⁸ Research Study Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, November 1976, Document 317, “Iraq Under Ba‘th Rule, 1968-1976,” *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976. See Karen Merrill, *The Oil Crisis of 1973-1974: A Brief History with Documents*. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2007); Edward Cowan, “A Year of Costly Oil and Abrupt Changes,” *NYT*, October 13, 1974, <https://nyti.ms/1XVvmVw>

²⁴⁹ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State and the Embassy in Iran, 6 November 1976, “Iraqi-Soviet Relations,” Document 319, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976. See also Mark Dohrmann and Robert Hatem, “The Impact of Hydro-Politics on the Relations of Turkey, Iraq, and Syria.” *Middle East Journal* 68, no. 4 (2014): 567-83. Hamid, Bayann, Jasmine Lief, Natasha Murtaza, and Chris Toensing. “Iraq’s Water Woes: A Primer.” *Middle East Report*, no. 254 (2010): 19-23. The Americans mused that the “decrease in Soviet leverage or influence on Iraq will not produce a corresponding increase or improvement in American-Iraqi relations. There is no reason to assume that Iraq will use its increased contacts with the West and the U.S. to counter Soviet influence in the country...” Research Study Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, November 1976, Document 317, “Iraq Under Ba‘th Rule, 1968-1976,” *FRUSA*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII; Iran; Iraq, 1973-1976.

Iran-Iraq War

The Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979 in order to save the Soviet-backed communist regime, led by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, as it struggled to survive against the Islamic insurgency of the Mujahideen which was spreading throughout the country. The U.S. government was quick to condemn the invasion, moving to isolate the Soviets diplomatically while simultaneously arming and financing the Islamic fighters.²⁵⁰ To the Arab world, this invasion was shocking: the Soviets were friendly with the majority of Arab states, and a war against Muslims was too hard to stomach.²⁵¹

Before the invasion began, Iraqi-Soviet relationship had reached a low point. For one thing, Iraq was frustrated with Soviet ambitions in East Africa and South Yemen; in both places, Soviet aspirations were in opposition to Iraq's interests.²⁵² Second, according to Saddam, the ICP, with Soviet help, had tried to launch a pro-Soviet military coup. This came after the bloody Ba'athist campaign in 1978 to expel and exterminate all remaining communist elements within the country. Third, the Iraqis were frustrated with Soviet overtures towards Syria.²⁵³ Because of these incidents, Saddam had become more vocal in opposing Soviet policies, and according to

²⁵⁰ For more, see Lawrence Wright, *Ghost Wars, The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. (New York: Knopf, 2007); Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the C.I.A., Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. (London: Penguin Group, 2004); Aaron O'Connell, *Our Latest Longest War: Losing Hearts and Minds in Afghanistan*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

²⁵¹ Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, 74. Artemy Kalinovsky, "The Soviet Union and the Iran-Iraq War," 230-232, 234. Also see Newell, Richard S. "International Responses to the Afghanistan Crisis." *The World Today* 37, no. 5 (1981): 172-81.

²⁵² National Intelligence Estimate, 21 June 1979, "Iraq's Role in the Middle East," Document 137, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume XVIII, Middle East Region; Arabian Peninsula. See Chapter 4: Iraqi Foreign Policy in East Africa.

²⁵³ Iraq-U.S.S.R.: A Downturn in Relations, February 1980, FOIA (C.I.A.), https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001255354.pdf

the U.S government, he made several public and “authoritative” statements against the Soviet Union.²⁵⁴ Iraq also likened Moscow’s “influence of domestic politics through military assistance” to what the U.S. government routinely did.²⁵⁵

The year 1979 also saw the fall of the Shah’s regime in Iran.²⁵⁶ Although they embraced the revolution belatedly, waiting for the Shah to leave the country, the Soviets rejoiced that Iran was no longer a hub for U.S. control in the region. James Clay Moltz and Dennis B. Ross argue that the Soviets believed that they could “rush into the vacuum created by the U.S. expulsion.”²⁵⁷ The Iranians resisted Soviet overtures. Eager to free themselves from all imperialism and Western influence, the new Iranian government effectively lumped the Soviets in with the Americans. Still, the removal of the Shah and the collapse of the U.S. strategic orientation in the region gave the Soviets hope that Iran, the long-awaited prize, might actually turn to Moscow. Despite the 1972 treaty with Iraq, the Soviets began tilting towards Iran, ready for Tehran to come around to Moscow.²⁵⁸

Frustrated with Soviet endeavors, Saddam started pushing Iraq beyond the confines of the Soviet sphere of influence by increasingly relying on the West, primarily France, Italy, and Japan,

²⁵⁴ Untitled Iraq-Soviet study, circa February 1986, Iran-Iraq War [February 1986] (5) Box 90192, OA 91834, 01840, 91843, William Burns Files, RRPL.

²⁵⁵ Untitled Iraq-Soviet study, circa February 1986, Iran-Iraq War [February 1986] (5) Box 90192, OA 91834, 01840, 91843, William Burns Files, RRPL.

²⁵⁶ Office of the Historian, “The Iranian Hostage Crisis,” *A Short History of the Department of State*, <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/iraniancrises>. No author listed, “A Chronology of Major Events in Iranian Turmoil,” *NYT*, Feb. 12, 1979, <https://nyti.ms/1LTQ5kY>

²⁵⁷ James Clay Moltz and Dennis B. Ross, “The Soviet Union and the Iran-Iraq War, 1980-1988,” in *Soviet Strategy in the Middle East*. George W. Breslauer, editor. (London: Routledge, 1990), 124-125.

²⁵⁸ Soviet interests, policies, and prospects with respect to the Iran-Iraq War, November 1980, NIC Collection (CIA), https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000273317.pdf; Artemy Kalinovsky, “The Soviet Union and the Iran-Iraq War,” 230-238.

for industrial goods and finances. As Tariq Aziz would later argue, “Friendship can only take place among countries which are balanced in power, such as France and Iraq, as the great countries do not believe in friendship and aim to gain influence inside other countries, but when they find themselves unable to do so they attempt to create a certain relationship with the intended country.”²⁵⁹ At the same time, Saddam was attempting to assume for himself the mantle of leadership of the Arab world by advocating for a non-aligned movement among Arab nations in order create a “balanced posture between the superpowers.”²⁶⁰ Whether this Arab leadership role had anything to do with altruism remains to be debated, but, by trying to place Iraq at the forefront against Soviet ambitions in the region, Saddam sought to limit Soviet influence in the Middle East. This new policy did not sit well in Moscow.

According to the C.I.A., Saddam considered the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan a “naked power play,” and he argued that the United Nations should call for the “immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan.” As the C.I.A. saw it, Moscow’s maneuver had “shaken Iraq’s belief that the U.S.S.R. is a safe ally with whom differences could be overlooked or contained because overall bilateral relations were beneficial to Iraq.” The Iraqis feared that, if the Soviets were successful in Afghanistan and if the Tudeh Party in Iran came to come, the Soviets would have a puppet government in Tehran and supreme leverage over the Gulf region.²⁶¹

In September 1980, Iraq launched an unprovoked surprise invasion of Iran, hoping to capitalize on the internal chaos following the Iranian revolution. Historians debate the exact

²⁵⁹ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-638, Saddam and the Revolutionary Command Council Discuss President Ronald Reagan's Speech in which he Admitted that the United States had a Relationship with Iran, after 15 November 1986

²⁶⁰ Article in the National Intelligence Daily, June 18, 1980, “Iraq: New Directions,” Document 141, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVIII, Middle East Region; Arabian Peninsula.

²⁶¹ Iraq-U.S.S.R.: A Downturn in Relations, February 1980, FOIA (C.I.A.),

https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001255354.pdf

motives of the invasion, but they range from Saddam's personal hatred of Iran's Supreme Leader, the Ayatollah Khomeini, to tensions between Arabs and Persians, fear of Shi'a uprisings within Iraq, opportunities to grab land, hopes of restoring Iraqi supremacy over the Shatt al-Arab waterway, improvement of regional stature, assumption of leadership in the Arab world, Saddam's desire to protect his rule and to cement the cult of personality centered on him.²⁶²

Although both the Americans and Soviets had inklings that Iraq wanted conflict with Iran, the Iraqis did not inform the Soviets prior to their invasion, catching Moscow off guard. Part of the 1972 agreement between Iraq and the Soviet Union called for "the two High Contracting Parties [to] hold regular consultations with each other at various levels on all important international issues affecting the interests of the two countries and on questions concerning the further development of relations between them."²⁶³ But it was not just the violation of a formality that angered the Soviets as the Iraqis, much as with the 1973 Samita incident, the Iraqis had tried to box the Soviets by making them look complicit in the invasion. As the Americans noted, the Iraqis had sent Tariq Aziz to Moscow just before the invasion began, "[calculating] that this visit would make the Soviets look like accomplices and keep Moscow from favoring Iran." However, the Soviets read this encounter like a book, giving no

²⁶² For more on this, and the war in general, see Murray and Woods, *The Iran-Iraq War: a Military and Strategic History*; Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*; Kevin M. Woods and Michael R. Pease, *The Iraqi Perspectives Report: Saddam's Senior Leadership on Operation Iraqi Freedom from the Official U.S. Joint Forces Command Report*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006); Kevin Woods, Williamson Murray, and Thomas Holaday with Mounir Elkhamri, *Saddam's War: An Iraqi Military Perspective of the Iran-Iraq War*. (Washington, D.C.: Institute for National Strategic Studies, 2009); Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: A History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*. For pre-September 1980 Iraqi thinking, as assessed by the USG, see National Intelligence Estimate, 21 June 1979, "Iraq's Role in the Middle East," Document 137, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume XVIII, Middle East Region; Arabian Peninsula

²⁶³ See Appendix B.

hint in their press coverage about their reception of the visit. Moscow also had the Soviet ambassador to Iran call on the President of Iran, Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, the very day Aziz departed the U.S.S.R.²⁶⁴

The U.S.S.R. was incensed over how the Iraqis handled the outbreak of hostilities. The Soviets cut off arms, military supplies, and other aid to Iraq. When Iraq protested, arguing that Moscow was ignoring their agreement, the Soviets referred to the 1972 treaty as a “treaty of peace” and not of “war.” This, in turn, prompted the Iraqis to claim that “Iraq would not forget the bad attitude of those who do not honor commitments.”²⁶⁵ Seemingly in retaliation, the Soviets also moved closer to Syria, and despite what the C.I.A. called a “poisonous state of relations between Hussein and Syrian President Assad,” on 8 October 1980 the Syrians and Soviets signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation.²⁶⁶ According to Saddam’s Presidential Advisor, in a move to “take up much closer ties with [Iraq’s regional adversary],” the Soviets had also offered more arms to Syria, which hit the Iraqis like a “bombshell.”²⁶⁷ Iraqi officials vented to U.S. officials that the Soviets had proven themselves once again to be untrustworthy; they were greatly irritated by the Soviet-Syrian treaty. Not all was lost for the Iraqis in this regard, however, for the Soviets and Syrians still did not get along so well. Tensions between the

²⁶⁴ Subject: Moscow and the Iraq-Iran Conflict, Iran/Iraq Conflicts: 9-10/80 (2), Brement Subject File, Iran 11/79-7/80 through Poland: Fall of 1980: 9/80, Box 56, NSA 23, Staff Material—Europe, U.S.S.R. and East/West, JCL.

²⁶⁵ Saddam would later add that the “treaty did not work.” Untitled Iraq-Soviet study, circa February 1986, Iran-Iraq War [February 1986] (5) Box 90192, OA 91834, 01840, 91843, William Burns Files, RRPL.

²⁶⁶ Soviet Interests, Policies, and Prospects with Respect to the Iran-Iraq War, November 1980, NIC Collection (C.I.A.), https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000273317.pdf

²⁶⁷ Lunch Meeting with Iraqi Presidential Advisor, 10/14/80, sent to the Secretary of State from Baghdad, Iraq: 4/80-1/81, Country File, Iran, 4/79 through Israel, 4-6/77, Box 34, National Security Affairs (Brzezinski Material) 6, JCL. Untitled Iraq-Soviet study, circa February 1986, Iran-Iraq War [February 1986] (5) Box 90192, OA 91834, 01840, 91843, William Burns Files, RRPL.

Soviet military leadership and the Syrian military continued persisted, making it impossible to realize the full potential of their relationship.²⁶⁸

With the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, the Soviets issued statements of neutrality and called for a cessation of hostilities. However, the Soviets also saw a grand opportunity in Iran, a country it so valued but to which it had had only limited access under the Shah's reign. Iran remained the "main prize," just as it had been in the 1970s. With the Shah gone, the Soviet leaders thought, a new pro-Soviet Iran could help remove the might of U.S. intelligence agencies from the country, dampen the threat of U.S. military action, and eventually drive Washington from southwestern Asia. Then, the U.S.S.R. could have even more influence and exert more pressure on Turkey and Pakistan.²⁶⁹ The Soviets still valued their relations with Iraq as they worried about the growing strength of Islamist forces in Iran. According to the C.I.A., Soviet proclamations of neutrality were part of a strategy to "buy time to preserve room for maneuver."²⁷⁰ Moreover, despite their relationship, the Soviets did not have any interest in having Iraq emerge as a more dominant power in the Gulf.²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ Soviet Policy in the Middle East and South Asia under Andropov, February 1983, CREST: General C.I.A. Records, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/C.I.A.-RDP86T00302R000701070001-9.pdf>. In 1983, for example, the C.I.A. also estimated there were around 700-1,000 Soviet military personnel in Iraq as compared to 5,000 in Syria. As for economic personnel, the C.I.A. estimated there were 1,500 Soviet economic personnel in Syria and 5,000 in Iraq.

²⁶⁹ Untitled Iraq-Soviet study, circa February 1986, Iran-Iraq War [February 1986] (5) Box 90192, OA 91834, 01840, 91843, William Burns Files, RRPL; Consultative Security Framework for the Middle East, Southwest Asia/Persian Gulf (2/79-12/79), Geographic File Southwest Asia/Persian Gulf (2/79-12/79) Through Southwest Asia/Persian Gulf 5/80, Box 15, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, JCL; Kalinovsky, "The Soviet Union and the Iran-Iraq War," 234.

²⁷⁰ Soviet Interests, Policies, and Prospects with Respect to the Iran-Iraq War, November 1980, NIC Collection (C.I.A.), https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000273317.pdf

²⁷¹ C.I.A. Memo, "Soviet reactions to Iraq-Iran hostilities," 22 Sept 1980, Iran/Iraq: 9/80, Country File, Iran, 4/79 through Israel, 4-6/77, Box 34, National Security Affairs (Brzezinski Material) 6, JCL.

At first, the United States government supported Iraq against Iran. Washington hoped that by supporting Iraq American could “teach Iran a lesson for behaving as an international anarchist.”²⁷² They also considered “how to ensure Soviets take a hit with their relations with Iraq” and how to ensure that “we and/or our allies position ourselves to make gains in Iraq if the Soviets queer their pitch there.”²⁷³ The U.S. government was concerned that the war could lead to expansion of Soviet influence in the area. Washington feared limited access to oil in the region and a public relations nightmare for the U.S., especially if the Arab world rallied behind Iraq and the U.S. did not support Iraq.²⁷⁴

The Soviets, furious over Iraq’s surprise invasion, did not support Iraq right away. The Soviets also were cautious about offering outright support to Iran, given the new regime’s campaign against leftist elements within Iran. In a sense, the Soviets wanted to “test” Iran, and punish Iraq, showing Baghdad that it could not turn to anyone else.²⁷⁵ But as the tide turned in Iran’s favor around 1982, both the Americans and Soviets realized that they had nothing to gain by either side winning outright.²⁷⁶ Although the Soviets eventually forgave the Iraqis and began supporting Iraq, in the words of the British FCO, “to curry favor with the rest of the Arab world,” the Soviets remained hopeful that the Iranian regime would struggle. Moscow wanted

²⁷² Soviet objectives (4), and American objectives (5). *The Superpowers in the Gulf and Arabia*, circa September/October 1987, FCO 8/6767, *The Superpowers in the Gulf and Arabia*, TNA.

²⁷³ C.I.A. Memo, “Soviet reactions to Iraq-Iran hostilities,” 22 Sept 1980, Iran/Iraq: 9/80, Country File, Iran, 4/79 through Israel, 4-6/77, Box 34, National Security Affairs (Brzezinski Material) 6, JCL.

²⁷⁴ Summary of Conclusions, Iran/Iraq: 9/80, Country File, Iran, 4/79 through Israel, 4-6/77 Box 34, National Security Affairs (Brzezinski Material) 6, JCL.

²⁷⁵ Untitled Iraq-Soviet study, circa February 1986, Iran-Iraq War [February 1986] (5) Box 90192, OA 91834, 01840, 91843, William Burns Files, RRPL.

²⁷⁶ See Razoux. *The Iran-Iraq War* for the best overall account of the war, including the 1982 turn of events.

the Islamists out of Tehran, but they did not want the regime to be so weak that the Americans could swoop in.²⁷⁷

The Iraqis understood that both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. wanted to gain influence in Iran and Iraq before the war ran its course. To that end, as Saddam said in a meeting with his advisors, the superpowers were willing to delay the end of the war. Saddam argued that, “if one of them sees that lengthening the war is not to its own benefit, it will try its best to stop it.”²⁷⁸ When evidence emerged that the U.S. and Iran were covertly working together—in what became known as the Iran-Contra Affair—the Iraqis saw this as evidence of the “American intention for lengthening the war, as the Americans think that this war will pave the way for them to gain more influence in the region.”²⁷⁹ The real prize for Moscow remained Iran, and, no matter how much Moscow declared its neutrality, this “careful fence-sitting policy” did not sit well in Iraq.²⁸⁰ In fact, it only confirmed Iraqi theories that the Soviets continued to “[conspire] against Iraq” and the belief of some Iraqis, especially Saddam’s cabinet, that the Soviets had long

²⁷⁷ Soviet objectives (4), and American objectives (5). The Superpowers in the Gulf and Arabia, circa September/October 1987, FCO 8/6767, The Superpowers in the Gulf and Arabia, TNA. Some British government officials argued that “Soviet foot-dragging must be exposed. The Arabs and the Third World must be mobilized to criticize Soviet flirtation with Iran.” See Sir David Miers, The Superpowers in the Gulf and Arabia, 6 October 1987, FCO 8/6767, The Superpowers in the Gulf and Arabia, TNA.

²⁷⁸ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-638, Saddam and the Revolutionary Command Council Discuss President Ronald Reagan's Speech in which he Admitted that the United States had a Relationship with Iran, after 15 November 1986.

²⁷⁹ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-638, Saddam and the Revolutionary Command Council Discuss President Ronald Reagan's Speech in which he Admitted that the United States had a Relationship with Iran, after 15 November 1986. For more on Iran-Contra, see Malcolm Byrne. *Iran-Contra: Reagan's Scandal and the Unchecked Abuse of Presidential Power*. (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2014).

²⁸⁰ Attitudes toward Iran, 13 February 1986, FCO 8/6400, UK Policy on the Iran/Iraq Conflict, TNA.

wanted to “destroy the Iraqi regime.” As Tariq Aziz claimed, the Soviets wanted “the socialists in Iraq to rise against us.”²⁸¹

The Iraqis knew that the Soviets favored Iran and that Iran could not completely turn away from Moscow, especially considering its economic situation and global standing. The Soviet Union’s relationship with Iran was little better than its relationship with Iraq. In discussions with his close advisors, Saddam remarked that he believed America wanted a “mildly strong Iraq” as means for leverage against Iran. Saddam argued that, although the Soviets claimed they wanted the war to end, the Soviets were afraid that a victorious Iran would threaten Afghanistan and the Soviet republics. In other words, Saddam believed Moscow wanted to keep Iran preoccupied so as to prevent Tehran from moving on to other regional ambitions. Saddam confronted the Soviets with this argument, speaking directly with Yevgeny Primakov, who later served as the head of Soviet intelligence and Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Russian Federation. Primakov, “the man who understands Arabs more than others,” according to Saddam, did not entirely deny Saddam’s argument, countering that the total costs of keeping the war going did not outweigh of its cessation. This non-denial, in Saddam’s mind, confirmed his belief that the Soviets were not truly on Iraq’s side.²⁸²

However, Iraq was quite aware that the Soviets viewed this war with particular apprehension. Tensions between Iran and the U.S.S.R. were growing. Like a recurring

²⁸¹ These comments were from Tariq Aziz. CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-638, Saddam and the Revolutionary Command Council Discuss President Ronald Reagan's Speech in which he Admitted that the United States had a Relationship with Iran, after 15 November 1986.

²⁸² Saddam also believed Primakov was trying to send him a signal, because “He didn't deny it because he knew that he was talking to someone who understands these things.” CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-555 3, Saddam and the Revolutionary Command Council discussing Reagan's speech to the nation on Iran-Contra Revelations (part 2), November 1986.

nightmare for Moscow, for example, the new Islamic regime was targeting leftist elements. The Soviet embassy in Tehran had been occupied twice by protestors, including some Afghans, and Moscow had shut down Soviet consulates in Iran in response. Not wanting to completely cut off Moscow, the Iranians did apologize for the occupation of the embassy, a move that Baghdad interpreted to be a chance for Moscow to “exploit Iran's dire political and economic situations...and to attempt to find a foothold in any shape in Iran.”²⁸³ Iraqi officials wagered that the Soviet Union would be more inclined to “build trust with Iraq so they do not lose their connections in the region.” These same officials believed it was time to “reactivate” the relationship with the Soviet Union, a relationship that was severely damaged when Moscow refused to sanction Iraq’s invasion of Iran.²⁸⁴

The Soviets took the opportunity to push the Iraqis toward reforming their positions on both the communists and the Kurds within the country as a precondition for the resumption of arms sales. As the Americans noted, Saddam was willing at least to “appear to satisfy minimal Soviet demands,” as evidenced by Ba‘thist overtures to Kurdish and communist opposition groups.²⁸⁵ But things did not significantly change between Baghdad and Moscow. In an early 1983 meeting with Soviet officials, after the exchanging of usual pleasantries—where the two parties confirmed their opposition to imperialism and Zionism— Iraqi officials tried to calm Soviet officials’ anger over the treatment of communists within Iraq. Iraqi officials laid the blame squarely on the leadership of the ICP, arguing they did not comply with the “progressive

²⁸³ CRRC SH-IISX-D-000-841, 1981 Iraqi evaluation of the Iranian military threat, January 1980-January 1981

²⁸⁴ No subject line, 1983/3/7, 0256-0270, BRCC 2958-0002, HB, HIA.

²⁸⁵ Telegram to the Secretary of State, 1/24/83 from USINT Baghdad (Eagleton), Iraq, 1/20/81-12/31/83 [1 of 4], Iraq, Box 37, Executive Secretariat, National Security Council: Country File: Near East and South Asia (Middle East), RRPL.

National Pact” and that they were also trying to form an armed organization. The Ba‘thists continued, arguing that the ICP was trying to ruin the Iraqi-Soviet relationship by creating problems and instability in the north. Baghdad also accused Moscow of working with Libyan leader Muammar al-Gaddafi and Syrian President Hafez al-Assad. The Iraqis refused to apologize, essentially justifying their persecution of the ICP. As the Ba‘thists saw it, the ICP was “constantly interfering in our internal affairs” and had their “infiltrators” commit “criminal actions...in Iraq before the [war with Iran.]” The Ba‘thists questioned the motives behind the visit of Iranian officials to Moscow “after the ascension of the ‘antichrist’ Khomeini.” This was rebuffed by Soviet officials who argued that they would be maintaining alliances with both parties in question.²⁸⁶

Although they hoped the Soviets would come around and resume arms sales, the Iraqis began prodding the Americans toward “clarifying U.S. and Iraqi positions.”²⁸⁷ Iraqi overtures to the Americans had started well before the war began, as part of the Iraqi re-orientation toward the West, with Iraqi officials—including the Foreign Minister—sending word back through private American citizens as well through the U.S. Interests Sections in Baghdad.²⁸⁸ In this sense, the war and the Soviet refusal to back Iraq outright galvanized Iraq’s efforts to restore diplomatic relations with the United States. In early 1982, Saddam’s half-brother, Barzan

²⁸⁶ No subject line, 1983/3/7, 0256-0270, BRCC 2958-0002, HB, HIA.

²⁸⁷ Lunch Meeting with Iraqi Presidential Advisor, 10/14/80, sent to the Secretary of State from Baghdad, Iraq: 4/80-1/81, Country File, Iran, 4/79 through Israel, 4-6/77, Box 34, National Security Affairs (Brzezinski Material) 6, JCL.

²⁸⁸ Memorandum from Secretary of State Vance to President Carter, “Improving Relations with Other Nations,” April 15, 1977, Document 131, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVIII, Middle East Region; Arabian Peninsula. Telegram from the United States Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, “Under Secretary Habib Meets With Iraqi Foreign Minister,” May 18, 1977, Document 132, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVIII, Middle East Region; Arabian Peninsula.

Ibrahim al-Tikriti, then the head of Iraqi intelligence, approached the Americans through back-channels, seeking Washington's view of the war, and expressing suspicions of the U.S.S.R. and the IPC.²⁸⁹ In September 1984, Tariq Aziz approached U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz to establish "a basis for a joint announcement of a decision to resume U.S.-Iraqi diplomatic relations."²⁹⁰ The State Department sought to move on this immediately—hoping to forestall possible Soviet counterreactions in light of it—and in November 1984, relations were officially restored.²⁹¹

Sadly for the Iraqis, their other friends remained questionably neutral. Many of them would supply Iran as well, including France, China, and various East European states.²⁹² The Iraqis sought aid from the East Germans after the outbreak of war; but, as if they were predicting the future, according to a February 1981 report, the Stasi believed that "neither of the two sides has the potential to lead a decisive strike. In this situation a political solution is deemed not very likely."²⁹³ The East Germans, just like the Soviets, were also none too pleased that, according to their spies in West Germany, the Iraqis were attempting to play the West and East against each

²⁸⁹ The Americans, for their part, were happy for Iraqi overtures but frustrated it was done in secret, as it would fuel the "conspiratorial nature of the regime." Telegram to the Secretary of State, 01/18/82 from USINT Baghdad (Eagleton), Iraq, 1/20/81-12/31/83 [1 of 4], Iraq, Box 37, Executive Secretariat, National Security Council: Country File: Near East and South Asia (Middle East), RRPL.

²⁹⁰ Memo for Robert C. McFarlane from Geoffrey Kemp, "Iraqi Minister's Request to Call on the President to Announce Resumption of Relations," 26 September 1984, Iraq (April-September 1984), Iraq, Box 37, Executive Secretariat, National Security Council: Country File: Near East and South Asia (Middle East), RRPL.

²⁹¹ Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Restores Full Ties With Iraq But Cites Neutrality in Gulf War," *NYT*, November 27, 1984, <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/11/27/world/us-restores-full-ties-with-iraq-but-cites-neutrality-in-gulf-war.html>

²⁹² CPPG Meeting of Wednesday 23 July, Iraq- CPPG Meeting (Defense) 1986, RAC Box 6, Tahir-Kheli, Shirin Files, RRPL. See also Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, Appendix F (Foreign Military Assistance).

²⁹³ Sassoon, "The East German Ministry for State Security and Iraq, 1968-1989," 13.

other. In one case, an Iraqi diplomat informed the West Germans that they were not “dependent on the Soviet Union” and recommended that the West Germans imitate the French-Iraqi relationship as a model for future diplomacy.²⁹⁴

There was a clear shift in the East German-Iraqi dynamic by the 1980s. East Germany began supporting “progressive” and communist states with more vigor. Therefore, Iraq’s continued targeting of communists within the Eastern bloc did not sit well with Berlin. Iraq’s rapprochement with the West also angered East Germany. The Stasi feared that improved Iraqi relations with Washington could lead to shared Iraqi-U.S. intelligence operations against East Germany.²⁹⁵ By the late 1980s, the East Germans were also more preoccupied with the changes coming from the U.S.S.R., including perestroika and glasnost. By November 1989, East Germany ceased to exist.

The Iraqis also eyed Western European states for help during the war. When the Soviets balked at supporting Iraq, the French supported Iraq by supplying them with over \$17 billion USD in assistance, including Mirages, Super Étendards, Exocets, helicopters, artillery pieces, advisors, technicians, credits, and more.²⁹⁶ Iraqi-European cooperation had already caught America’s attention before the war began, especially when the French and the Italians began helping Iraq with its nuclear program.²⁹⁷ According to a former supervisor of the Iraqi nuclear

²⁹⁴ Sassoon, “The East German Ministry for State Security and Iraq, 1968-1989,” 14.

²⁹⁵ See Sassoon, “The East German Ministry for State Security and Iraq, 1968-1989.”

²⁹⁶ Untitled Iraq-Soviet study, circa February 1986, Iran-Iraq War [February 1986] (5) Box 90192, OA 91834, 01840, 91843, William Burns Files, RRPL. See also Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, Appendix F (Foreign Military Assistance).

²⁹⁷ Memo from ZB to the Secretary of State, Subject: French and Italian Nuclear Cooperation with Iraq, 28 July 1980, Iraq: 4/80-1/81, Country File, Iran, 4/79 through Israel, 4-6/77, Box 34, National Security Affairs (Brzezinski Material) 6, JCL. For Italian-Iraqi nuclear cooperation, researchers should consult the BRCC dataset as well, specifically Photo 0093 in Batch 036-5-5 (Nuclear Letter to Mu’ammarr).

program, Saddam was so dissatisfied with Soviet technology that he ordered the leaders of the program to pursue the French instead.²⁹⁸ The burgeoning nuclear program worried the Israelis so much that they bombed the facility, just south of Baghdad, in June 1981, destroying the Osirak nuclear reactor; in the attack, an Italian technician was also killed.²⁹⁹

The Italians and the Iraqis were also later implicated in a banking scandal in which an Italian bank, Banca Nazionale del Lavoro (BNL), granted Iraq more than \$3 billion USD in fraudulent loans. Although Iraq later claimed it was the victim, the Iraqis did use \$600 million USD of the credits to buy military and dual-use technology “through various companies and legitimate firms in Western Europe.” The C.I.A. also believed that Iraqi intelligence was directly involved in this, including possessing and operating “holding companies funneling technology to Iraq.”³⁰⁰ Baghdad also repeatedly approached the European Economic Community to “enlist the support of Western states” and to find a “peace formula” to end the war with Iran numerous

²⁹⁸ CRRC SH-GMID-D-000-113, The former supervisor of Iraq Nuclear program unveils the secrets of his works, 11 February 2001.

²⁹⁹ David K. Shipler, “Israeli Jets Destroy Iraqi Atomic Reactor; Attack Condemned by U.S. and Arab Nations,” *NYT*, June 9, 1981, <https://nyti.ms/29z8iO4>. For Iraqi discussions on this attack, see CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-910, Meeting between and his officials discuss different issues--the aftermath of British/Iranian/Israeli spy, and modifications on the constitution and rearrange some of its clauses, undated, after 1981 Israeli strike on Osirak reactor, and CRRC Number SH-SHTP-A-001-039, Saddam and his Senior Advisors Discussing Israel's Attack on the Tamuz (Osirak) Reactor and Iraqi Civil Defenses, undated, circa mid-June 1981. After 1981 attack, the C.I.A. noted that since U.S. and U.N. were working with Iraq on this issue—Israel’s attack was wildly condemned by the Arab states—the Soviets were not happy with this new arrangement. The U.S.S.R. thought the U.S. was involved in the attack and therefore tried to use perceived American complicity to illustrate the weakness of the Camp David Accords. See, Implications of Israeli air attack on Iraq, July 1981, NIC Collection (C.I.A.), https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000211961.pdf

³⁰⁰ Iraq-Italy: repercussions of the BNL-Atlanta scandal, November 1989, FOIA (C.I.A.), https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000491425.pdf. See also, Elaine Sciolino, “The World; A Budding Scandal, In Brief: A Primer On The 'B.N.L. Affair',” *NYT*, October 18, 1992, <https://nyti.ms/29bfZKr>

times.³⁰¹ However, because the European community was sharply divided and because many European states were making money by selling arms and weapons to both belligerents, a peace agreement was hard to imagine.³⁰²

The Iraqis took the fact that their “allies” were arming and selling weapons to Iran particularly hard. The Iraqis were obsessed with monitoring Iranian actions, whether real or imagined, long believing that Iran was in cahoots with outsiders to bring down the Ba‘thist regime. Intelligence reports from northern Iraq detailed information about possible weapons agreements among the Kurds, Syria, and China—one report suggested that “saboteurs” would gain use of these weapons smuggled through Iran.³⁰³ Worse yet, the Iranians were smuggling weapons—including aircraft spare parts, tanks, and 175mm caliber anti-aircraft guns—imported from the West, including West Germany and Austria, into the Kurdish region.³⁰⁴ One particular Iraqi intelligence report specifically documented that the Iranians had received 120 missiles from China and North Korea in 1986.³⁰⁵ Furthermore, another report suggested that gas masks, spare

³⁰¹ Telegram to the Secretary of State, 1/24/83 from USINT Baghdad (Eagleton), Iraq, 1/20/81-12/31/83 [1 of 4], Iraq, Box 37, Executive Secretariat, National Security Council: Country File: Near East and South Asia (Middle East), RRPL. Iran/Iraq memorandum from Middle East Department, 26 June 1986, FCO 8/6400, UK Policy on the Iran/Iraq Conflict, TNA.

³⁰² To get a sense of just how much the Europeans aided the longevity of the war, consult Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, Appendix F (Foreign Military Assistance).

³⁰³ Saboteurs and China, 1980, North Iraqi Dataset, 1253996, PUK 15699, HIA.

³⁰⁴ Even spare parts from Israel were sent to Iran, according to various Iraqi intelligence report. Information sent to the Director of General Military Intelligence, 1989/1/23, NIDS, 0440018-19, KDP 37237, HIA. Information sent to the Director of General Military Intelligence, 1989/7/8, NIDS, 0439910-13 KDP 37236. Iranian smuggling, 1989/2/20, NIDS, 0439991-92, KDP 37237, HIA.

³⁰⁵ Air Force intelligence, 1986, NIDS, 0496649, 0496682, 0496683, 0496688, 0496689, 0496692, KDP 38110, HIA.

parts, engineers, and technical experts for F-5 and F-14 fighter planes arrived from Argentina, China, and North Korea.³⁰⁶

Conclusion of the Iran-Iraq War

The war between Iran and Iraq ended in August 1988 with things returning for the most part to how they had been before September 1980. A war that saw chemical weapons deployed against soldiers and civilians, child soldiers sent to the front line, international tankers targeted, even a civilian airliner downed came to an end largely because both warring states had exhausted their financial and military capabilities and because the rest of the world could no longer tolerate the attacks on oil tankers within the Persian Gulf.³⁰⁷ There were fears that a continuation of the war, which had already gone on for eight years, risked severe damage to the global economy. The Americans and Soviets were also concerned about the increasing probability for incidents between outside players, whether accidental or not.

Iran's political and economic overtures to Western and non-Western countries following the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq War troubled the Iraqis. Oil and energy representatives from German, French, North Korean, and Chinese companies were known to be in Iran for consultation and to repair oil refineries and arms factories damaged during the war. The Iranians and French were also in negotiations for economic assistance and investment in Iran's oil fields

³⁰⁶ Training, Arming, Preparation for Enemy Forces, 1989, NIDS, 0439823, KDP 37236. Information sent to the Director of General Military Intelligence, 1989/1/23, NIDS, 0440018-19, KDP 37237, HIA.

³⁰⁷ Passenger liner Iran Air 655 was shot down by the USS *Vincennes* on 3 July 1988, after the latter mistook the former to be a threat. Controversy, and conspiracy theories, continue to surround this tragic event. John F. Burns, "World Aviation Panel Faults U.S. Navy on Downing of Iran Air," *NYT*, December 4, 1988, <https://nyti.ms/29zsfm6>. See Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, 443-462.

and in its nuclear potential.³⁰⁸ This is not to say that Iranian relations with all these countries were trouble-free, but to the Iraqis they were signs of betrayal by their supposed allies.³⁰⁹

The Iranians and the Soviets were also improving their relationship. Despite their mutual distrust and hostility, the Iranians and the Soviets still cooperated with each other through military and economic deals. This hatred was noticed in Iraq, as Iraqi intelligence saw that “the Persian regime's hatred of the Soviet Union is countered by the Soviet Union's supply of two hundred tanks to Iran, [while] Iran is paying the Soviets back with oil and gas exports by the end of the current year.”³¹⁰ Intelligence sources in northern Iraq confirmed and reinforced fears of a continued covert and improving Soviet-Iranian relationship. This relationship included political and military cooperation. Iraqi intelligence reported that “the criminal [then presidential candidate and eventual winner Akbar Hashemi] Rafsanjani will run away with the presidential election, and there is a very high probability of him becoming the President of the Republic. When Rafsanjani returned from a visit to the Soviet Union [the trip occurred in June 1989], Iranian television broadcast footage of this visit, [using it as] propaganda.”³¹¹

The military relationship prospered as well. Special contracts were signed between the two for military equipment. This included aircraft, tanks, surface-to-surface missiles, radars,

³⁰⁸ Information sent to the Director of General Military Intelligence, 1989/1/27, NIDS, 0440014-15, KDP 37237, HIA.

³⁰⁹ The French-Iranian relationship is especially complicated. For example, see Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, 470; Pierre Razoux, “France’s involvement in the Iran-Iraq War,” in *The Iran-Iraq War: New International Perspectives*. Nigel Ashton and Bryan Gibson, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2013).

³¹⁰ Information to Military Intelligence Director, 14/8/1989 NIDS, 0439895-97, KDP 37236, HIA.

³¹¹ Information on Iranian elections, 1989/6/20, NIDS, 0439914-15, KDP 37236, HIA. Michael Parks, “Iranian Gets Warm Soviet Welcome : Rafsanjani-Gorbachev Talks Point to Improved Relations,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 21 June 1989, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1989-06-21-mn-2425-story.html#null>

surveillance equipment and devices, and wireless devices.³¹² There were also deliveries of twenty MiG-29s, as well as the arrival of Soviet pilots to train Iranian pilots.³¹³ The Soviets were also helping the Iranians to build a chemical factory in the city of Damghan. Iraqi intelligence reported that Syrian and Iranian experts were working together on the factory. According to their report, the Iranians ran into trouble, requiring “a number of engineers from the Soviet Union [to come] to the rescue.”³¹⁴ A source at the factory told Iraqi intelligence agents that three Soviet officials had toured the factory, escorted by Iranian officials of the Ministry of Industry, to “look at the nature of the work and the quality of the production” while the director of the factory explained the work still needed.³¹⁵

Although the relationship was tenuous, the Soviets and the Iraqis continued probing one another throughout the war, seeing what was acceptable and what had changed. Visits continued through the decade, including a September 1987 Soviet visit to Baghdad in which the two parties tried “patch up recent strained relations.” Talks were centered on oil, heavy industry, and military affairs, and both sides published positive talks about the visit and meetings. In this instance, as in many others, the meetings did not occur at the upper levels. For example, the Chairman of the Soviet State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations and his delegation did not meet Tariq Aziz or Vice President Taha Yasin Ramadhan, let alone Saddam.³¹⁶

³¹² Information sent to the Director of General Military Intelligence, 1989/7/9, NIDS, 439907-09, KDP 37236, HIA.

³¹³ Information to Military Intelligence Director, 14/8/1989, NIDS, 0439895-97, KDP 37236, HIA.

³¹⁴ Information to Military Intelligence Director, 14/8/1989, NIDS, 0439895-97, KDP 37236, HIA.

³¹⁵ The source also indicated that he heard from employees at the Sattenen Ayad compound that the Iranians had modified 175mm, 120mm, and 155mm artillery shells with chemical and toxic substances. Information to Military Intelligence Director, 14/8/1989, NIDS, 0439895-97, KDP 37236, HIA.

³¹⁶ Visit by Soviet official, 23 September 1987, FCO 8/6750, Iraq-U.S.S.R. Relations, TNA.

By the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the Soviets were clearly moving closer to Iran, arranging for new arms and economic deals, and so too were Western and non-Western states. The 1970s and 1980s, therefore, not only severely weakened the Iraqi-Soviet relationship, but they also brought essential lessons for Iraq. First, Baghdad needed to balance relations with both superpowers, because relying solely on the Soviets had not produced a reliable, consistent ally. The Soviets had merely picked moments to support Iraq when it best fit the Kremlin's own interests. But the second lesson was that even superpowers were not enough. Outside powers, including the French, proved to be more loyal than either superpower. In this sense, the Iraqis were looking to avoid being trapped by their reliance on outside weapons and support.³¹⁷ The third, and final, lesson was that no matter their frustration with Moscow, the Ba'athist regime could not completely cut off the Soviets. Instead, Iraq needed to be more realistic, and, as Saddam eventually came to understand, in the words of Pierre Razoux, he could "no longer truly count on the Kremlin."³¹⁸

³¹⁷ The Iraqis also made outreaches to Egypt and Jordan in attempts to bolster "its regional credibility and to provide stability" against Iran. Untitled Iraq-Soviet study, circa February 1986, Iran-Iraq War [February 1986] (5) Box 90192, OA 91834, 01840, 91843, William Burns Files, RRPL.

³¹⁸ Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, 479.

Chapter 3 - Iraqi Intervention in the Lebanese Civil War, 1975-1990

Much of what has been written about Iraq in the years prior to its seizure of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf War (August 1990-February 1991) is focused on Iraqi policy towards Iran, the Kurds, and Israel. Iraq's involvement in Lebanon between 1975 and 1990, however, has drawn little attention from scholars despite its importance.³¹⁹ In Lebanon, the Iraqis acted neither to do the bidding of their Soviet client-masters nor to antagonize them. Similarly, the Iraqis were not agents of the Americans either. Moving into Lebanon was a product of Iraq's own agency, its own hopes, fears, and goals in the Levant. Its foreign policy, moreover, was driven just as much by their domestic concerns as it was by their regional issues.

Iraqi intervention in the Lebanese Civil War was framed by the Ba'athist regime as its *national mission*. This framework served two purposes. In terms of foreign policy, Iraq used the civil war as an opportunity to counter Syrian and Iranian influence in the Levant using rhetoric and force. Simultaneously, it was an attempt to bolster credibility with the Palestinian cause as a way to enhance Iraq's stature in the Arab world. However, Iraqi accomplishments often fell short of achieving these goals. Intervention in Lebanon provided another way for the Ba'athists to exert control over the Iraqi population; this desire for control grew more prominent as Saddam Hussein's power and influence strengthened in the 1970s.³²⁰ In this case, foreign intervention by

³¹⁹ See Pesach Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2017); Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Fred H. Lawson, "Syria's Intervention in the Lebanese Civil War, 1976: A Domestic Conflict Explanation." *International Organization* 38, no. 3 (1984): 451-80.

³²⁰ For the rise of Saddam, see Charles Tripp. *A History of Iraq*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007) and Joseph Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Iraq allowed the Ba‘thist elite—Saddam, in reality—to grow in strength and to control party members, both within the Ba‘th Party and in the Popular Army.

An examination of the national mission provides another way in which historians can assess the strength and inner workings of the Ba‘thist state. Iraqi efforts in Lebanon revealed yet again the tedious bureaucracy of the Ba‘thist state, the overall power dynamic between state and citizen, and the tendency for Saddam to overstate his power. In other instances, this examination shows the complicated nature of the intervention and the inner workings of the Ba‘thist party apparatus abroad, including foreign fighters, intelligence networks, and the like.³²¹ More importantly, while the intervention may not have proven decisive or even consequential for the Levant, it reveals how Iraqi foreign and domestic interests often intertwined and influenced one another.

Lebanon Collapses into Civil War

Lebanon was created by the French in 1920, selectively carved out of the Syrian mandate to ensure that a Christian majority ruled rather than be outnumbered by Muslims. But the Christian population, dominated by the Maronite sect, was not alone. This new state was home not only to Christians but also to Sunni, Shi‘a, and Druze. In 1943, Lebanon was granted independence from France; and, soon after, the Muslim and Christian communities embarked on creating an independent government that could represent all religious sects. In what became known as the National Pact, a Maronite Christian would serve as president while a Sunni Muslim

³²¹ Here, this analysis of the Iraqi intervention in Lebanon supports other scholarship which illustrates the ability and limitations of Ba‘thist bureaucracy to operate both at home at abroad. See Samuel Helfont, “Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba‘th Party as a Transnational Actor,” *The Middle East Journal* 72. No 2. (2018): 229-245.

would serve as prime minister. The National Pact created a government that was consociationalist in structure—using the 1932 census, representation within the Lebanese government was also divided between Maronite Christians and Sunni Muslims in a 6:5 ratio for allocation of seats in the chamber of deputies.³²² Lebanon’s sectarian composition and its power-sharing accord have led some scholars to proclaim that the country was “born schizophrenic.”³²³

The use of the 1932 census would ultimately prove extremely contentious, especially by the 1970s. The Maronites in Lebanon refused to allow another census to be conducted, fearing that the results would confirm suspicions that the Maronites had become the minority in Lebanon, which would cost them some of their power within the government.³²⁴ After years of political corruption, including Maronite President Camille Chamoun’s attempts to take an illegal second term for himself, a revolt broke out in Lebanon in 1958. Chamoun called for assistance, feigning that he was defending Lebanon from communism and from Egyptian President Gamal Nasser’s intent to interfere in Lebanese affairs. The Americans responded, deploying over 15,000 American Marines to Beirut.³²⁵ The perceived Maronite preference for the West, and not for their fellow Arabs, did nothing to reduce internal tensions.

³²² William L. Cleveland, and Martin Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 5th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013), 211-214. Eugene Rogan, *The Arabs: A History*. (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 379-380.

³²³ Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 209.

³²⁴ The 1995 Dayton Agreement (which ended the war between Serbs and Bosniaks in Bosnia-Herzegovina), and the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (which ended violence between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland), are often cited as other examples of consociationalism. For a more detailed breakdown over the collapse of the National Pact, see Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 310-312. For more on the Maronites, see Kamal S. Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017).

³²⁵ For more on the American perspective of this, see Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: the Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East*. (Chapel-Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

In June 1967, the Israelis took preemptive action against neighboring Arab states in the Six-Day War. The Israelis won a time of greater security, but Arab states lost much. Lebanon, for example, was badly troubled by a flood of Palestinian refugees pouring over the country's border with Israel. As a consequence, these refugees added even more pressure on the fragile National Pact. Palestinian liberation and terrorist groups, including the umbrella organization the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), also began using Lebanon as a base of operations against Israel and Jordan, prompting the former to retaliate, catching many Shi'a living in southern Lebanon in the crosshairs.³²⁶ Disenfranchised Lebanese Sunni and Shi'a began joining forces with Palestinians when the Maronites refused to undertake a new census.³²⁷ Fearing a Muslim majority and refusing to accept any proposed changes within the National Pact, the Maronites began arming and empowering their own militias. This prompted Muslim politicians to prop up their own militias as well. Fighting began between the two main groups—on one side, the “rightist” or “status quo” the Christians, and, on the other side, the “leftist” or “revisionist” Lebanese Sunnis, Shi'a, and Druze along with the PLO—when a Christian militia element attacked and killed 27 Palestinian bus passengers in late April 1975. After a brief ceasefire, fighting resumed in August 1975.³²⁸

³²⁶ Besides drawing Jordan into the Israel-PLO standoff and violence, the PLO began targeting the Jordanian government, including trying to assassinate King Hussein twice. As a result, the Jordanians moved to expel the PLO and the Palestinians from Jordan by force. In what became known as Black September, in 1970, the Jordanian army moved against the Palestinians, forcing many of them to flee to Lebanon. For more, see Craig Daigle, "Crisis on the Suez, June–September 1970," in *The Limits of Détente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1969-1973*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 113-54.

³²⁷ Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 380-381.

³²⁸ Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*, 514. Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 380-383.

As the civil war intensified, Lebanon's geography and its internal composition—drawn from Shi'a, Sunni, Maronite Christian, Druze, and Palestinian factions—created a power vacuum in the Levant, triggering an influx of regional and international players into the conflict.³²⁹ This war occurred at a time of uncertainty: Hafez al-Assad was consolidating power in Syria, Saddam Hussein was gearing up to assume official leadership of Iraq, and Iran was heading toward Islamic revolution, all while Israel and Egypt were in the midst of peace negotiations. Arab states, as well as the United States and the U.S.S.R., could all sense that there was power to be had in Lebanon. Fundamentally, these actors saw the Lebanese Civil War as an opportunity to advance their own interests in the Middle East. But they also believed that, even if their interests could not be achieved, they could at least thwart the interests of their competitors and enemies.

By the mid-1970s, as part of the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War of October 1973, the major policy focus for the United States government regarding the Middle East was the prevention of another war between the Arabs and the Israelis. This was no easy task. Tensions ran high among all parties including the Israelis and the Americans. In mid-March 1975, the relationship between Israel and the United States reached a new low after failed American attempts to secure Israeli withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula. The Israelis informed Kissinger

³²⁹ The rise of the Shi'a groups, which cannot be overstated, sadly does not fit in the purview of this chapter. However, it should be noted that the flight of the PLO and the Maronite-Israeli-U.S. leadership also "created a vacuum in the Muslim camp which the leadership of Shi'a, now the largest single sect, was quick to fill..." Dilip Hiro, *Lebanon: Fire and Embers: a History of the Lebanese Civil War*. (New York: St. Martin, 1993), 208. For more on Shi'a politics, including Hezbollah, see Joseph Daher, *Hezbollah: The Political Economy of Lebanon's Party of God*. (London: Pluto Press, 2016). Fred Burton and Samuel M. Katz, *Beirut Rules: the Murder of a C.I.A. Station Chief and Hezbollah's War against America and the West*. (NY, NY: Berkley, an imprint of Penguin Random House, 2018) offers a more popular history of the Shi'a-Iran alliance during the war in Lebanon. For more a more recent discussion on the rise of Shi'a politics, and its regional and global implications, see Frederic M. Wehrey, *Sectarian Politics in the Gulf: From the Iraq War to the Arab Uprisings*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

that they wanted Egypt “not to resort to the use of force and to resolve all disputes between them by negotiations and other peaceful means. They will refrain from permitting, encouraging, assisting, or participating in any military, paramilitary or hostile actions, from any warlike or hostile acts and any other form of warfare or hostile activity against the other party anywhere.”³³⁰ This demand forced Sadat into a corner—in Egypt’s view, signing any treaty like this while the Sinai was in Israel’s possession would be seen as capitulation to Israel.

Kissinger was irate at Israel for this seemingly antagonizing demand. In one conversation with other U.S. government officials, he reasoned: “I am Jewish. How can I want this? I have never seen such cold-blooded playing with the American national interest. Every Arab was looking to us; we had moved the Soviet Union out of the Middle East; even Iraq was being moved. What they have done is destroy this.”³³¹ After freezing F-15 arms deliveries to Israel, from then until late in summer 1975, the relationship between the U.S. and Israel was under “reassessment.” It was not until the U.S. Senate intervened that the State Department ended on its standoff with Israel.³³²

But the Israelis were not the only players in the region, as the conflict drew in many regional and international actors. Many of the Christian militias received aid and arms from Israel—which the Americans did not oppose because this support maintained the status quo in the conflict—while “radical groups,” including prominent anti-Syrian politician Kamal

³³⁰ Kissinger Reports on U.S.S.R., China, and Middle East Discussions (Box 3, March 7-22, 1975—Kissinger’s Trip—Vol. II (3)), GFL. Available online, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0331/1553961.pdf>

³³¹ Memorandum of Conversation, March 24, 1975, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976, Volume XXVI, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1974-1976, Document 159.

³³² For more on this demand, and standoff, within the USG, see Kenneth Kolander. “Phantom Peace: Henry ‘Scoop’ Jackson, J. William Fulbright, and Military Sales to Israel.” *Diplomatic History* 41:3 (June 2017): 567-593.

Jumblatt's element and other Palestinian factions, were largely supported by Libya and Iraq.³³³ Syria's role in the war was much more complicated. The U.S. government believed that Syria was trying to "preserve the existing system," and this therefore explained as to why the Syrians supported the Christian elements and other moderate Muslims rather than the side of the radicals. The war could "open the floodgates of radicalism in Lebanon.... [Assad] did not relish the idea of finding himself sandwiched between radical Iraq...and radical Lebanon."³³⁴ Generally speaking, the Assad regime wanted to ensure two outcomes in Lebanon. One of Syria's largest fears was that, if Lebanon turned radical, it could draw further Soviet support and could "find itself squeezed between Lebanon and Iran." Seeking to avoid this outcome, the Syrians also wanted to control the PLO, replace PLO leader Yasser Arafat with their own puppet, and to "increase [their] power in the Arab world."³³⁵

Although the U.S. government was inclined to favor Syrian objectives, calling Syria's role "very constructive and [serving] our interests," they worried that Syrian intervention could have dramatic and detrimental long-term consequences to American interests in the region.³³⁶

³³³ Dilip Hiro, *Lebanon: Fire and Embers: a History of the Lebanese Civil War*. (New York: St. Martin, 1993), 14.

³³⁴ Hiro, *Lebanon: Fire and Embers: a History of the Lebanese Civil War*, 36.

³³⁵ Jordan supported Syria's intervention, finding common cause in Syria's goal to root out radical PLO factions, just as Jordan did in the early 1970s. Saudi Arabia supported the PLO factions "in order to restrain its excesses but opposing the radicals." Minutes of National Security Council Meeting, April 7, 1976, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976, Volume XXVI, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1974-1976, Document 284. Philippe Takla, the Lebanese Foreign Minister, broached the subject of regional meddling with the Americans by suggesting that they "encourage Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to help with Syria and the Palestinians. They have not been at all active, yet they have the potential to help us. Maybe France could be helpful with Iraq, and maybe one could get the Soviets to calm the Lebanese left." To allay fears that he was seeking to direct U.S. Government policy, he then added: "[but] I am making no precise request, merely exposing the situation." Memorandum of Conversation, September 30, 1975, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976, Volume XXVI, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1974-1976, Document 263.

³³⁶ Egypt also supported Jumblatt "because it is so angry at Syria." Jordan supported Syria's intervention, finding common cause in Syria's goal to rout out radical PLO factions, just as Jordan did in the early 1970s. Saudi Arabia

There were concerns that Assad, after years of consolidating power successfully in Syria, could extend his reach and power by dominating Lebanon, thus potentially paving the way for entry into Jordan as well. This alone could pose a major threat to the balance in the modern Levant and the Middle East more broadly. However, Syria's invasion into Lebanon stoked fear of a possible new Arab-Israeli war, a fear which trumped all other concerns for the U.S. government. The Americans worried that Israel, under the pretense of a chaotic Lebanese civil war, would be "sorely tempted to try to go in to clean out the PLO" within Lebanon. According to the U.S. State Department, this would have "disastrous consequences." Washington also worried over just how far Syrian penetration into Lebanon would extend, fearing that, the deeper Syria entered Lebanon, "the danger of Israeli action [would increase]."³³⁷

According to the Israeli government, Assad was working to "restore Soviet prestige in the Middle East" by "[vassalizing] Lebanon" and thus prompting the Soviets to back Syrian objectives. From Assad's point of view, wagers the Israelis, neither the radicals nor the PLO and their allies could defeat the Christians and unify the country. From Tel Aviv's point of view, all of this spelled trouble for the Egyptians, a view the Americans would come to share as well.³³⁸ For if Syria were to be defeated in Lebanon, Israel contended that Assad likely would be "sandwiched between two radical states," with the PLO controlling Lebanon and Assad eventually being overthrown. According to Kissinger, "[t]his would be of no benefit to Sadat."

supported the PLO factions, "in order to restrain its excesses but opposing the radicals." Minutes of National Security Council Meeting, April 7, 1976, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976, Volume XXVI, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1974-1976, Document 284.

³³⁷ Memorandum of Conversation: Lebanon, March 26, 1976, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976, Volume XXVI, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1974-1976, Document 274.

³³⁸ Memorandum of Conversation: Lebanon, March 29, 1976, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976, Volume XXVI, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1974-1976, Document 278.

According to a belief shared by the Israelis and the U.S. government, Sadat held no concrete policy regarding Lebanon besides preventing Assad from assuming the mantle of leadership within the Arab world. Protecting Egypt was viewed as the essential component of any deal with the Syrians, PLO, and whomever else. Kissinger succinctly described U.S. government policy goals in relation to Lebanon: “We have no illusion about Assad but we want to keep Syria split from Libya and Iraq and the U.S.S.R. If a radical crescent involving Iraq, Syria, a PLO-controlled Lebanon and Libya comes into being—following the overthrow of Assad—it will be very bad for Egypt.”³³⁹

The Soviets, for their part, largely supported the Lebanese Communist Party, but they also supported Jumblatt. However, the Soviets neither wanted Lebanon to fall into chaos nor for Syrian armed forces to be ravaged once again, fearing that another Soviet-armed Arab defeat could devastate Soviet credibility and diplomatic standing in the region. The Soviets often criticized Assad’s move in Lebanon because they themselves were not eager for another war, and so they cautioned Syria not to move too far. However, they could not entirely abandon Syria, especially since they had just lost another important Arab ally in the years before—Egypt.³⁴⁰ As Secretary of State Henry Kissinger argued, although the Soviets supported certain elements within the war, “overall [the Soviets] are a factor of restraint.” Kissinger continued that “they want to have their cake and eat it, too. The Soviets are not looking for trouble but they will be

³³⁹ Israeli Ambassador Hermann Eilts also alleged that the Egyptians believed the Israelis to be “in a conspiracy with Syria and Israel to crush the PLO.” Memorandum of Conversation, August 7, 1976, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976, Volume XXVI, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1974–1976, Document 292.

³⁴⁰ The Egyptians expelled the Soviets in 1972. Edward R. F. Sheehan, “Why Sadat packed off the Russians,” *NYT*, August 6, 1972, <https://nyti.ms/2CtMC3U> For more see. Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez. *The Soviet-Israeli War, 1967-1973: the USSR’s Military Intervention in the Egyptian-Israeli Conflict*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017).

forced to move rather than lose all their assets in the Middle East, should another war come.”³⁴¹ Washington, however, noticed the distrust between the Soviets and the Syrians. Kissinger noted that the “[the] Syrians are highly nationalistic. They may not be willing to take Soviet forces. They don’t like the Russians.” Other American officials chimed in, stating that the Syrians “don’t like anybody” and that Assad was “trying to keep his independence.”³⁴²

Despite apprehension about Soviet intentions, the Carter administration did try to work with the Soviets to achieve a ceasefire. The Soviets agreed with the Carter’s initiatives, calling for an end to hostilities; and the two superpowers worked together through the U.N. to try and secure a permanent peace.³⁴³ However, the Americans and the Soviets were not able to achieve

³⁴¹ Jordan supported Syria’s intervention, finding common cause in Syria’s goal to root out radical PLO factions, just as Jordan had done in the early 1970s. Saudi Arabia supported the PLO factions “in order to restrain its excesses but opposing the radicals.” Minutes of National Security Council Meeting, April 7, 1976, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976, Volume XXVI, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1974–1976, Document 284. Kissinger also likened the Soviets to a “Trojan horse,” in that, if the PLO were given a platform for negotiations, the PLO would in turn “give the Soviets leverage over the negotiations if [the PLO] got into them prematurely.” Memorandum of Conversation, August 7, 1976, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976, Volume XXVI, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1974–1976, Document 292. For more on the Soviet-PLO relationship see Galia Golan. “The Soviet Union and the PLO since the War in Lebanon.” *Middle East Journal* 40, no. 2 (1986): 285-305.

³⁴² Minutes of Washington Special Actions Group Meeting: Middle East, January 14, 1976, *FRUSA*, 1969-1976, Volume XXVI, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1974–1976, Document 126.

³⁴³ “Carter sought Soviet support for the ceasefire and dispatched another letter to Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev via the hotline on October 5. The letter is in the Carter Library, National Security Affairs, Staff Material, Office, Outside the System File, Box 69, U.S.S.R.: Brezhnev-Carter Correspondence: 1–12/78. Brezhnev responded on October 6 agreeing that “the immediate termination of hostilities by all sides participating in the conflict must be realized.” The text of Brezhnev’s response is in the Carter Library, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, Subject File, Box 61, Soviet Exchanges: 1/77–12/78.” See Editorial Note, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume IX, Arab-Israeli Dispute, August 1978–December 1980, Second, Revised Edition, Document 77. Briefing Memorandum from the Senior Adviser to the Secretary of State (Habib) to Secretary of State Vance: Lebanon—Discussion with Dobrynin, November 17, 1979, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume IX, Arab-Israeli Dispute, August 1978–December 1980, Second, Revised Edition, Document 311.

this peace, each viewing the other with suspicion. At the same time, U.S. diplomats, such as Senior Adviser to the Secretary of State Philip Habib, did not view all future peace prospects as “bleak,” but they did “[come] away with the distinct feeling that the Soviets are not inclined to be helpful, although to what extent they may have stimulated the Syrian and PLO reaction is unclear.”³⁴⁴

As the U.S. and U.S.S.R. sought to curtail the civil war, Iraq saw Lebanon in an entirely different light. In the early 1970s, Iraq began to flex its regional might, with the first signs of Ba‘thist regime’s eagerness to use its military power to undertake its foreign affairs materializing during the 1973 Yom Kippur War.³⁴⁵ The invasion of Israeli territory led by the Syrians and Egyptians that began on 6 October 1973 caught the Iraqis by surprise—they had been left out of the conspiracy entirely. Nevertheless, the Iraqis quickly mobilized, with President Hassan al-Bakr calling both Presidents Anwar Sadat and Assad to inform them of impending Iraqi participation. The Iraqis lost 835 soldiers fighting on the Golan Heights—according to Kenneth Pollack, Iraqi artillery “caused more casualties to their own troops and their Jordanian and Syrians allies than to their Israeli foes”—but as Pesach Malovany argues, the Iraqi Army “acquired the greatest amount of battle experience since its foundation.”³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ Briefing Memorandum from the Senior Adviser to the Secretary of State (Habib) to Secretary of State Vance: Lebanon—Discussion with Dobrynin, November 17, 1979, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume IX, Arab-Israeli Dispute, August 1978–December 1980, Second, Revised Edition, Document 311.

³⁴⁵ For an overview of prior Iraqi action in wars against Israel, see W. Andrew Terrill, “Iraq’s role in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 11:3 (2000): 1-20: 4-6. DOI: [10.1080/09592310008423287](https://doi.org/10.1080/09592310008423287)

³⁴⁶ Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*, 176. There are debates over exactly how many Iraqi troops were deployed to the Golan Heights. Pesach Malovany argues there were over 60,000, about three divisions, while W. Andrew Terrill argues these numbers have been grossly exaggerated and contends there were only about 18,000 soldiers. See Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*. 51-62. W. Andrew Terrill, “Iraq’s role in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 11:3 (2000): 1-20. Pp. 2 and n2. DOI: [10.1080/09592310008423287](https://doi.org/10.1080/09592310008423287)

Important Iraqi rhetoric was born out of this conflict as well. This included the Iraqi legend that Iraq “saved” Damascus from an Israeli advance and occupation.³⁴⁷ The “saving of Damascus” was proof, according to the Iraqis, that Iraq would aid its Arab brothers. (The Iraqis would later argue that Syria betrayed this favor by siding with Iran during the Iran-Iraq War.) Iraq would also criticize Syrian and Egyptian capitulation, while simultaneously arguing that it would always resist the “Zionist” enemy, no matter the cost.³⁴⁸ Iraqi newspapers and radio programs chastised Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt for accepting the ceasefire when the Palestinians still had not been allowed to return home. Iraqi media argued that the Arab world was only using the Palestinians “when [it] suits their interests,” and they went further to suggest that they were actively preventing the Palestinians from “recovering their rights.”³⁴⁹ After the war, Iraq escalated its anti-Israeli rhetoric and action, including maintaining its boycott of the United States long after other Arab states moved on. Highlighting its participation in the 1973 war through government publications and declarations, Iraq began attempting to assert itself in a region previously dominated by Syria, setting the stage for Iraq’s later interventions in the region.

Iraq’s growing strength in the Levant and its maneuvering in the region did not go unnoticed. According to the Jordanians, the Iraqis had built a nine-division army by 1978 thanks

³⁴⁷ Iraqi presence in the Golan Heights may have delayed the Israeli advance and protected some Syrian targets, however. W. Andrew Terrill, “Iraq’s role in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 11:3 (2000): 1-20. DOI: [10.1080/09592310008423287](https://doi.org/10.1080/09592310008423287)

³⁴⁸ Never mind that even Syria was caught off guard with Egyptian surrender, with the Syrian command even debating whether to continue the fight. Pesach Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2017), 60.

³⁴⁹ C.I.A. Intelligence Memorandum, 9 November 1973, Middle East, 11/9/73, Box H-095, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, Washington Special Action Group Meetings, RMNL.

to assistance from the Soviets and \$3 billion USD worth of American arms.³⁵⁰ The King of Jordan also expressed concern about Iraqi action in the region directly to the Americans. King Hussein told Philip Habib, a career U.S. diplomat, that Iraq was “unstable and unpredictable and had resources enough to do damage in the region and particularly to Syria.”³⁵¹ To bolster its mission in Lebanon and to combat Syrian influence, Iraqi intelligence was carrying out “blatant operations” in Jordan as well. King Hussein likened Iraq to Libya, citing their utilization of students to carry out terrorist attacks abroad. Iraq, as he saw it, was an “expansionist” state, creating problems and disputes with some of its neighbors.³⁵²

Civil War Intensifies

As Maronite Christian forces were losing the upper hand in Lebanon, Syrian forces invaded on 1 June 1976.³⁵³ This Syrian invasion prompted the Iraqis to respond by deploying their own forces to Lebanon as well. Overall, this Iraqi intervention was not well sustained in terms of troop movements. Iraqi troops were deployed, recalled, and then re-deployed, often mirroring Syrian actions. For example, 500 Iraqi fighters whose government called them

³⁵⁰ The Jordanian Hashemite kingdom also believed that when Iraqi President al-Bakr were to die, there would be a clash between the army and Ba‘thist party entities, including the militia. They anticipated the fallout which shifted Iraq to the left, a move “that would help the Soviets.” This, much to the Soviet’s displeasure, did not happen. Telegram from the Embassy in Jordan to the Liaison Office in Riyadh, February 19, 1977, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume VIII, Arab-Israeli Dispute, January 1977–August 1978, Document 12.

³⁵¹ For more on Habib, see Catherine S. Manegold, “Philip C. Habib, A Leading U.S. Diplomat, Dies At 72,” *NYT*, May 27, 1992

³⁵² Telegram from the Embassy in Jordan to the Liaison Office in Riyadh, February 19, 1977, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume VIII, Arab-Israeli Dispute, January 1977–August 1978, Document 12.

³⁵³ There are numerous debates amongst scholars as to why Syria, under Hafez al-Assad, sided with the Christians. See Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*, 658n65 for more information on the decision and the debates surrounding it.

“volunteers” were deployed to Beirut, Tyre, and Sidon between September and October 1976. There, while coordinating with the Syrians, these troops also helped break an Israeli-imposed blockade and smuggled weapons to Lebanese fighters. When Syria returned to Lebanon in 1977, these troops were redeployed; some even had to escape through Cyprus and Egypt.³⁵⁴

The reaction to Syria’s invasion was a product of Baghdad’s rivalry with Damascus. While both capitals were ruled by Ba‘thists, all of whom were descended from the original Ba‘th party, the Syrian and Iraqi branches split in 1966 because of competing regional and personal ambitions.³⁵⁵ The party had been formed in Damascus in 1947 by Michel ‘Aflaq and Salah al-Din Bitar, a Syrian Orthodox Christian and a Syrian Sunni Muslim, respectively; both were educated in France and were greatly influenced by socialism and communism. At its first congress, the party was named the Hizb al-Ba‘th al’Arabi, literally the Party of Arab Renaissance, but in 1953 the name was changed to Hizb al-Ba‘th al’Arabi al’ Ishtiraki, the Arab Socialist Ba‘th Party. Influenced by socialism and a product of the post-colonial era, ‘Aflaq and Bitar called for the liberation of the Arab people from Western imperialist and capitalist forces, the return and redistribution of land and property to the Arab people, and the modernization of the Arab world.³⁵⁶ The party’s constitution called for the unification of all Arabs under the banner of one single state. According to the constitution, this would eventually encompass the

³⁵⁴ Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 71.

³⁵⁵ See Eberhard Kienle, *Ba‘th v. Ba‘th: the Conflict between Syria and Iraq, 1968-1989*. (London: Tauris, 1990) for more information on the buildup to the split, and subsequent regional divide.

³⁵⁶ Indeed, socialism, in the Ba‘thist party sense, was highly influenced by the likes of Karl Marx and other communists. However, the Ba‘thists did not adhere to a complete overhaul of society and destruction of capitalism as did their Western socialist brethren did. Rather, for the Ba‘thists, socialism, combined with nationalism, offered an avenue to free Arabs from foreign and western domination and manipulation. For more on this, see Paul Salem, *Bitter Legacy: Ideology and Politics in the Arab World*. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1994).

entire “Arab fatherland (*watan*) [which] is the part of the globe inhabited by the Arab nation which stretches from the Taurus Mountain, the Pushti-i-Kuh mountains, the Gulf of Basra, the Arab Ocean, the Ethiopian mountains, the Sahara, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Mediterranean.”³⁵⁷

Although the party was headquartered in Damascus, party organizations were set up in Transjordan (modern day Jordan) in 1947; in Lebanon in 1949; in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen in 1952; and in Libya in 1954.³⁵⁸ In 1954, largely due to the geographic expansion of the party, party organizations outside Syria were classified as “regions.” These were run by regional commands, with the National Command, seated in Damascus, serving as the executive body to all regional commands. But in the early 1960s, tensions arose between the regional command in Iraq and the national command in Syria. The two regional commands had tried to unify in 1963, hoping to then unify the countries, but the 1963 Iraqi coup ended this chance. Disputes within the Syrian wing of the Ba‘th Party spilled over into a coup in 1966, in which the wing dominated by the military overthrew Syria’s old guard. Michael ‘Aflaq would eventually flee Syria and settle in Iraq—an exile whom Iraq would use to further support its Ba‘thist credentials.

Between 1963 and 1968, the two countries competed for the affections of Egypt, then the most prominent Arab state under President Gamal Abdel Nasser. But the turmoil in Iraq, as well as Nasser’s failure to unify Syria and Egypt within the United Arab Republic, signaled the beginning of the end of rapprochement between Iraq and Syria. Debates soon arose, both in Damascus and Baghdad, over the nature of Ba‘thism. The governments also quarreled over

³⁵⁷ Ba‘th Party Constitution, General Principles 2, 6, 7 as cited in Kienle, *Ba‘th v. Ba‘th: the Conflict between Syria and Iraq, 1968-1989*, 2-3.

³⁵⁸ Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: a Study of Iraq’s Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba‘thists, and Free Officers*. (Princeton: Princeton University, 1978). Kienle, *Ba‘th v. Ba‘th: the Conflict between Syria and Iraq, 1968-1989* also cites these dates as well.

which regional command exemplified the true nature of the ideology. But this was not entirely ideological. Oil pipelines and water boundary disputes along the Euphrates River also fueled the rivalry. Each state attempted to use the Yom Kippur War in October 1973 as evidence for their claims that *it* was the true center of Arabism. Syria maintained that it was continuing to lead the fight against Israeli state, while Iraq accused Syria of supporting the “Zionist entity” for agreeing to a ceasefire backed by the United Nations.³⁵⁹ Ideology could not override nationalism in this case.

The rivalry between the Iraqi and Syrian Ba‘thist regional commands continued thanks in part to the growing personal rivalry between Hafez al-Assad and Saddam Hussein.³⁶⁰ Each man would support attempts to subvert the other in the domestic sphere, including Saddam supporting Syrian Islamists in their quest to overthrow Assad in the early 1980s. The antagonism itself intensified as both men sought to exert their influence in the region. Their battle for regional supremacy drew in both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. as well. The Cold War superpowers often used this division for their own benefit. For the U.S., a split Arab world meant that Arabs could not focus solely on destroying Israel. As for the Soviets, they pushed cooperation between the two but not the kind of complete reconciliation that could undercut the need for Moscow’s bargaining power in the region.³⁶¹ Friends of Iraq and Syria tried to navigate the growing tense schism, often to little avail. In one example, even Romanian President Nicolae Ceausescu, a friend of both leaders, tried to bridge the gap between Iraq and Syria, but he was unsuccessful as

³⁵⁹ Kienle, *Ba‘th v. Ba‘th: the Conflict between Syria and Iraq, 1968-1989*, 38-40, 70, 76-82.

³⁶⁰ The two had hated each other way before their formal ascensions to their respective presidencies. Kienle, *Ba‘th v. Ba‘th: the Conflict between Syria and Iraq, 1968-1989*, 46-48.

³⁶¹ Kienle, *Ba‘th v. Ba‘th: the Conflict between Syria and Iraq, 1968-1989*, 151.

well.³⁶² The rivalry and hatred reached the point at which Saddam added al-Assad to his enemies list when the latter supported Iran during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988).³⁶³

The Iraqis believed that the Syrians intervened in the Lebanese Civil War in order to control both the country and the Palestinian population along with it, seeking to end any chance for a future independent Palestinian state. This, as Iraqi leaders saw it, would give Syria unprecedented control over the region, an arrangement Iraq could not accept. Even American officials in Baghdad noted Iraqi panic over Syrian action in Lebanon, especially as Iraqis expressed themselves in the state media. As the U.S. Interests Section in Baghdad noted, “[the] Lebanese situation remains the major preoccupation of Iraqi press. Coverage of Syrian role in Lebanon is near-hysterical as [Government of Iraq] does its best to stir up internal problems for the Syrian regime. For example, July 12 papers carried stories of Syrian atrocities in Lebanon, mutinies in several Syrian Army units, resignations of Syrian Army officers, bomb blasts in Damascus, protests sweeping Syria, and wild celebrations in western Beirut following rumors of a coup in Damascus.”³⁶⁴ The tension between the two had escalated in 1975 because the Syrians were building a large dam in northeastern Syria on the Euphrates River. Since the dam would control how much water flowed through Syria into Iraq, the Syrians preemptively transferred troops to the region to keep Iraqi troops from crossing the border.³⁶⁵

³⁶² The Jordanians suspected this was reconciliation attempt was instigated by the Iraqis. Telegram from the Embassy in Jordan to the Liaison Office in Riyadh, February 19, 1977, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume VIII, Arab-Israeli Dispute, January 1977–August 1978, Document 12.

³⁶³ Williamson Murray and Kevin M. Woods, *The Iran-Iraq War: a Military and Strategic History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 34, 208.

³⁶⁴ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State: Iraqi Regime Frustrated by Course of Events, July 13, 1976, *FRUSA*, 1973-1976, XXVIII, Iraq-Iran, Document 313.

³⁶⁵ Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 70.

On 9 June 1976, while ordering Iraqi troops into the “Arab arena,” Saddam stated in an interview published by state media that the fight was not against Syria but against what he called the “Zionist” enemy.³⁶⁶ Iraq’s mission in Lebanon, according to Saddam, was for the good of the entire Arab nation. Iraq even went so far as to arrange for Libya, Algeria, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) to consent to Iraq “liberating” the Golan Heights through Syria—although it remains to be seen if Saddam truly believed that these states could contribute in a meaningful way or if he was merely seeking their endorsement. On 11 June, however, Syria declined Iraq’s offer to help rescue the Golan Heights. This denial stemmed in part from Syria’s having been excluded from discussion of the very arrangement that Iraq had put together with pretended generosity. It also stemmed from Syria’s own goals and ambitions for expanding influence in Lebanon. They saw no need for the agreement in the first place. As part of a public rebuke, Syria carried out aerial reconnaissance sorties into Iraq near northeastern Syria. To retaliate, Iraq took a Syrian pilot who had defected during one of these sorties and paraded him around the state-run media, through which he criticized the Syrian regime.³⁶⁷

Yet, although Iraq’s anti-Israel campaign remained consistent, there was some flexibility towards Syria regarding force coordination. In 1978, 500 fighters of the 32nd Special Forces Brigade were deployed to Lebanon to fight the Israelis after the latter moved into southern Lebanon. Although it had barred the movement of Iraqi troops across Syrian territory in June 1976, the Syrian government allowed it this time and even accepted assistance from Iraqi forces

³⁶⁶ The Hizb al-Ba‘th al-Arabi al’Ishtiraki records almost always refer to Israel as the Zionist entity, Zionist enemy, etc. For sake of clarity and reference, I am using the language of the Ba‘thists when referring to Israel as the “Zionists.”

³⁶⁷ Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 70-71.

as they crossed into Lebanon.³⁶⁸ It appears that, when Israeli forces crossed certain thresholds, the Syrians and Iraqis were at least willing to work together, albeit for a short while, against their common enemy.³⁶⁹ This convenient reconciliation raised alarms in Israel, who feared any future collaboration against them and their interests in the region. News of Egypt's peace negotiations with Israel also led to a brief *détente* between the two Ba'athist parts between late 1977 and early 1978. The U.S. was also told by the Israeli ambassador that the Israelis were concerned about the two Ba'athist regimes "being naughty" together.³⁷⁰ Elements of the United States government shared similar concerns, noting the possibility that on-going peace discussion between Egypt and Israel could well "quicken the pace of Syrian-Iraqi reconciliation, particularly in the area of foreign policy and military cooperation."³⁷¹

These moments were few and far between, however. The Ba'athist parties ended their *détente* soon after Iraq began maneuvering to replace Egypt as the leader of the Arab world and

³⁶⁸ Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 71-72.

³⁶⁹ Michael Eisenstadt and David Schenker argue that "from March 1976 until the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in April 2005, Syrian-Israeli relations in Lebanon were governed by a series of tacit understandings, loosely defined 'red lines' demarcating Israeli and Syrian spheres of influence, deployments, and activities." For more information on the Syria-Israeli dynamic see Eisenstadt and Schenker, "Syria's Role in the War in Lebanon," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 8 August 2006, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/syrias-role-in-the-war-in-lebanon>.

³⁷⁰ Telegram from Secretary of State Vance's Delegation to the White House and the Department of State, January 19, 1978, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume VIII, Arab-Israeli Dispute, January 1977–August 1978, Document 200.

³⁷¹ On the Saudis, the memorandum argued: "The day of reckoning that the Saudis have long feared appears to be at hand. In their eyes a treaty forces them to choose between two pillars of Saudi foreign policy—Arab unity and a special relationship with the United States. They seek a middle ground, but developments since Sadat's trip to Jerusalem seem to have denied them this option." Intelligence Memorandum Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency: Arab Reactions, March 15, 1979, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume IX, Arab-Israeli Dispute, August 1978–December 1980, Second, Revised Edition, Document 213.

when Syria openly supported Iran in its war against Iraq beginning in 1980. Both regimes would continue to claim the mantle of Arab legitimacy while attempting to undermine one another in their own homelands . By October 1980, Iraq and Syria broke off diplomatic relations. Assad later accused Iraq of being anti-Arab, since it was attacking another Muslim nation, a nation which would otherwise have focused its strength on destroying Israel rather than Iraq. In a speech broadcast on Radio Damascus in March 1982, Assad laid out his argument against Iraq:

When the revolution in Iran said: We are with you, Arabs, the Iraqi ruler invaded it. He now demands that all Arabs go and fight with him against the Iranians in their country as a punishment for them because of their support for us in or battle against Zionism and because they say that the cause of Jerusalem is their own cause.³⁷²

If anything, there was more grandstanding between Syria and Iraq throughout 1976-1989 than there was cooperation or reconciliation. One instance in July 1976 saw Iraq calling up reserves and deploying troops to the Syrian border within the Arab Security Forces—a military entity within the Arab League. Although the intention was to intimidate Syria, the Syrians were less than impressed and failed to see any cause for concern regarding a possible Iraqi invasion.³⁷³ Despite the shared enemy, the ultimate goal for Iraqi intervention in Lebanon—to contain, harass, and weaken the Syrian regime and its interests—remained constant.

Egyptian-Israeli peace negotiations and the eventual signing of the Camp David Accords in September 1978 created new opportunities for Iraq.³⁷⁴ Iraq had long moved against Egyptian-

³⁷² This diplomatic break, as to be expected, not a first-time occurrence. Kienle, *Ba‘th v. Ba‘th: the Conflict between Syria and Iraq, 1968-1989*, 162, 166-167.

³⁷³ Footnote #74 cites a former Syrian defense minister, interviewed in 8 March 1988 who stated they never believed Iraq was going to follow through on any supposed declaration of war. Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 71.

³⁷⁴ For a concise timeline of Egypt-Israel conflict and peace agreements, see No individual author listed, “Sinai Peninsula: The Years of Conflict,” *NYT*, April 26, 1982. For more information on the Camp David Accords, see

Israeli peace overtures. In December 1977, Arab opponents of the peace process, organized by the PLO, formed the Arab Steadfastness and Confrontation Front (or “Steadfastness Front”) at the Arab League meeting in Tripoli, Libya. Member states included Algeria, Iraq, Libya, the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen, Syria, and the PLO. The Steadfastness Front produced a formal charter and a “proclamation calling for the Front’s member states to break political and economic relations with Egypt and for the transfer of Arab League headquarters from Cairo.”³⁷⁵ Hostile to the peace process, the Iraqi delegation took the opportunity to protest Egypt’s perceived betrayal and at one point angrily walked out of the meeting to call for greater punishment for Egypt from their fellow Arab states.³⁷⁶

Iraqi rhetoric worried the peace participants. In conversation with American government officials, the Egyptians expressed concerns that Iraq would continue the call to arms against Israel after Saddam Hussein stated in 1978 interviews that, “even if there were peace, Iraq would not accept Israel. There would always be war.”³⁷⁷ According to the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Muhammad Ibrahim Kamel, the Israelis believed in “the honesty of the Egyptians, but

William B. Quandt, and Martin Indyk. *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics*. (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2016). Kāmil Muḥammad Ibrāhīm. *The Camp David Accords: a Testimony*. (London: Routledge, 2016). Nigel Ashton, “Taking Friends for Granted: The Carter administration, Jordan, and the Camp David Accords, 1977–1980.” *Diplomatic History* 41:3 (June 2017): 620-645.

³⁷⁵ According to this *FRUSA* document’s endnotes, “A full summary of the summit’s resolutions is in telegram 5738 from Damascus, September 27; National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy File, D780395–0045. Telegram from the Department of State to the United States Observer Mission in the Sinai, September 20, 1978, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume IX, Arab-Israeli Dispute, August 1978–December 1980, Second, Revised Edition, Document 63.

³⁷⁶ Benjamin V. Allison, ““The nucleus of the Arab peoples’ struggle’: Relations of the Soviet Union and the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front” (Unpublished thesis, Grove City College, 2017): 3.

³⁷⁷ Memorandum of Conversation: Middle East Discussions at Leeds Castle, July 18, 1978, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume VIII, Arab-Israeli Dispute, January 1977–August 1978, Document 269.

they also think that Iraq means what it says.”³⁷⁸ Other Egyptians also shared concerns about Iraq. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat relayed one instance of Iraqi intransigence to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, describing Vice President Hosni Mubarak’s visit to Iraq during his tour of Arab countries. According to Mubarak, after being met by Saddam at the airport in Baghdad, the two men got into the limousine sent to take them into the capital, when Saddam “pulled a pistol out and put it on the seat between them. Sadat thought that story was the best commentary he could make on the internal situation in Iraq.” When Vance asked Sadat about the chance that the Iraqis would block any peace agreement, Sadat replied by noting that “there were two ‘elements’ in the Arab world which would never accept a settlement: Iraq and Libya. He said that they were not important. He differentiated between the two, noting that the Iraqis were much more rational and are willing to discuss their differences and at least, in effect, agree to disagree. Gadhafi is demented.” However, notes of his conversation with Gadhafi report Sadat’s belief that neither Libya nor Iraq could “change the balance in the Arab world.”³⁷⁹

Egypt’s peace treaty with and recognition of Israel—formalized by the signing of accords at Camp David in September 1978—shocked the Arab world, leading to accusations of Egyptian betrayal and deceit. Iraq quickly arranged for a conference of Arab leaders “to condemn the Peace Treaty, the U.S. role in its negotiation, and Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat.” In late

³⁷⁸ In discussions with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Egyptian Foreign Minister Muhammad Ibrahim Kamel suggested “that the Israelis should listen to radio Cairo not radio Baghdad. Perhaps decisions could not be made overnight, but an agreement could be reached. If the parties simply kept talking about their fears, they would never get anywhere. The Iraqis would continue with their line.” Memorandum of Conversation: Middle East Discussions at Leeds Castle, July 18, 1978, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume VIII, Arab-Israeli Dispute, January 1977–August 1978, Document 269.

³⁷⁹ Memorandum of Conversation: Secretary’s Luncheon with President Sadat, April 4, 1977, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume VIII, Arab-Israeli Dispute, January 1977–August 1978, Document 26.

March 1979, eighteen Arab foreign ministers and leaders of the PLO gathered in Baghdad to “consider the implementation of sanctions censuring Egypt’s negotiation with Israel passed at the Baghdad Summit in November 1978.” The United States Interests Section in Baghdad reported the “harsh rhetoric” used by leaders of the conference: Saddam Hussein, PLO leader Yasser Arafat, and Iraqi Foreign Minister Saddoun Hammadi. In his speech, Saddam equated any Arab who supported the treaty with “an ally of Sadat and thus an ally of the Zionist enemy.” Arafat called for Arabs to boycott the United States, but Hammadi echoed Saddam when he argued that it was a “nationalist responsibility of Arabs to check Zionist imperialist conspiracy through an increase of awareness and sacrifices.”³⁸⁰

In outlining the six objectives of the conference, Hammadi laid the groundwork for Iraq’s claims to lead the Arab world. The six objectives were:

1. to expel Egypt from the Arab League and to isolate it both from Arab world and within the international community;
2. transfer the Arab League headquarters from Cairo, along with all of the League’s associated institutions;
3. stop all Arab economic, financial, and technical assistance programs for Egypt;
4. withdraw all official and private Arab deposits from Egyptian financial institutions;
5. “freeze” Egyptian membership in all economic, cultural, and other groups;
6. call upon the Egyptian people to shoulder their responsibility by supporting collective Arab efforts to confront Zionist, imperialist plots which have turned the Egyptian regime into their executive tool.³⁸¹

³⁸⁰ This *FRUSA* document also notes that “Saddam also criticized the United States for “pushing Sadat in to a peace settlement,” an action which he noted would cause U.S. interests in the Arab world to “suffer.” Editorial Note, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume IX, Arab-Israeli Dispute, August 1978–December 1980, Second, Revised Edition, Document 242.

³⁸¹ Telegram 694 from Baghdad, March 28; National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy File, D790142–0982 as cited in Editorial Note, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume IX, Arab-Israeli Dispute, August 1978–December 1980, Second, Revised Edition, Document 242.

But not all Hammadi's objectives were met, and the conference was not without controversy. For one, as argued by the C.I.A., not all Arab states were amenable to an "unqualified condemnation of the treaty and President Sadat."³⁸² The C.I.A. also viewed Iraq along with Syria and Libya as the "hardliners" leading this push. Agreeing to recall its ambassador from Cairo, Jordan was nonetheless reluctant to cut off all ties with Egypt. According to the C.I.A., the Saudis agreed only to "minimum sanctions" against Egypt.³⁸³ In response, Arafat launched attacks on Saudi Arabia, accusing the kingdom of being weak for refusing to challenge the United States and Egypt. This in turn prompted a "heated exchange" between Arafat and the Saudi delegation, which itself prompted the Syrian, Libyan, and PLO delegations to walk out of the conference room. The Saudis, greatly disturbed by the PLO's attacks, immediately informed the Americans that Arafat's attack was "most serious and completely unexpected." Furthermore, Arafat's verbal attack caught Riyadh so off guard that the U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, John C. West, wrote to the U.S. State Department that Arafat's attack had "upset all plans and calculations." Fearing something was afoot, the Saudis withdrew their commitment to implement the sanctions discussed at the conference.³⁸⁴

³⁸² Intelligence Memorandum Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency: Arab Reactions, March 15, 1979, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume IX, Arab-Israeli Dispute, August 1978–December 1980, Second, Revised Edition, Document 213.

³⁸³ On the Saudis, the memorandum argued that, "The day of reckoning that the Saudis have long feared appears to be at hand. In their eyes a treaty forces them to choose between two pillars of Saudi foreign policy—Arab unity and a special relationship with the United States. They seek a middle ground, but developments since Sadat's trip to Jerusalem seem to have denied them this option." Intelligence Memorandum Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency: Arab Reactions, March 15, 1979, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume IX, Arab-Israeli Dispute, August 1978–December 1980, Second, Revised Edition, Document 213.

³⁸⁴ This *FRUSA* document also cites Marvin Howe, "Arabs, Deeply Split, Bar Stronger Steps Against U.S., Egypt," *NYT*, March 29, 1979. The Saudis also told the Americans that they "worked hard to prevent radicals from carrying the day at Baghdad." See Telegram 2602 from Jidda, March 29; National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy

Despite the difficulties, the conference ended with a unanimous Arab diplomatic and economic boycott of Egypt, the suspension of Egypt's membership in the Arab League, and the movement of the League's headquarters from Cairo to Tunis. All other economic and technical affiliations were to cease.³⁸⁵ In March 1979, U.S. State Department officials noted that “during the last six months Iraq has become active diplomatically in an effort to improve its standing in the Arab world. Iraq's adept management of the Baghdad Summit Conference, its present intention to push for prompt action to implement Summit sanctions against [Egyptian President Anwar] Sadat once a treaty has been signed, and its mediatory efforts in Yemen are examples of this effort.... Iraq's persistence and the apparently genuine nature of at least some aspects of the Iraqi/Syrian rapprochement cannot escape the attention of other Arab states....”³⁸⁶ A June 1979 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) argued that the Iraqi regime was seeking “to play a leading role in the region[;] and a concern about unsettled conditions in Iran will, in the near term, push it toward non-confrontational relations with many other Arab states. Although muting their policy of subversion, Iraqi Ba‘th leaders will continue to support the development of party

File, D790144-0446, and Telegram 2746 from Jidda, April 4; National Archives, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy File, D790154-0337 as cited in Editorial Note, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume IX, Arab-Israeli Dispute, August 1978–December 1980, Second, Revised Edition, Document 242.

³⁸⁵This *FRUSA* document also indicates that the full text of the Baghdad resolutions is printed in Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1979, pages 29952–29953. Editorial Note, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume IX, Arab-Israeli Dispute, August 1978–December 1980, Second, Revised Edition, Document 242. For Iraqi internal discussions on this boycott, see CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-553, “Saddam Hussein and his advisers discussing how to punish countries that sided with Egypt after Anwar Sadat made peace with Israel,” 27 March 1979. See Kevin M. Woods, David D. Palkki, and Mark E. Stout. *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978-2001*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 118-121.

³⁸⁶ Telegram from the Department of State to the United States Interests Section in Baghdad: Iraq: An Anglo-American Perspective, March 24, 1979, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, XVIII Middle East, Document 136.

organizations in other Arab states and spread Ba‘thist socialist doctrine throughout the region.”³⁸⁷

But Iraq’s celebration over Egypt’s diplomatic isolation was short-lived. Early in 1979, the Shah of Iran, an American ally, was overthrown by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who instituted a Shi‘a theocratic regime. Although Saddam detested the Shah and his American backers, the Shah and Saddam had established an uneasy truce after the 1975 Algiers Agreement; the Shah had agreed to cease assistance to the Kurds, allowing Saddam to focus on the rebellion in the north, in exchange for territory in the Shatt al-Arab waterway.³⁸⁸ Iraq wanted that territory back eventually, and, with the Shah gone, all bets were off.

The Iraqis had three pressing concerns with consequences of the Iranian Revolution. For one, the revolution had replaced the Shah’s rule and ushered in an Islamic theocracy. The overwhelming success of the revolution, in that it had removed an American puppet and had even taken over the American embassy, galvanized other Islamists. Although the Ba‘th Party had created nationalistic narratives coated with Islamic tenets to justify its rule, Iraqi leaders also feared that Islamists could create their own narratives to challenge the legitimacy of the state.³⁸⁹ As Tariq Aziz, who had become Saddam’s Foreign Minister in 1983, argued, “all Islamist groups, with few exceptions, look at the regime in Iran as a power and an example to

³⁸⁷ National Intelligence Estimate: Iraq’s Role in the Middle East, June 21, 1979, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, XVIII, Middle East, Document 137.

³⁸⁸ No author listed, “Iraq and Iran Sign Accord to Settle Border Conflict,” *NYT*, March 7, 1975, <https://nyti.ms/2WjrmD9>. For information on the Kurdish Rebellion, see David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 323-342. (Chapter 16: The Kurds Under the Ba‘th)

³⁸⁹ See Chapter 4: Iraqi Foreign Policy in East Africa. Also, for more on Iraq and Islam, see Samuel Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion: the Authoritarian Roots of Saddam Hussein’s Islam*. (Oxford: Oxford University, 2018). Also see Ofra Bengio, *Saddam’s Word Political Discourse in Iraq*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 176-191.

follow...but once the Islamic state is established in Iran, this experience may repeat what happened to communism. When communism was established in the Soviet Union, communism around the world supported it and said, 'In this case, communism is possible.'"³⁹⁰ Moreover, since the new theocratic regime was based in Shi'ism, the Sunni-dominated Iraqi Ba'th party was extremely worried. Iraq's population consisted of majority Shi'a, but the government was by in large controlled by Sunnis. The Ba'th Party had long targeted the Iraqi Shi'a, pushing them to the margins of society. As COL Joel Rayburn argues, this disenfranchisement created a "fertile ground for a religious awakening," and Shi'a political groups, such as the Dawa Party and the Sadrists, began mobilizing against the Ba'th.³⁹¹ Respected Iraqi Shi'a called for Iraqi society to return to Islam and for the Iraqi government to transform into an Islamic government. This was a clear threat to secular mentality of the Ba'thist regime. As Saddam argued, "By God, I do not like them, I do not like those who work politics under the guise of religion. My trust in them is not good."³⁹²

The Ba'th had long gone to great lengths to suppress this religious resistance by arresting, exiling, torturing, and even executing Shi'a political leaders in the 1960s-1970s. The news and success of the Iranian Revolution galvanized the Iraqi Shi'a community and inspired hopes that perhaps an Islamic revolution would also soon transpire in Iraq. Many notable Iraqi

³⁹⁰ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-167, "Saddam and Ba'th Party Members Discussing the Status of the Party in the Arab World and Potential Cooperation with the Muslim Brotherhood," 24 July 1986. See Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978-2001*, 107-114.

³⁹¹ Joel Rayburn, *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*. (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2014), 13 (see also 9-19).

³⁹² CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-219, Saddam and Military Officials Discussing the Reorganizing of the Intelligence Service, 14 January 2001. Also see Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978-2001*, 84.

Shi'a, such as Muhammad Baqir Sadr, supported the new regime in Tehran, pledging support to Ayatollah Khomeini. In June 1979, fearing a Shi'a revolt, the Ba'th arrested prominent Iraq Shi'a, forced many to flee Iraq, banned the Islamic Dawa Party, and even executed Sadr by driving a spike into his head after he was forced to watch the rape of his sister by his Ba'thist captors.³⁹³ Despite the violent clampdown, the Ba'th party remained fearful that the Iraqi Shi'a and Iranian Shi'a would join forces to bring down the regime.

Along with Shi'ism, the Iraqis feared cooperation between Syria and Iran, since both government apparatuses in Damascus and Tehran were dominated and controlled by Shi'a elements.³⁹⁴ While Sunni populations dominated Syria, Assad's regime, including the military and state security apparatuses, was formed from members of the Alawite sect of Shi'ism.³⁹⁵ Religious connections were equally as important as geopolitical concerns, and both regimes sought to create a front against Iraq. Islamic fundamentalism, as espoused by the new regime in Tehran, was not welcomed in Damascus, especially in the light of Islamist-inspired rebellions in Syria between 1980 and 1982.³⁹⁶ No matter these ideological differences, as Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz would argue when discussing the Islamist rebellions against Assad in Syria

³⁹³ Rayburn, *Iraq after America: Strongmen, Sectarians, Resistance*, 14.

³⁹⁴ According to Kevin Woods, et al. in *The Saddam Tapes*, "When the Ba'th used the term 'Shi'a' in public, it almost always referred to non-Iraqi Shiites in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, or elsewhere." The authors also argued that "one is hard pressed to find explicit reference to Iraq's Shi'a population or 'Sunni-Shi'a divide,' even during the war with Iran" within the Saddam tapes. Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978-2001*, 88.

³⁹⁵ See Stefan Winter, *A History of the Alawis: from Medieval Aleppo to the Turkish Republic*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

³⁹⁶ Stanley Reed, "Syria's Assad: His Power and His Plan," *NYT*, February 19, 1984, <https://nyti.ms/2FDjuTY>

in the early 1980s, “I mean Hafez Al-Assad is Khomeini's ally. The Alawi is the [Shi‘a’s] ally....”³⁹⁷

The Iraqis also believed the new Iranian regime would work together with Israel, “the Zionists,” to undermine Iraq’s internal security as well as its interests in the region. Saddam stated to his inner circle: “...the Iranians are satanic turbans, and they know how to conspire and know how to plan a sedition, and they know how to communicate with the world...it is Zionism that is guiding [the Iranians]. Zionism is taking the Iranians by hand and introducing them to each party one by one, channel by channel.”³⁹⁸ Taken together, the Iraqi Ba‘thists believed that the new regime in Tehran and a Shi‘a ally in the region would forever alter the balance of power in the Middle East.

Therefore, American assessments in the June 1979 NIE were incorrect in that the goal for Iraqi expansion was neither the spreading of Ba‘thist socialist doctrine nor the repairing of the relationship with Syria to counter Iran. Iraqi extension into Lebanon was indeed predicated on preventing the spread of a combination of Iranian and Syrian influence in the region. In a recorded conversation in November 1979, Saddam and his advisers discussed Iranian diplomatic efforts and their influence in the Gulf. One of Saddam’s advisers remarked that “it seems that Iran is discovering these points and believes Iraq is playing a role bigger than its size, the role of

³⁹⁷ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-167, “Saddam and Ba‘th Party Members Discussing the Status of the Party in the Arab World and Potential Cooperation with the Muslim Brotherhood,” 24 July 1986. Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*, 107-114.

³⁹⁸ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-561, “Saddam and his Inner Circle Discussing the Iran-Iraq War and U.N. Security Council Resolutions Related to the War” (circa 1981). See also Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*, 79-80.

policeman, the protector.”³⁹⁹ The adviser continued his description of the Iranian thrust into the region, noting that the goal of the Iranian deputy prime minister’s visit to Lebanon was not only to assure “Gulf States that there is no real threat from Iran” towards them but also to isolate and sabotage Iraqi diplomatic efforts in the region. Worse yet, Iranian and Western media, according to the advisor, had picked up on Iraq’s worries and “[on its attempts] to acquire a leading role” in the region. The advisor concluded by arguing that “we should be observant of all political activities that affect us whether they relate to the Palestinian problem, the Lebanon problem, the Gulf problems, and Iran’s objectives in the region.”⁴⁰⁰

Iraqi intervention in Lebanon, therefore, rested on two major enemies: the *Zionists* (Israel) and the *Persians*. It is interesting to note the emphasis within the BRCC documents on the choice of Persian, rather than Shi’a, as the *enemy*. Ethnic tensions certainly mattered in the region, with Arab-Persian conflicts dating back well before Islam emerged in the Middle East.⁴⁰¹ Throughout his tenure, Saddam consistently referred to the Iranians as Persians and he often highlighted the historical struggles between the Arabs and the Persians, as well as the Arab

³⁹⁹ Saddam interrupted the advisor by retorting, “describe this to the Syrian consultant,” or, in other words, Hafez al-Assad. CRRC SH-SHTP-D-000-559, “Saddam and his Inner Circle Discussing Relations with various Arab States, Russia, China, and the United States,” (circa 4-20 November 1979). Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*, 129-132.

⁴⁰⁰ CRRC SH-SHTP-D-000-559, “Saddam and his Inner Circle Discussing Relations with various Arab States, Russia, China, and the United States,” (circa 4-20 November 1979). Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*, 129-132.

⁴⁰¹ See William Polk, *Understanding Iraq: Understanding Iraq: The Whole Sweep of Iraqi History, from Genghis Khans Mongols to the Ottoman Turks to the British Mandate to the American Occupation*. (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 13-33. William Polk, *Understanding Iran: Everything You Need to Know, From Persia to the Islamic Republic, From Cyrus to Ahmadinejad*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 21-31.

triumphs over the Persians.⁴⁰² Documents related to Lebanon and the national mission rarely, if at all, mentioned Syria and Iran's shared-Shi'a connection. According to Ofra Bengio, "the [Ba' thist] regime had enacted a 'conspiracy' of silence around the issue of the [Shi'a], lest they might have to share power with them."⁴⁰³ In this regard, the Ba' thists considered the Syrian-Iranian relationship as "elements of the Persian enemy."⁴⁰⁴

The civil war in Lebanon was a paradox for Iraq: it gave the Iraqi state another avenue in which to confront Syria and Hafez al-Assad; but the war also created a power vacuum and thus gave Syria and Iran an opportunity to influence events counter to Iraq's ambitions. In this sense, the national mission was a race against the clock to prevent Syria, and later Iran with Syria, from taking hold in Lebanon. U.S. officials in Baghdad noted that the Iraqis were frustrated over Syria's increasing role in the conflict, but noted that "[apart] from stepping up efforts to subvert the Syrian regime internally, which would have run the risk of encouraging corresponding acts by Syrians in northern Iraq, it is difficult to see what the Iraqi regime could have done to reverse the course of events."⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² For a few examples of this rhetoric see CRRC, SH-SHTP-A-001-039, Saddam and his Senior Advisors Discussing Israel's Attack on the Tamuz (Osirak) Reactor and Iraqi Civil Defenses, undated, circa mid-June 1981. CRRC, SH-IISX-D-001-083, Saddam's speech to IIS directors before the war, 18 February-9 March 2003. CRRC, SH-SHTP-A-000-910, Meeting between Saddam and Senior Iraqi Officials Discussing the Execution of British Journalist Farzad Bazoft, Modifications to Iraq's Constitution, and an Israeli Attack on Iraq's Nuclear Reactor, undated, sometime after 1989.

⁴⁰³ Bengio, *Saddam's Word Political Discourse in Iraq*, 99-102. See also, Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978-2001*, 84-88.

⁴⁰⁴ See Untitled, dated 1988/11/5, BRCC 0048, 078-2-7, HB, HIA. Separated from the party, 1986/12/25, BRCC, 0111, 078-2-7, HB, HIA.

⁴⁰⁵ Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State: Iraqi Regime Frustrated by Course of Events, July 13, 1976, *FRUSA*, 1973-1976, XXVIII, Iraq-Iran, Document 313.

The second enemy, the Israelis, offered a common and unifying enemy for all Muslims. Much like Syrian actions, Iraqi troop movements often mirrored Israeli action within Lebanon. As noted above, Iraqi special forces and volunteers were deployed to southern Lebanon to train and arm Lebanese and Palestinian groups in March 1978. Again, the deployment was short as Iraqi troops returned home by July 1978. However, the “Zionist enemy” also gave the Ba‘thists a scapegoat—if Iraq was fighting against the Israelis, then Baghdad could claim that Iraqi action was necessary. Often, Iraqi rhetoric took any Syrian influence as evidence of a Zionist conspiracy. The real enemy for Saddam and Iraq was the “Persian enemy,” and, by attacking the Israelis, Iraq was striking a blow against Persians and “Zionist” machinations. Baghdad’s logic was that if Damascus was acting in ways conflicting with Iraqi policies, then the Syrians must be colluding with the Israelis. On top of that, by attacking the Israelis and therefore protecting Lebanon, Saddam proclaimed Iraq – with him as its embodiment – as the true protector of the Palestinians and the Arab world.

This framework also allowed Saddam to criticize not only Hafez al-Assad in Damascus and the ayatollahs in Tehran but also Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Arafat was born in Cairo, and his father was a Palestinian refugee from Gaza. Arafat founded Fatah, a political party advocating Palestinian nationalism, and he served as PLO Chairman until his death in 2004.⁴⁰⁶ In the early 1970s, the Ba‘thist regime began serving as a makeshift safe haven for PLO and Arab terrorists, including the infamous Abu Nidal and his organization, the Abu Nidal Organization (ANO), as well as elements of the Palestine Liberation Front (under Palestinian terrorist and later politician Abu Abbas), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and

⁴⁰⁶ For more information on Arafat, his life, and his political ambitions, see Barry M. Rubin, and Judith Colp. Rubin. *Yasir Arafat: a Political Biography*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.⁴⁰⁷ Using Iraq as a base, some of these groups affiliated with the PLO would carry out attacks against targets both within Lebanon and in Israel.⁴⁰⁸

Arafat and Saddam cultivated a relationship based on their mutual interest in liberating Palestine and on their shared hatred of Israel and the United States. The two met in April 1990, to discuss potential terrorist operations against the United States. Saddam even suggested that “we can send a lot of people to Washington just like the old days. For instance, the person with an explosive belt around him would throw himself on [President George H.W.] Bush’s car.” Saddam would also tell Arafat that “we did not forget Palestine and our Palestinian brothers. They call us the invaders while Israel occupies Palestine, rapes the Palestinian women, and kills the kids daily!” To this Arafat responded: “Together until victory.”⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ Among many other attacks, ANO was infamous for the 1985 attacks on Rome and Vienna’s airports and the June 1982 attempted assassination for the Israel ambassador to the United Kingdom. He was also linked the bombing of Pan American Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in December 1988. However, Nidal himself was expelled from Fatah, after concerns were expressed over his extremity and brutality as well as his challenge to Arafat’s leadership. He was later executed by the Iraqi regime in August 2002, after suspicions of spying for Kuwait and Egypt. For more, see Paul Thomas Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Patrick Seale, *Abu Nidal: A Gun for Hire*. (London: Hutchinson, 1992). For a discussion on the different Palestinian groups see Jeffrey Herf, *Undeclared Wars with Israel: East Germany and the West German Far Left, 1967-1989*. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

⁴⁰⁸ Statement of Judith S. Yaphe to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States on “Saddam’s Iraq and Support for Terrorism,” Third public hearing of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, July 9, 2003. https://www.9-11commission.gov/hearings/hearing3/witness_yaphe.htm

⁴⁰⁹ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-037, “Meeting between Saddam Hussein, Iraqi officials, Yasser Arafat, and the Palestinian Delegation,” 19 April 1990. According to Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*, there is “no evidence indicating that the PLO had ever sent individuals to Washington, D.C. to perform acts of terrorism.” Saddam is likely referring to the Iraqi’s sponsoring PLO attacks in Lebanon. As for President H.W. Bush, in June 1993, the Clinton administration announced Saddam had attempted to assassinate Bush with a car bomb. The authors cited David Von Drehle and R. Jeffery Smith, “U.S. Strikes Iraq

Arafat even supported Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, citing his opposition to the coalition led by the Americans and calling for a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict before Iraqi troops withdrew from Kuwait. Opinions vary about why Arafat supported the Arab-on-Arab invasion, including his concern for the fate of over 400,000 Palestinians who were living in Kuwait at the time of the invasion. He was also frustrated with the Americans over negotiating a settlement. The move severely damaged Arafat's legacy and credibility, both within the PLO and in the Arab world in general.⁴¹⁰

But in the context of Lebanon, Arafat was a competitor in this realm of leadership. In a discussion recorded in 1978, Saddam disparaged Arafat by claiming that he was "not a true representative of the Palestinian revolution; you can tell when he talks about the revolution that he is reluctant and not confident."⁴¹¹ In reality, Saddam considered Arafat a threat, someone who challenged Saddam's claim to be protector of the Arab world. The national mission in Lebanon, therefore, could expose Arafat as a charlatan and a traitor to the Palestinian and Arab cause. According to Saddam, Arafat "did not move a whisker and was not the least shaken" when Syrians massacred innocent Palestinian refugees in 1976. Saddam argued that these actions

for Plot to Kill Bush," *The Washington Post*, 27 June 1993. See Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978-2001*, 115, n78 and n79.

⁴¹⁰ Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Confrontation in the Gulf: Arafat's Support of Iraq Creates Rift In P.L.O" *NYT*, 14 August 1990. Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Mideast Tensions; Arafat Stresses Linkage in Settling Gulf Crisis," *NYT*, November 26, 1990. Jack Anderson and Dale Van Atta, "Why Arafat Backed Saddam," *The Washington Post*, August 26, 1990. For more on the legacy of this decision see Philip Mattar. "The PLO and the Gulf Crisis." *Middle East Journal* 48, no. 1 (1994): 31-46.

⁴¹¹ CRRC Number SH-SHTP-A-000-619, "Culture and Information Office Meeting in which Saddam Hussein talks about the Palestinian Issue and Yasser Arafat" 8 September 1978. See Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978-2001*, 103-107.

“[show] the people the treason of Yasser Arafat....”⁴¹² Even then, as alleged by Saddam, Arafat, with “his evil brain,” had a plan “for people in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Syria, and everywhere else to execute attacks against us.”⁴¹³ Arafat, argued Saddam, was thus engaging in a conspiracy against the Palestinians, Iraqis, and the Arab world. It is ironic that Arafat was willing to stake, and arguably ruin, his reputation by supporting Saddam’s ill-conceived invasion of Kuwait while Saddam viewed Arafat as a competitor for the mantle of leadership in the Arab world.

Domestic Implications

Beyond geopolitical goals, the national mission also served as a way to enhance domestic control of the state. Following a pattern often repeated, the Ba‘thist regime used war as an excuse to purge rivals within the ranks of the party and among the military leadership. Major General Walid Mahmud Sirat of 1st Corps, for example, was executed at the end of the 1970s.⁴¹⁴ Coinciding with the outbreak of hostilities in Lebanon, in the late 1970s, Iraq also underwent a change in command. President Hasan al-Bakr stepped down to make room for Saddam Hussein,

⁴¹² Saddam is referring to the massacre of Palestinian refugees by Israeli backed Lebanese Christian allies at the Tel el-Zaatar camp in 1976. Woods *et al.* cite Robert Fisk’s 14 October 2000 article in the *Independent* in which Fisk said that Arafat “was a man who was prepared to watch his people massacred...so that he could show the world the brutality of his enemies.” CRRC Number SH-SHTP-A-000-619, “Culture and Information Office Meeting in which Saddam Hussein talks about the Palestinian Issue and Yasser Arafat” 8 September 1978. Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*, 106.

⁴¹³ Saddam would also state: “If Arafat continues with his bad behavior then let one of the brave Iraqis among the crowd draw a pistol and shoot Arafat in his chest and surrender himself afterward.” CRRC Number SH-SHTP-A-000-619, “Culture and Information Office Meeting in which Saddam Hussein talks about the Palestinian Issue and Yasser Arafat” 8 September 1978. See Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*, 103-107.

⁴¹⁴ Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 70.

who was then his vice president.⁴¹⁵ Saddam was always afraid of coups, especially originating from the military, and thus Saddam used the Lebanese crisis as yet another opportunity to terrorize his own party and the military leadership as a way to protect his own power.

The Ba‘thist party used the civil war in Lebanon as justification to enlarge the composition of the Popular Army, an entity which was created by the party in 1970 to protect the regime from countercoups and internal power struggles. Given the number of coups and countercoups between 1958 and 1968, with the Ba‘th in and out of power, the Popular Army was created solely to protect the Ba‘thists. In 1976, Saddam was given the rank of general by al-Bakr. At the same time, the Popular Army was doubled in size and control was given to Saddam’s protégé, Taha Yasin Ramadan al-Jazrawi. According to historian Charles Tripp, this move “effectively [deterred] any other faction in the party from challenging Saddam Hussein’s own leadership.”⁴¹⁶

Deemed the “army of the party” by the regular Iraqi military, the Popular Army was armed mainly with light weapons and deployed to major towns and cities to protect key infrastructure and government buildings.⁴¹⁷ Controlled by the Ba‘th party, the Popular Army ran parallel to the Iraqi Army and answered to Saddam and the Ba‘th elites. As Aaron Faust argues, the Popular Army “acted as a rural security force, guarded the frontier, and stayed in and around

⁴¹⁵ There is plenty of evidence and debate surrounding the extent of Saddam’s control of the Ba‘thist party before al-Bakr’s retirement. Some historians argue Saddam was completely in control in the 1970s, and this retirement was merely a formality. The logic is that Saddam did not want to upset those who supported al-Bakr in 1968, given al-Bakr’s clan connections and his history and legacy within Iraqi political and military circles. It also allowed Saddam to cultivate complete control within the Ba‘thist regime before his formal ascension. See Charles Tripp. *A History of Iraq*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), 186-214.

⁴¹⁶ Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 208.

⁴¹⁷ Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*, 146.

Baghdad to protect the Ba‘thist leadership.”⁴¹⁸ The Popular Army was quick to try to equate itself with other vital federal-level components of the Iraqi state—in one instance Popular Army Commander Taha Yasin Ramadan al-Jazrawi sent a report to nearly all ministries and security agencies to organize a celebration that “befits such an army on the national level” for the 16th anniversary of the Popular Army.⁴¹⁹ However, this was not a polished and well organized force. Historians Joseph Sassoon and Aaron Faust have shown the lack of discipline that plagued the Popular Army, especially in units in northern Iraq. Problems ranged from theft—so much so that the military camps were forced to move outside cities to lower the crime rate—to forged military cards and to soldiers taking advantage of black markets.⁴²⁰

The Ba‘thists categorized Iraqis who joined the Popular Army to fight in Lebanon as “volunteers.” Whereas a volunteer force, especially in the United States, carries connotations of individual patriotism and a sense of civic duty, those who joined in the Popular Army had little choice in the matter. Some Iraqis did indeed volunteer of their own accord, and such cases continued to arise throughout the war.⁴²¹ However, many of these “volunteers” did not join the Popular Army out of a sense of loyalty to country but rather out of a sense to save their own skins. Ba‘thist party members were expected to carry out their duties in the Popular Army; those who did not risked losing their membership and faced expulsion. Since the Ba‘th party was so

⁴¹⁸ Aaron M. Faust, *The Ba‘thification of Iraq: Saddam Hussein’s Totalitarianism*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 110. The Popular Army fell under command of Taha Yasin Ramadan al-Jazrawi, a “sycophant par excellence who could never rid himself of his sense of inferiority for being originally Kurdish.” Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*, 146.

⁴¹⁹ Taha Yasin Ramadan to Chief of Staff of the Popular Army, “Anniversary of the Creation of the Popular Army,” 30 July 1985 as cited in Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*, 146.

⁴²⁰ See Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*, 146-147 and Faust, *The Ba‘thification of Iraq: Saddam Hussein’s Totalitarianism*, 109-110.

⁴²¹ Volunteer Application, dated 1989/9/28, BRCC, 0259-0260, 025-3-3, HB, HIA.

ingrained in Iraqi society—with membership in it being tied to eligibility for jobs, education, or other avenues to social mobility—expulsion from the party carried severe consequences.⁴²²

Under the pretense of foreign intervention, the Iraqi regime used the chaos in Lebanon as means to control both the Popular Army and the Ba‘thist party itself.

True to the Ba‘thist bureaucratic disposition, lists were compiled of those fighters who were dismissed from the party because of their failure to carry out the national mission in Lebanon.⁴²³ Everything from birth dates, recruiting departments, and dates of enlistment were collected. Examining one particular list offers great insight into Ba‘thist motives and fears. Those on this list who were dismissed from the party were born between 1942 and 1958, putting them in the 18-34 year-old range; these men came from all parts of Iraq, not just from urban centers. To be sure, these men were of fighting age, and as Joseph Sassoon argues, the regime “needed to co-opt large segments of the population to strengthen its power base.”⁴²⁴ However, for the Ba‘thist regime and Saddam, these men posed the biggest risk in terms of internal security. Many of Saddam’s decisions—whether they were within the party or in the military—were predicated on coup-proofing his regime. Iraqi males 18-34 years old in the 1970s would have been well aware of Iraq’s many coups between 1958 and 1968.⁴²⁵

Therefore, by encouraging Ba‘th party members and Iraqi citizens from all parts of the country to “volunteer” to serve in the Popular Army, Saddam fulfilled two aims: he enlarged the

⁴²² See Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime* and Faust, *The Ba‘thification of Iraq: Saddam Hussein’s Totalitarianism* for more on relationship between the Ba‘thist party and Iraqi society.

⁴²³ Untitled, dated 1987/3/2, BRCC, 0149-0151, 078-2-7, HB, HIA.

⁴²⁴ Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*, 6.

⁴²⁵ See Chapter 5 (The Ba‘th Party and the Army) in Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*. For more on coup-proofing, see Ahmed Hashim, "Saddam Husayn and Civil-Military Relations in Iraq: The Quest for Legitimacy and Power." *Middle East Journal* 57, no. 1 (2003): 9-41.

ranks of the Popular Army—his own separate, but parallel army—but he also found yet another way to coup-proof, and thus protect, both his party and the regime. Iraqi intervention in other countries, therefore, served as another way in which to check and maintain control over both the Iraqi state and Iraqi society. As historian Joseph Sassoon argues, “the durability of the regime can be explained by the determination of the leadership to eradicate all opposition, whether military or civilian; its willingness to use violence and fear to control the population; its comprehensive system of rewards; its success in recruiting large numbers of supporters even though many were not fully active...and finally, Saddam Hussein’s own shrewdness and ability to outmaneuver his opponents and competitors....”⁴²⁶

Fighters who did not “perform their national mission” in 1976 could volunteer for combat in Lebanon at a later date in hopes of regaining entry into the Ba‘thist party—which many did.⁴²⁷ One fighter wrote to party officials in 1989, conceding that he had been dismissed from the Ba‘th Party in 1976 for his lack of good conduct. He mentions his participation in the Popular Army from 1983 to the time when he was writing, claiming that he had fought in twelve battles, many of them against the “brutal Persian enemy.” To back this up, the fighter includes a list of awards he received for his service. After six years of service, the fighter was asking for his release from the Popular Army now that “the war [is] over and Iraq won, led by the great leader Saddam.”⁴²⁸ Again, the Ba‘thists maintained lists of those who had not “[fought] against the Persian enemy in

⁴²⁶ Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*, 278-279.

⁴²⁷ Circulation, 1981/11/10, 0181, BRCC 078-2-7, HB, HIA. List of fighters, 1987/3/2, 0149-0150-151, BRCC 078-2-7, HB, HIA.

⁴²⁸ Fighter request, dated 1989/1/16, BRCC, 0043-0045, 078-2-7, HB, HIA.

1976” and who had therefore been expelled from the party but had redeemed themselves by fighting, as Ba‘thists insisted, on the front lines at a later date.⁴²⁹

Many of these volunteers sent to Lebanon had prior experience fighting in the region. Others had family or other connections in the country including various Lebanese, Jordanian, and Palestinian groups such as the Arab Liberation Front, Fatah, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization.⁴³⁰ To assist these volunteers and to coordinate efforts in Lebanon, the Ba‘thists, under the behest Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, created the Office of the Arab Liberation Front. According to Ba‘thist documents, the aim was to assist and support Arab and Palestinian liberation movements, “especially for [the] political and military struggle to achieve their national rights, [and to] regain their occupied lands, build their desired state, and deepen the spirit, ideas, principles and policies of the Arab Ba‘th Socialist Party and the revolution in Iraq.”⁴³¹

Bureaucracy and local connections helped the Iraqis develop intricate intelligence networks because the Iraqis seemed to have well-placed agents within the Arab Liberation Front, as well as agents within many Syrian jails.⁴³² Ba‘th Party records in the Hoover Archives include numerous lists of information on Iraqi-allied detainees in Lebanon or Syrian jails. These

⁴²⁹ Untitled, dated 1987/3/2, BRCC, 0181, 078-2-7. Separated from Party, National mission in Lebanon, dated 1986/12/25, BRCC, 0111, 078-2-7, HB, HIA. Circulation, 1981/11/10, BRCC 0181, 078-2-7, HB, HIA.

⁴³⁰ The Arab Liberation Front, for example, was small faction within the Palestinian Liberation Organization, created by Saddam’s predecessor President Ahmed Hassan al-Bakar in 1969. This group was linked to terrorist activities in Lebanon and in Israel. Nomination of a representative, dated 1982/7/2 BRCC, 0080-0081, 3348-0002, HB, HIA. Untitled, BRCC, 0414, 3703-0002. From the Secretary of the Leadership of the Unit Branch, dated 1983/7/24, BRCC, 0496, 3703-0002, HB, HIA.

⁴³¹ Office of Palestinian Armed Struggle, dated 1982/5/16, BRCC 0090-0092, 3348-0002, HB, HIA.

⁴³² In one instance, an Iraqi operative was transferred from Iraqi intelligence to the Arab Liberation Front as a “part-time member.” Intelligence, 1982/5/25, BRCC 3348-0002, 0075-0076. HB, HIA.

include the names of Syrian, Jordanian, Palestinian, and even Yemeni fighters along with their places of arrest, dates and length of imprisonment, political affiliations, and notes about the torture inflicted upon them by their captors. One example is a series of reports on Yemeni detainees. After their capture by Syrian-backed troops, many of these unfortunate Yemeni fighters were subjected to unspeakable torture. One Yemeni's "hand was shot from the fingers to the elbow so that the muscles and bones appeared."⁴³³ Even female detainees were tortured. One woman was reported as "bleeding from the uterus from being beaten by metal whips on her womb," while another detainee, likely suffering from poor medical treatment, was recorded with a blood sugar level above 400, resulting in her fainting. Another detainee suffered "beating from metal whips and electrical torture."⁴³⁴

These lists themselves reflect the bureaucratic temperament of the Ba'athist regime. Regional offices had to routinely request permission from Baghdad to process fighters and Ba'athist members leaving or returning home—these requests were then relayed through numerous channels for debates and red tape wrangling.⁴³⁵ Navigating the red tape often meant getting the approval of the President's Office—Saddam Hussein's office, that is. Saddam meddled in the smallest affairs. Even field reports had to be cleared by him before they could be distributed to the appropriate offices in Iraq and in Lebanon. Historians can often find Saddam's initials, signature, and comments within the margins of even the minor documents.⁴³⁶

⁴³³ List of detainees, dated 1989/3/21(?), BRCC, 0155-0160, 026-5-5, HB, HIA.

⁴³⁴ A normal blood sugar level ranges anywhere from 72-140, depending on when one last ate, if one is fasting, etc. List of detainees, dated 1989/3/21 (?), BRCC, 0168, 026-5-5, HB, HIA.

⁴³⁵ Basra Branch proposal, 1988/11/5, BRCC 0048, 078-2-7, HB, HIA.

⁴³⁶ Report, 1989/12/17, BRCC, 0014, 025-3-3, HB, HIA. See Faust, *The Ba'athification of Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Totalitarianism*, 73-80. The bureaucracy of the Ba'athist state only expanded after the First Gulf War. See Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*, 227-236.

Red tape could displace human suffering quite easily. In the middle of reporting on the torture of Yemeni detainees, one memorandum was sent back and forth between two separate Ba‘th Party offices in Lebanon. In the exchange, the former “branch office of the unit” and the new “Lebanese affairs office” discussed the transfer of office furniture “without allowance after obtaining the approval of party affairs.”⁴³⁷ After the matter was settled, the report resumed discussing the torture of Yemeni detainees. It appears that bureaucracy persisted throughout the Ba‘thist regime, both in domestic and foreign offices.

The Lebanese Civil War in the 1980s

By the early 1980s, the Israelis were fed up with the constant attacks, raids, and shelling coming from Palestinians within Lebanon. Especially sparked by Defense Minister and future Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin’s right-wing cabinet decided, in the words of historian Kenneth Pollack, to “solve the Lebanese problem.”⁴³⁸ On 6 June 1982, the Israelis launched an invasion of southern Lebanon. This invasion arguably became Israeli’s most controversial war. Clear goals were to destroy PLO elements in Lebanon, force the withdrawal of Syrian troops, and secure the Maronite faction’s predominance in Lebanon. But the Begin government also viewed this war as an opportunity to isolate the PLO in the West Bank, thereby further justifying Israeli annexation of the territory. However, the Israeli effort was disrupted by civilian massacres at Sabra and Shatila—where over 1,000 Palestinian men, women, and children refugees were slaughtered by the Phalange, an Israeli-backed

⁴³⁷ Furniture, dated 1989/11/25, BRCC, 0010, 025-3-3, HB, HIA.

⁴³⁸ Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*, 514. Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East.*, 383-386.

Christian militia, while Israel Defense Forces (IDF) forces stood by. The massacres drew domestic and international condemnation, prompting the Israelis to withdraw and pressuring Ariel Sharon to resign; Begin resigned shortly after as well.⁴³⁹

The Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon in June 1982 coincided with the recovery of nearly all territory lost by the Iranians early in the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). By April-May 1982, the Iranians turned the tide of the war, advancing into and liberating Khorramshahr (an Iranian city just southeast of Basra that had been captured by the Iraqis in November 1980 after a violent and bloody siege). The Iranians in Khorramshahr forced the Iraqis to retreat across the border by the end of May 1982.⁴⁴⁰ As if worrying about the Iranians in Khorramshahr was not enough for the Iraqis, they also had to contend with the fact that the June 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon had disrupted access to oil in the region. Since 1976, the beginning of the national mission, the Iraqis had ceased pumping oil from Kirkuk through Lebanon's port at Tripoli. The timing of this Israeli invasion in 1982 could not have been worse for the Iraqis, since oil-pumping activities had only resumed in late December 1981.⁴⁴¹ Yet another paradox emerged — stress came with opportunity. What the Israelis did was almost a gift to the Iraqis, and Saddam took this invasion as another chance to claim that he was the defender of the Arab world. Iraq

⁴³⁹ Israeli strikes on Syrian air defenses and positions prompted Assad to run straight to Moscow for assistance. He literally secreted himself out of Syria and went straight to Moscow. This drove Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev to contact U.S. President Ronald Reagan, who then in turn sent a special peacemaking mission under U.S. special envoy Philip Habib to the region. Neither superpower wanted this to become a greater issue, something they would not have been able to influence or control. Hiro, *Lebanon: Fire and Embers: a History of the Lebanese Civil War*, 386-389.

⁴⁴⁰ Military historians and tacticians generally see this battle as a major turning point for Iran in the war. For more information on the capture and liberation of Khorramshahr see chapters 8, 9 and 14 in Pierre Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015).

⁴⁴¹ No author listed, "Around the World: Iraqi Oil Flowing Again to the Lebanese Coast", *NYT*, 27 December 1981, <https://nyti.ms/2V2nvcw>.

proposed a ceasefire with Iran and withdrawal to the internationally recognized border between Iraq and Iran if Iran agreed to end all military activities. Saddam even suggested that he was willing to withdraw Iraqi troops so they could be transferred to southern Lebanon as means to assist in the fight against the Israelis.

Saddam's claim to protect the Palestinians and Arabs from the "Zionist" invasion, however, according to Pesach Malovany, was "no more than lip service directed at the Palestinian public opinion, since apart from the denunciations of [the invasion], the Iraqi leadership did nothing to aid the Palestinians."⁴⁴² Little aid, even symbolically, was sent to Lebanon largely because the Iraqi military was still reeling from its defeat at Khorramshahr—this arguably was the real reason for Saddam's offer to cease hostilities. Iran rejected the ceasefire.⁴⁴³ This symbolic aid continued even until 1988 when Ba'athist government officials argued that "we have not yet determined to employ all the fighting capabilities that we possess because of this mainly due to the general security situation surrounding the Ba'athists movement.... The areas surrounding the enemy's security belt inside the Lebanese territory are under the control of the three parties hostile to the party. The Syrian regime is called the eastern sector. The Amal Movement in particular and Hezbollah are located in the middle and central sectors."⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴² Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 231.

⁴⁴³ Malovany also argues this urge to assist Lebanon was more in response to Iranian parliament head Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's declaration that he wanted to send troops to Lebanon; the Iranians did send a small number of troops to Lebanon. See footnote 15. Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 196-197.

⁴⁴⁴ Report on Lebanese Country Organization, dated 1988/5/2, BRCC, 0035-0036, 3358-0000, HB, HIA. The full report goes from 0030-0043.

An examination of the national mission permits historians to consider the regional impact of the Iran-Iraq War—arguably, Saddam may even have seen opportunities in a possible two-front war—it also continues to show the domestic implications of this intervention. It cannot be said with certainty just how many were transferred in total, but the documents within the Hizb al-Ba‘th al-Arabi al’Ishtiraki records show that there were troop transfers between the Lebanese and Iranian fronts.⁴⁴⁵ The Israeli invasion provided yet another opportunity for Saddam to test Ba‘th Party and Popular Army members. Misbehavior or poor performance could have resulted in an increased risk of being transferred, or actual transfer, to the Iranian front, where the chances of injury or death increased exponentially. Fighters who were specifically cited for “failing to perform their mission” often faced this punishment; in an assessment of personnel after their transfers had gone into effect, the Ba‘thists even argued that these troops had “benefited from the educational lesson and the great opportunity that had been given to them.”⁴⁴⁶

The civil war in Lebanon ended with the signing of the Taif Agreement in 1989; the agreement saw the withdrawal of Syrian forces and Israel’s abandonment of the land it held in southern Lebanon. The agreement also reduced the power of the Maronite president in favor of the Muslim prime minister while altering the previous 6:5 ratio to 6:9 (three of the nine were allocated to the Shi‘a community). Syria was given a virtual fiefdom over Lebanon as the agreement acknowledged the “special relationship” between the two countries, going as far as using Syrian troops to implement the details outlined in the agreement. This arrangement , however, did not end all fighting. General Michel Aoun, a Maronite, rejected the agreement about a new government in favor of rebellion. His forces were defeated in October 1990; Aoun

⁴⁴⁵ List of fighters, 1984/7/23, BRCC, 0410, 0411-04112, 3703-0002, HB, HIA.

⁴⁴⁶ Inquiry, dated 1988/11/5, BRCC, 0048, 078-2-7, HB, HIA.

fled to France, and over 1,000 lives were lost. Aoun's blatant disregard for life, including those of his fellow Maronites, managed to unite a majority of Lebanon against him.⁴⁴⁷

The ending of the Iraq-Iran War in August 1988 allowed Saddam to seek revenge against Assad for having supported the Iranians. Iraqi media broadcast Saddam's statements supporting Aoun in which Saddam declared that "Assad was implementing an evil conspiracy in Lebanon that is aimed at dividing up the Arab world and sowing discord among its people."⁴⁴⁸ Despite not deploying troops in response to Aoun's rebellion, the Iraqis did conduct "massive weapons transfers to Lebanon's Christian forces" in order to, as the national security adviser to Vice President Dick Cheney argued, "[buttress] the ill-considered belligerency of General Aoun." These weapons were ultimately supplied by the Soviets, who themselves were arming Syria.⁴⁴⁹ Nonetheless, Iraq feared oversupplying Lebanese governmental forces and so began supplying Aoun's factions as well, hoping to draw Assad further into the conflict.⁴⁵⁰

In June 1989, the Syrians discovered that Iraq was sending Aoun Soviet-made Frog-7 surface-to-surface missiles aboard freighters and that they were to be delivered through the Jordanian port of Aqaba. After gaining little help from the Egyptians, Jordanians, and Americans, the Syrians declared that they would sink the freighter, prompting the Soviets to intervene. Vice President Dick Cheney's National Security Adviser, John Hannah, ironically

⁴⁴⁷ Aoun to Lebanon in 2005. Cleveland and Bunton. *A History of the Modern Middle East*. 5th ed., 386-388.

⁴⁴⁸ Broadcast on August 14, 1989, via the Iraqi News Agency, Hiro, *Lebanon: Fire and Embers: a History of the Lebanese Civil War*, 155.

⁴⁴⁹ John Hannah, "It's Moscow's Weapons Fighting Lebanon's War, So Moscow Must Step In," *Los Angeles Times*, 20 August 1989. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/its-moscows-weapons-fighting-lebanons-war-so-moscow-must-step-in>

⁴⁵⁰ Iraq's supplying of other Christian forces made Aoun jealous and also nervous that he could lose areas of Beirut. Hiro, *Lebanon: Fire and Embers: a History of the Lebanese Civil War*, 143.

pointed out that “the carnage in Beirut is being carried out almost entirely on behalf of parties that are, in one form or another, allied with and armed by the Soviet Union.”⁴⁵¹ The Iraqis were closely monitoring the Syrian-Soviet relationship as well, with a June 1989 political report arguing that “relations with Moscow are no longer the same as [they were] in the past.”⁴⁵² This was attributed partly to Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev’s new policies regarding the Third World, but the report’s authors also suggested that Moscow was frustrated with the conduct of Damascus in Lebanon. In addition, Assad refused to make amends with Arafat.⁴⁵³ The report also noted that the Syrians were not happy that the Iraqis were meddling in Lebanon once again.⁴⁵⁴ No matter the Soviet dilemma, the Americans in Baghdad also reacted by asking the Iraqis to reconsider sending the freighter, suggesting that any potential attack could draw Israel into the conflict and thereby risk engulfing the region in war. By July, facing Soviet and American pressure, Saddam announced that he was recalling the freighter.⁴⁵⁵

However, the United Nations imposed sanctions on the Iraqi regime on 6 August 1990 as punishment for Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.⁴⁵⁶ As a result, Iraqi aid to Aoun was

⁴⁵¹ John Hannah, “It’s Moscow’s Weapons Fighting Lebanon’s War, So Moscow Must Step In,” *Los Angeles Times*, 20 August 1989. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/its-moscows-weapons-fighting-lebanons-war-so-moscow-must-step-in>

⁴⁵² Political conditions in Syria, 1989/6/5, 0087, 3807-0001, HB, HIA.

⁴⁵³ Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the Iranian advances against Iraq in 1982 prompted the Soviets to involve themselves deeper in Arab affairs. However, as the C.I.A. argued, Moscow’s inability to “deal with both sides of the Arab-Israeli dispute and its reluctance to commit itself militarily to the defense of its clients,” led to a decline of Soviet prestige and credibility in the region. Soviet Policy in the Middle East and South Asia under Andropov, February 1983, CREST: General C.I.A. Records, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/C.I.A.-RDP86T00302R>. See Chapter 3: Iraqi Intervention in the Lebanese Civil War, 1975-1990.

⁴⁵⁴ Political conditions in Syria, 1989/6/5, 0086-0100, 3807-0001, HB, HIA.

⁴⁵⁵ Hiro, *Lebanon: Fire and Embers: a History of the Lebanese Civil War*, 150.

⁴⁵⁶ Special to The New York Times, “Mideast Tensions; Renegade Lebanese General Ends Revolt and Surrenders,” *NYT*, October 14, 1990, <https://nyti.ms/2DFln11>

severely curtailed. The Lebanese government was also left reeling from the loss of both Kuwait and Iraq, two of its most important trading partners.⁴⁵⁷ Despite being preoccupied with events in Kuwait, Saddam was disappointed to learn of Aoun's surrender in October 1990 as he had enjoyed watching Syria struggle to contain Aoun and his Christian forces.⁴⁵⁸ As for Syria, in what can be attributed to revenge and the continuing legacy of this bitter relationship, Assad sent his troops to join the coalition effort against Iraq in the First Gulf War.⁴⁵⁹

The legacy of the national mission illustrates some important themes. Similar to what American society faced following the Vietnam War, Iraq faced a serious domestic consequence from its long-term foreign intervention: There was a rising number of veterans who were counting on state support following their military service. In one instance, an Iraqi citizen wrote to his local Ba'ath office pleading for relief from his debts, which were increasing as his family grew. The veteran cites his withdrawal from school to travel to Lebanon to "to perform the national mission" between 1978 and 1979. He returned to Lebanon in 1982 to work with Palestinian students and the PLO, and he cited the credentials given to him by the PLO. Even though he was grateful for all the benefits and privileges he had received as compensation for his participation in the national mission, and despite his earning 120 Iraqi dinars from his army

⁴⁵⁷ Around 100,000 Lebanese and Lebanese-Palestinians fled Kuwait, costing them their remittances as well. Hiro, *Lebanon: Fire and Embers: a History of the Lebanese Civil War*, 178-179.

⁴⁵⁸ Nick B. Williams, Jr. "Syrians force General Aoun out of Beirut Christian rebel bows to Lebanese regime, gets French asylum," *The Baltimore Sun*, 14 October 1990. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1990-10-14-1990287034-story.html>

⁴⁵⁹ Even then however, Assad delayed his decision as to whether the Syrian troops would participate in the invasion, prompting coalition forces to assign these troops to the reserves. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*, 514. William Drozdiak, "Aoun's Defeat In Lebanon Linked To International Events," *The Washington Post*, October 14, 1990.

pension, the veteran argued that this was not enough for him and his family.⁴⁶⁰ He, therefore, suggested that the Ba‘th Party “consider a truly legitimate civil service [for] a radical solution to the needs of the living or the poor.”⁴⁶¹

As Israeli strikes were carried out against Hezbollah targets in Lebanon in 1996, Saddam issued a quintessential anti-Zionist diatribe. He said of Israel: “[for] nearly ten days, it has been waging a war of genocide against Lebanon...[cultivating] terrorism...[using] targeted killing, destruction, displacement, and striking all aspects of life from electricity, water, roads, transportation, homes, and plantations.”⁴⁶² The flight of the Palestinians was also stressed: “Once again, the Zionist entity is committing an aggression that kills, destroys and displaces a whole people, as it did before against the people of Palestine.”⁴⁶³ Restating conspiracy theories, he claimed that “the renewed aggression on Lebanon is one of a series of plans that targeted our Arab nation, the most comprehensive of which was the aggression of the Zionist-Atlantic aggression on Iraq, which aimed to extinguish the candle and flame of the high light in our Arab nation.”⁴⁶⁴ Again, themes of Iraq as the center, promoter, and protector of the Arab nation against the “Zionists” remained the same. However, Saddam did not offer any concrete promises of materiel or deployment of Iraqi soldiers. Only symbolic aid was promised, “[our] people in Lebanon, to you from the Arab Ba‘th Socialist Party, with its leadership and its support, all the work to mobilize the energies of the masses until the aggression stops.”⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁰ 120 Iraqi dinars was around \$386 USD in 1986.

⁴⁶¹ Letter, dated 1986/9/15, BRCC, 0045-0046, 037-5-7, HB, HIA.

⁴⁶² These Israeli airstrikes, under Operation GRAPES OF WRATH, occurred between 11-27 April 1996. Saddam speech dated 1996/4/21, BRCC, 0011, 3364-0000, HB, HIA.

⁴⁶³ Saddam speech dated 1996/4/21, BRCC, 0012, 3364-0000, HB, HIA.

⁴⁶⁴ Saddam speech dated 1996/4/21, BRCC, 0013, 3364-0000, HB, HIA.

⁴⁶⁵ Saddam speech dated 1996/4/21, BRCC, 0018, 3364-0000, HB, HIA.

Saddam Hussein's hatred of Assad continued. In literature produced and distributed by the Ba'ath Party after the First Gulf War (1991), Saddam charged that, because of its "special influence on its neighbors," Syria had been exploiting what he called "the system," the Palestinians, and the Arab world. Using "effective political and media centers" while increasing its control over PLO activity, Syria was also gaining influence in Jordan, thus extending Syria's "Arab military front." The Palestinians, according to the Ba'athists, recognized that "Syria is the bottleneck that controls the Palestinian armed action," especially after the PLO's expulsion from Jordan in 1971.⁴⁶⁶ Yet there was nothing the Palestinians could do about this Syrian guardianship. The same piece of literature alleged that the Palestinians chose to remain silent on this issue, somewhat content with Syrian control and interference in their own local affairs. This was despite being "stabbed in the back by the Syrians" over and over again.⁴⁶⁷ The Iraqis remained somewhat sympathetic toward the Palestinians, alleging that the Palestinians had limited options; the Ba'ath Party said of the Palestinians, "whenever they are stabbed...they have no choice but to act as if swallowing the knife."⁴⁶⁸

The Iraqis continued to attack Syria abroad as well. In one instance, an Iraqi delegation was sent to Geneva, Switzerland for a conference organized by Syrian opposition elements to be held between 21 and 23 March 1989. According to the Iraqi delegation's report, some 250 participants "representing human rights organizations and representatives of Arab and international parties and organizations" attended the conference, in which Palestinians,

⁴⁶⁶ Assad conspiracy against Palestinians, 1991, BRCC, 0332, 3272-0000, HB, HIA. James F. Clarity and Milt Freudenheim, "Jordan Expels Arafat Again," *NYT*, July 13, 1986, <https://nyti.ms/29BjG9f>

⁴⁶⁷ Assad conspiracy against Palestinians, 1991, BRCC, 0321-0371, 3272-0000, HB, HIA.

⁴⁶⁸ Assad conspiracy against Palestinians, 1991, BRCC, 0321-0371, 3272-0000, HB, HIA. The knife metaphor is on 0332.

Lebanese, and Syrians formerly held as prisoners detailed their torture and “repression” during their imprisonment under the Assad regime.⁴⁶⁹ The conference, according to Ba‘th Party documents, was a “global trial of the Syrian regime and the brutal brutality,” and it published the details of Syria’s “terrorism” and acts of “genocide, executions, political assassinations, physical assassinations, hostage-taking, arbitrary detention and the most brutal practices. The types of torture are brutal against the detainees psychologically and physically.”⁴⁷⁰ The Iraqi delegation was happy to report that the conference participants discussed the “Iraqi victory” against Syria, praising Iraqi leadership within the Arab world. Reports about the conference that were circulated in the Ba‘th Party again touched on themes of the national mission: “Lebanon did not suffer alone from Syrian [actions], but rather Lebanon’s struggle was indicative of the entire Arab struggle and Palestinian crisis.”⁴⁷¹

The differences between Iraq’s geopolitical ambitions and its accomplishments remained. The Israeli, Syrian, and Iranian regimes remained intact, and they were very much a part of Lebanese politics; now Syria arguably even had “guardianship” of Lebanon as part of the Taif Agreement.⁴⁷² Yasser Arafat survived, both personally and politically, as well. The only thing remaining for Saddam to claim, therefore, was his defense and supposed leadership of the Arab

⁴⁶⁹ The Supreme Committee of the Progressive Patriotic and National Front, 1989/4/4, BRCC 0153-0154, 3703-0002, HB, HIA. International Conferences for Solidarity with Palestinian, Lebanese, and Syrian Students, 1989/3/21, BRCC 0161-0167, 026-5-5. HB, HIA.

⁴⁷⁰ The Supreme Committee of the Progressive Patriotic and National Front, 1989/4/4, BRCC 0153-0154, 3703-0002, HB, HIA. International Conferences for Solidarity with Palestinian, Lebanese, and Syrian Students, 1989/3/21, BRCC 0161-0167, 026-5-5. HB, HIA.

⁴⁷¹ The Supreme Committee of the Progressive Patriotic and National Front, 1989/4/4, BRCC 0153-0154, 3703-0002, HB, HIA. International Conferences for Solidarity with Palestinian, Lebanese, and Syrian Students, 1989/3/21, BRCC 0161-0167, 026-5-5. HB, HIA.

⁴⁷² See Imad Salamey, “Failing Consociationalism in Lebanon and Integrative Options” in *International Journal of Peace Studies*. 14 (2): 83-105.

nation and Arab world. Yet this, too, was grossly exaggerated and had run its course within the Arab world. Ironically, at the 1989 Arab People's Congress, Libya, a one-time supporter of Iraq's national mission, blamed Iraq for the destruction and devastation in Lebanon, arguing that "the Iraqi regime has strengthened its supply of weapons to the strong, which helps in the further killing and destruction of Lebanon and its people, and the blood of all factions of the Arab Liberation Movement, which is fighting for freedom, democracy, and human rights in different parts of the Arab world."⁴⁷³

The 1990's

Saddam's actions in Kuwait between August 1990 and February 1991 certainly did not help his claims to be the leader of the Arab world. Contending that Kuwait was Iraq's (allegedly) stolen 19th province, Saddam invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990. In reality, Saddam wanted to control Kuwaiti oil fields, to expand Iraq's shoreline in the Persian Gulf, and to find a quick solution to Iraq's deteriorating financial situation. Invading Kuwait, therefore, was meant to provide Iraq immediate economic relief. But it also allowed Saddam to rally his people around the flag. In the aftermath of the war with Iran, Saddam feared losing face, both at home and abroad. These fears were well grounded. Arab leaders had rejected his pleas for economic assistance, and he feared looking weak within his own party and before the Iraqi military.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷³ The Political Report of the So-Called Arab People's Congress in Libya, dated 1989/9/13, BRCC, 0312-0314, 0318, 025-3-3, HB, HIA.

⁴⁷⁴ Dina Rizk Khoury, *Iraq in Wartime Soldiering, Martyrdom, and Remembrance*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 33-35.

Kuwait quickly fell to Iraq, as was to be expected. Kuwait's armed force was small, and its leaders were caught completely off-guard by the Iraqi invasion.⁴⁷⁵

By 5 August 1990, Iraqi units, including the Republican Guard, began withdrawing from Kuwait, leaving the Popular Army to maintain control in Kuwait. It had been disbanded between 1988 and 1989 after operations concluded in Iran and Lebanon. However, after Iraq seized Kuwait, the Popular Army was quickly reconstituted as means to help secure Iraq's new territory.⁴⁷⁶ Volunteers were sought out, both at home and abroad. Some recruits from Jordan and Palestine joined; the Iraqi embassy in Amman, Jordan even sought permission to accept the volunteers arriving at their doorstep. Some of these volunteers just as they were given orders just as before, but this time to Kuwait, both to assist in combat and to "lead volunteers after training."⁴⁷⁷ When units of the Popular Army returned to Baghdad in October 1990, they gave a parade of more than a million fighters, including volunteers from Palestine, Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, and even a contingent of Syrians.⁴⁷⁸

Even the general improvement in the quality of volunteers along with needed organizational changes was not enough to improve the performance of the Popular Army, however. In the occupation of Kuwait, it helped to loot and pillage the country; but as had been the case in its experiences in the national mission in Lebanon, the Popular Army was more show than force. It was quickly withdrawn from the country when U.S.-led coalition forces began their counter-invasion to liberate Kuwait in late February 1991. Iraqi Army leaders and officials, as

⁴⁷⁵ For a detailed overview of the Iraqi invasion, see Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 503-516.

⁴⁷⁶ Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 825.

⁴⁷⁷ Acceptance of volunteers from Jordan and Palestine, 1990/8/6, NIDS, 0218120, KDP 33229. HIA.

⁴⁷⁸ Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 825.

they had prior to the invasion of Kuwait, scorned the claims of productivity and even the existence of this parallel force. The Popular Army's fate was sealed after performing dismally in the Iraqi Intifada of 1991—in the wake of Saddam's defeat in Kuwait, the Shi'a population in southern Iraq rose up against the regime. The Popular Army failed to crush the rebellion in its early stages and proved itself completely ineffective. The Ministry of Defense was then given control over all the Popular Army's assets and infrastructure.⁴⁷⁹

But the idea of an alternative, parallel armed force did not die. Neither did Saddam's fear of coups and conspiracies against him—General al-Hamdani told prominent specialist in the history of Iraq Joseph Sassoon that “the fear of internal conspiracies eclipsed everything after 1991, and that Saddam Hussein became obsessed with the possibility of a coup d'état or another intifada to an extent that made life unbearable for professional soldiers in their daily jobs.”⁴⁸⁰ Saddam disbanded the Popular Army in 1991, establishing in its place the Jerusalem (al-Quds) Army in early 2001. This came in response to the second Palestinian intifada in September 2000.⁴⁸¹ Much of this was merely a name change—the “volunteers” were encouraged to help

⁴⁷⁹ Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*, 146-147.

⁴⁸⁰ Saddam never even officially nominated his favored son, Quasy, as his successor, fearing he would make the same mistake that the Sultan of Oman had made when he named his son, Qaboos, as his successor; Qaboos successfully overthrew his own father in a coup in 1970. Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*, 143, 192.

⁴⁸¹ The term “Intifada,” or “uprising” in Arabic, is often attributed to the Palestinian uprisings in Israel, first in 1991, and then in 2000. However, the Iraqis had their own “intifada” when the southern peoples of Iraq rebelled following the 1991 Gulf War. Originally promised support from the Americans, support which did not materialize in the end, the Shi'a were brutally crushed. There was another intifada in the north of Iraq as well, when the Kurdish people, like the Shi'a in the south, rose up against the Iraqi regime after responding to calls from the Americans. They, too, were crushed. Saddam and his commanders discuss both intifadas in CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-739, “Saddam and Officials Discussing the States of the Iraq Army, the 1991 Uprising, and the Withdrawal from Kuwait,” 3 April 1991. For more on the Palestinian intifadas, their legacies, the subsequent Oslo Accords, and the effect of these agreements, see Lawrence Joffe, *Keesing's Guide to the Mid-East Peace Process*, (London: Cartermill International,

“liberate” Jerusalem, with Saddam even calling for people to enlist in *jihad* against the “Zionist entity” in Jerusalem.⁴⁸² Iraqi propaganda alleged that over “seven million Iraqi volunteers answered the call.” There were massive parades held in Baghdad to celebrate this force, while propaganda pieces circulated the country, some portraying Saddam as the heir to Islamic heroes Caliph ‘Umar and Salah al-Din.⁴⁸³

It remains unclear whether Saddam really intended to deploy this force to Israel—there is some evidence to suggest that Iraqis began coordinating with Hamas, which focused either on Palestinian liberation or else on terrorism, depending on who was asked. This group was based in Gaza, and there was even talk of possible Iraqi transfer of UAVs to Hamas, a Palestinian militant group. However, the force was rife with misconduct, and Iraqi military leadership continued to resent this parallel but uncoordinated force.⁴⁸⁴ It was despised by military leaders.

1996), William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010), Cheryl A. Rubenberg, *The Palestinians: in Search of a Just Peace*. (Boulder, CO: Rienner, 2003), Charles Enderlin, *Shattered Dream: The Failure of the Peace Process in the Middle East, 1995-2002*. (New York: Other Press, 2003). For more on the rebellions in southern Iraq, see William R. Polk, *Understanding Iraq: the Whole Sweep of Iraqi History, from Genghis Khans Mongols to the Ottoman Turks to the British Mandate to the American Occupation*. (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 153-156. Al-Jabbar, Faleh Abd. "Why the Uprisings Failed." *Middle East Report*, no. 176 (1992): 2-14. doi:10.2307/3012605.

⁴⁸² Translated directly, *jihad* (جهاد) means “struggle.” Because the term has been co-opted by extremists and terrorist groups, it is often mistranslated into “holy war.” For more on this phenomenon and the concept of “*jihad*” as holy war see Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones (Ma'alim fi al-Tariq)*, originally published in 1964; William McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: the History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*. (New York: Picador, 2016); Shadi Hamid, *Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle over Islam Is Reshaping the World*. (New York: Saint Martin’s Griffin, 2017).

⁴⁸³ Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 652-653, 852.

⁴⁸⁴ Historians speculate there were 500,000 troops in this force, not the seven million announced by the Ba‘thists in October 2000. Kevin M. Woods, and Michael R. Pease. *The Iraqi Perspectives Report: Saddam’s Senior Leadership on Operation Iraqi Freedom from the Official U.S. Joint Forces Command Report*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006), 48.

After the 2003 U.S. invasion under Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, the Iraqi Minister of Defense, Sultan Hashim Ahmed, stated: “The Quds [Jerusalem] force was a headache, they had no equipment for a serious war and their creation was a bad idea...but the Army had no control of them. Their instructions came from only the President’s office and not from normal military channels.”⁴⁸⁵ In reality, the al-Quds force diverted “the public’s attention from the regime’s internal difficulties and the pressure being exerted on it by the Coalition to a mission that was universally acceptable: aiding the Palestinians in their military efforts against Israel.”⁴⁸⁶ This transition from the Popular Army to the al-Quds Army also demonstrates both Saddam’s continued desire to create and deploy parallel forces abroad as priorities and missions changed as well as his need for a force parallel to the regular Iraqi Army.

In the spring of 2001, a request was filed from the President’s Office for information on a particular comrade of the Muthanna Branch. Why this information was requested is unknown—the document itself, to the historian’s frustration, has been physically cut in half—but the information present is that the comrade participated in action in Lebanon and that he assisted in capturing fugitives and defectors. His willingness to die for Iraq was also specifically mentioned.⁴⁸⁷ Why Saddam wanted this information is unknown. It is possible this comrade maintained, saved, or re-earned his Ba‘th Party membership by fighting in Lebanon. Perhaps he even earned Saddam’s esteem through these actions. This foray may have been considered inconsequential to many then, and even today, but as this document suggests, the national mission was still on Saddam Hussein’s mind in 2001.

⁴⁸⁵ Woods and Pease. *The Iraqi Perspectives Report: Saddam’s Senior Leadership on Operation Iraqi Freedom from the Official U.S. Joint Forces Command Report*, 50.

⁴⁸⁶ Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 655.

⁴⁸⁷ [Comrade’s name withheld] dated 2001/16/4, BRCC, 0062, 077-3-4, HB, HIA.

Iraq was ultimately able neither to shift the power dynamic nor to secure any lasting influence in Lebanon. The military deployments were short and ineffective, the Palestinian people were still left stateless, and the attempts to substantially weaken the Syrian regime proved fruitless. Iraqi claims to the mantle of leadership in the Arab world were all but destroyed when Saddam decided to invade Kuwait in August 1990. However, at home, the Iraqi national mission allowed the Ba'athists to expand their control within the party and over the Popular Army. Party members who failed to volunteer or who failed to perform well at the battlefield risked losing their party membership, a loss that could severely damage their positions and chances of social mobility within Iraqi society. Ever fearful of a potential coup d'état, Saddam used the intervention to further justify his culling of the Iraqi armed forces, removing any suspect officers or party members who posed a potential threat to his reign. If anything, further regime security was the only tangible success from this Iraqi intervention in Lebanon.

Chapter 4 - Iraqi Foreign Policy in East Africa

During the Cold War, Iraq crushed several Kurdish rebellions, intervened in Lebanon, competed with Syria, and waged war against Iran. However, as this chapter will illustrate, Iraq's foreign policy interests in the Cold War era extended beyond the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. For that matter, these interests continued well into the 1990s even after the Iraqi defeat in Kuwait and the implementation of U.N. sanctions against the Ba'athist regime. One such area in which the Iraqis were involved was the Horn of Africa. Specifically, Baghdad was interested in the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict, a war that engulfed the region and drew Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, and Libya in as well.

Iraqi political and diplomatic operations in East Africa were complicated and spread throughout the region. Iraq used organizations housed in its embassies in the Horn to conduct political and intelligence operations in attempts to gain more influence; the Ba'ath Party viewed local student and liberation groups as critical for these operations. And even though the Iraqis remained active and interested in East Africa into the 1990s, Iraqi documents do not suggest that many of these operations were successful. In many cases, Iraq was bogged down by factionalism and incompetence; these were either a product of Iraq's meddling or of events beyond Baghdad's control.

For one, Iraq had geopolitical interests in the Horn of Africa. Iraq ultimately wanted to secure political alliances in hopes of obtaining better access to the region. Iraq also desired friendly relations with states along the Red Sea. Reliable access to the Red Sea, and the Bab el

Mandeb straits, would have granted Iraq more security over its oil shipments in the region.⁴⁸⁸ On the other hand, the Ba‘thists saw this region as one in which they were monitoring the activities of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., the Cold War superpowers. Despite their client status, the Iraqis resented that the Soviets were pushing socialism in the Third World. The Iraqis had long resisted Soviet pressure and support for communist elements within Iraq, which had led to increased tension and resentment between Moscow and Baghdad. But Baghdad also resented Soviet intentions to support and bolster socialist regimes in the Horn of Africa, convinced that the Soviets were trying to implement Marxist-Leninist regimes as means to expand their domination in this region. Soviet maneuvers in South Yemen and Oman also heightened Baghdad’s fears.⁴⁸⁹ In this sense, Iraqi leaders feared that the Soviets were angling to encircle and control both the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁸ Controlling these waterways could have also allowed Iraq, and other Arab states for that matter, to hypothetically blockade Israel and limit Tel Aviv’s access to the Red Sea. Roy Pateman, "Eritrea, Ethiopia, And the Middle Eastern Powers: Image and Reality." *Northeast African Studies* 8, no. 2/3 (1986), 23-39: 25.

⁴⁸⁹ Oles M. and Bettie Smolansky, *The U.S.S.R. and Iraq: The Soviet Quest for Influence*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 190-194.

⁴⁹⁰ The Iraqis also feared Iranian domination over the Persian Gulf after Iran and Oman moved closer together. Haim Shemesh, *Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988: In the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict*. (Boulder, Co.: Rienner, 1992), 157; CRRC, SH-SHTP-A-000-851, Saddam and High-Ranking Officials Discussing Khomeini, the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict, the Potential for Kurdish Unrest, and the Iranian Economy, 20 February 1979; Karen De Young, "Eritrea is not for Cubans," *The Washington Post*, 22 June 1978; Iraq-USSR: A Downturn in Relations, February 1980, FOIA, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001255354.pdf. See also Military Thought (USSR): Once More on the Modern Concept and Classification of Theaters of Military Operations, March 1976, Soviet Warsaw Pact Military Journals, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP10-00105R000201700001-6.pdf> ; For more about the Soviet Union, socialism, and the Horn of Africa, see Odd Arne Westad, "The Prospects of Socialism: Ethiopia and the Horn," in *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 250–87.

However, not all Iraqi action in East Africa was driven by this anti-Soviet agenda. Iraq was interested to see what other global players, including the Americans and the Chinese, were doing in the Horn. The Ba‘th also monitored other regional players such as Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and more. In the mid-1970s, Iraq began attempting to assume the mantle of leadership in the Arab world, and so the Ba‘thists were concerned as to what other Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia, were doing in the region. Iraqi activities in the Horn of Africa illustrate how pan-Arabism and, to a lesser extent, non-alignment played important roles in the formulation of Iraq’s foreign policy. In the Horn of Africa, Baghdad sought to expand its influence in areas that it saw as ripe for exploitation and for its benefit—both geopolitical and ideological.

Iraq, Ethiopia, and Eritrea

For most of their history, Ethiopia and Iraq had little connection, and their histories developed apart from one another until the middle of the 20th century. Even then, it was not matters intrinsic to Ethiopia that were of special interest to Iraq. Ethiopia regained its independence in 1947 after the removal of Italian forces that had been present since they invaded in 1935. From the late 1940s on, the Ethiopian monarchy faced two major separatist movements. One movement was centered in Ogaden, the Somali-dominated province of Ethiopia, which campaigned against Ethiopia for independence in two separate wars—the first in 1963-1964 and the second in 1977-1978. In the first war, some ethnic Somalis in Ethiopia formed guerrilla groups, which were supported by the government of neighboring Somalia. These rebel forces attacked Ethiopian military and police garrisons with initial success, only to be pushed back to the border. Although there was little international recognition for Somalia’s claims to Ogaden, heavily mechanized Somali forces drove deep into the region in 1977, aided by the Somali

Liberation Front, a guerilla entity based in the contested area. However, the Americans did not come to the aid of Ethiopia in this new war because they had cut aid to Ethiopia after Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown in 1974 by a communist-led military coup d'état, under a military committee known as the Derg. Instead, the Ethiopians were aided and backed by Soviet advisors, weapons, and air power, driving the Somalis out in “blitzkrieg-style” operations.⁴⁹¹

The second independence movement pitted Ethiopia against the Eritreans in a problem that was deeply rooted. To strengthen its control over East Africa, Italy had created new colonies by consolidating numerous kingdoms and sultanates in the late 1800s. Italian Somaliland was established 1888 with Italian Eritrea following suit in 1890. After the Italians were defeated in World War II, the British assumed control over Eritrea until 1952, when the United Nations granted Eritrea federal status within Ethiopia. However, Eritrea was formally annexed by Ethiopia in 1962, triggering a long and protracted war between them that pitted Eritrean resistance fighters against Ethiopian forces. The conflict drew international forces into the region as well.

Like other global liberation groups, the Eritrean resistance movement was a complex network of fighters, tactics, and ideals. However, like other global liberation groups, the Eritrean resistance movement was recurrently plagued by factionalism. Founded in 1960, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) fell into infighting in 1970 and split in 1977, when the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) emerged.⁴⁹² The EPLF would grow and gain traction in the region,

⁴⁹¹ Richard J. Reid, *Warfare in African History: New Approaches to African History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2012), 162-163. For more on Ethiopian history, see Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1991*. (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2002).

⁴⁹² For more on the formation and divide, see David Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government: the Eritrean People's Liberation Front*. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2001), 63-104; Okbazghi Yohannes, *Eritrea, a Pawn in World Politics*. (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1991).

consolidating into one of the larger and more dominant fighting groups in Eritrea; its combination of guerilla tactics and conventional warfare made it a nightmare for Ethiopia for decades. Inspired by the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria, as historian Richard J. Reid has observed, the EPLF “[extolled] the virtues of ‘self-reliance’ (much of its weaponry, including automatic rifles and artillery, was captured from the Ethiopians), advocated pragmatic Marxism and sought to mobilize rural communities in the name of ‘social revolution.’”⁴⁹³

The Iraqi regime was involved in some way or another in the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict from 1970s through into the 1990s for several reasons. First, the Iraqis viewed this region as another area of geopolitical maneuvering in which the Iraqis could operate free from alliances or other prior entanglements. In a 1979 conversation with other diplomats about why Iraq was interested in Eritrea, Iraqi diplomats explained that “because of the location... we have the right to be interested in this issue.”⁴⁹⁴ The Iraqis wanted to be part of Scramble for Africa, redux and to ensure that they had sway in a region they saw as geopolitically viable and crucial—the Horn of Africa served as the gateway into the Red Sea and Suez Canal. In August 1977, then Minister of Information Tariq Aziz (he would later become the Foreign Minister) declared that the Red Sea was an “Arab lake,” and therefore must remain as such.⁴⁹⁵ Whereas the American government did not see the Horn of Africa as part of its Near East policy, the Iraqi government viewed the Horn as an integral part of both the Arab struggle and Arab geopolitical interests.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹³ Reid, *Warfare in African History: New Approaches to African History*, 163.

⁴⁹⁴ CRRC, SH-SHTP-A-000-851 “Saddam and High-Ranking Officials Discussing Khomeini, the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict, the Potential for Kurdish Unrest, and the Iranian Economy,” 20 February 1979.

⁴⁹⁵ Shemesh, *Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988: In the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict*, 159.

⁴⁹⁶ Horn of Africa, Study Pursuant to NSSM 184, 6 July 1973, SRG Meeting, NSSM 184 Horn of Africa, 7/25/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

Second, the Iraqis wanted to bolster their own credibility among countries in the region by assisting Arabs in their fight against their oppressors. In a meeting with his advisors, Saddam argued: “Eritrea is a people who claim to be Arab... who struggle for particular rights.” Iraq claimed to support Eritrea on whatever path it decided to take. Saddam continued: “We do not instruct them on what they want and it is not our right to advise them on their choices, rather we support them in what they choose. If they choose integration or unity, we will not be against that. If they choose autonomy, we will not stand against it. Anything else, as long as they carry weapons, we will be with them. We will provide them with weapons, money, and support.”⁴⁹⁷

Iraq’s desire to lead the Arab world was galvanized when Egypt signed the Camp David Accords with Israel in 1978. In retaliation for what was perceived as betrayal of the united Arab front against Israel, Egypt was subsequently isolated both diplomatically and politically from the Arab world. Iraq saw an opportunity to take advantage of Cairo’s isolation by “playing on the refusal of most moderate Arabs to support the U.S. peace process and on their doubts about U.S. reliability.” With turmoil in neighboring Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, Iraq sought to take advantage of this power vacuum to “organize the Persian Gulf under Iraqi leadership, establish Baghdad as the new pole for Arab politics, and create a nonaligned image.”⁴⁹⁸

In the light of Egypt’s signing of the Camp David Accords, Saddam Hussein proposed a Pan-Arab Charter in April 1980, calling for the prohibition of all foreign military bases and facilities within Arab territories. Saddam also called for a boycott of Arab nations that refused to follow the Charter’s terms. The Iraqis hoped that their proposal would slow Soviet inroads

⁴⁹⁷ CRRC, SH-SHTP-A-000-851 “Saddam and High-Ranking Officials Discussing Khomeini, the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict, the Potential for Kurdish Unrest, and the Iranian Economy,” 20 February 1979.

⁴⁹⁸ Article in the National Intelligence Daily, Iraq: New Directions, June 18, 1980, *FRUSA, 1977-1980*, Volume XVIII, Middle East Region; Arabian Peninsula, Document 141.

within Syria and South Yemen and, at the same time, stall American negotiations in Oman and Somalia. After securing support from twelve Arab states and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the Iraqis also sought to bring Sudan and Somalia under the Charter as well. Although the C.I.A. believed the Charter would not be sufficient to “[reverse] a superpower’s presence already in being,” they also argued that the Charter should neither be ignored nor underestimated, citing it as an example of Iraq “molding a formal consensus.” Further, the C.I.A. warned that the “uncertainties generated by events in Iran and Afghanistan have so far pushed most area governments to seek protection in Arab unity, rather than to seek external alliances. The charter is consistent with that trend.”⁴⁹⁹ The Iraqis were again using Arab unity, at least in their rhetoric, to shore up support for them as the leader of the Arab world and to secure their geopolitical interests in the region.⁵⁰⁰

The Iraqis also saw and resented the hypocrisy of other Arabs with regard to Eritrea. Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Algeria, and others were depicted as “reactionary countries” which “did not want the Eritrean revolution to succeed.” According to Saddam’s cabinet, by attempting to assert their power, these countries had corrupted the Eritrean revolution. These Arab states meddled and conspired against Iraq’s intentions, poisoning the Eritrean mindset towards Iraq, so that “[Eritrea] will not adopt [Iraq’s] advice....” This, in the mind of Saddam, put them in league with the Americans.⁵⁰¹ The Ba’thists also wanted to be the leader for negotiations between Ethiopia and the Eritrean factions and therefore viewed opposing Arab actions as a threat to this

⁴⁹⁹ C.I.A. Memo, “Iraq’s Pan-Arab Charter,” 10 March 1980, Iraq: 1/77-3/80, Country File, Iran, 4/79 through Israel, 4-6/77, Box 34, National Security Affairs (Brzezinski Material) 6, JCL.

⁵⁰⁰ This Arab unity would be severely tested when Iraq decided to invade Iran on 22 September 1980. See Pierre Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015).

⁵⁰¹ CRRC, SH-SHTP-A-000-851 “Saddam and High-Ranking Officials Discussing Khomeini, the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict, the Potential for Kurdish Unrest, and the Iranian Economy,” 20 February 1979.

desired role. Iraqi diplomats alleged that Mengistu's former secretary had informed them that the Ethiopian regime would "accept Iraq, and only Iraq, as mediator at the beginning of the situation in general, although there were no previous diplomatic relations between U.S."⁵⁰²

Iraq and the Superpowers

Iraq's interest in the Eritrean-Ethiopian conflict meant that Baghdad was attentive to the actions of the Soviet Union and the United States in East Africa. The Horn of Africa was another region in the Third World in which the Soviets and the Americans attempted to outmaneuver, out-influence, and out-dominate one another. The Horn's proximity to the Red Sea, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Persian Gulf meant that neither superpower could neglect it. Both had been making moves in the region since World War II amid the massive efforts at decolonization in both the Middle East and Africa, shoring up support for newly independent regimes. With the potential for oil and gas deposits and with the likelihood that the Soviet Union would "gain a preponderance of influence in the Horn with the resultant of control of Red Sea," the Americans could not afford to completely ignore this region.⁵⁰³ Soviet policy differed from that of the Americans in that, while both sought to enhance their geopolitical positions, the Soviets' strategic interests also included defending and enhancing their interests in the Indian Ocean and countering rising Chinese influence.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰²CRRC, SH-SHTP-A-000-851 "Saddam and High-Ranking Officials Discussing Khomeini, the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict, the Potential for Kurdish Unrest, and the Iranian Economy," 20 February 1979.

⁵⁰³ Analytical summary—NSSM 184—The Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia, and the French territory of the Afars and the Issas) SRG Meeting, NSSM 184 Horn of Africa, 7/25/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

⁵⁰⁴ The Nixon administration did not yet see a threat from an increase in the Soviet naval presence in this region . Analytical summary—NSSM 184—The Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia, and the French territory of the Afars and

Nonetheless, while both superpowers acknowledged the significance of this region—its potential for oil and gas, and its geographic proximity to the Red Sea and Persian Gulf— both wanted to avoid nuclear war, continue détente, and preserve their own national security interests. Despite their global competition, the superpowers did not want conflict in East Africa. The U.S. assessed that Soviet and American prospects for success—securing of alliances and natural resources—in East Africa “do not look too bright, at least without cooperation rather than competitive rivalry.”⁵⁰⁵ East Africa was not worth the potentially expensive or catastrophic showdown.

American interests in the Horn rested on Ethiopia due to previously established American relations with Emperor Haile Selassie and because of the 1969 Marxist military coup in Somalia. The U.S. State Department also bet that Washington would “be very glad we decided to stay in Ethiopia” whenever the Suez Canal reopened.⁵⁰⁶ Most relief to Ethiopia from the United States was in the form of economic aid. This was deemed by the Nixon administration to be the “best vehicle for preserving our overall long-range interests in Ethiopia.”⁵⁰⁷ The U.S. support of

the Issas), SRG Meeting, NSSM 184 Horn of Africa, 7/25/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL. For more on Chinese activities and competition with the Soviets in Africa, generally speaking, see Timothy Scarnecchia, “Africa and the Cold War” in *A Companion to African History*, edited by William H. Worger, et al. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 387. For more on the Soviets in East Africa, see Robert Patman, *The Soviet Union in the Horn of Africa: The Diplomacy of Intervention and Disengagement*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁵⁰⁵ Analytical Summary, NSSM 181, “U.S. Policy in the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf,” 19 July 1973, SRG Meeting—Arabian Peninsula, NSSM 181, 7/20/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

⁵⁰⁶ Minutes of Senior Review Group Meeting, July 25, 1973, *FRUSA*, Documents on Africa 1973-1976, Volume 1969-1976, E-6, Document 92. The Suez Canal re-opened in 1975. Henry Tanner, “Sadat Announces Plans to Reopen Suez Canal June 5” *NYT*, 30 March 1975. <https://nyti.ms/2Uo4iq5>

⁵⁰⁷ The U.S. government gave Ethiopia \$15.6 million USD in fiscal year (FY) 1970, \$13.8 million USD in FY 1971, \$31.7 million USD in FY 72, \$8.6 million USD in FY 73, and \$17.1 million USD in FY 74Horn of Africa, Study

Ethiopia meant less U.S. influence in Somalia. Although the U.S. did not want Somalia to be dominated by an “unfriendly power and [become] a disruptive influence in the Horn,” there was little interest in Somalia’s international relations other than that it maintain peaceful relations with Kenya and Ethiopia and that it might offer future port or oil opportunities.⁵⁰⁸

Soviet support for Somalia started in 1963, when the Soviets helped Somalia to build an army and small air force. This aid increased exponentially following a 1969 Marxist-military coup in Mogadishu which resulted in General Muhammad Siad Barre taking control of the country. Soviet interest in the geopolitical value of Somalia continued to increase; and in 1974 the two signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, giving the Soviets naval facilities at the Somali port of Berbera in return for increased Soviet military aid to Somalia. However, the Soviets had not cut off all contact with or aid for Ethiopia. After the military coup in 1974, Ethiopia reached out to Moscow again, hoping for more Soviet aid. The Derg, which overthrew Emperor Selassie in September 1974, was slowly superseded by one of their own, Major Mengistu Haile Mariam. Abolishing the monarchy, Mengistu then embarked on transforming Ethiopia into a Marxist state, going as far as to proclaim Marxist-Leninism as the official ideology of Ethiopia in September 1976.⁵⁰⁹

Nonetheless, instead of rushing to fill the Ethiopian request, the Soviets remained cautious. Indeed, according to the U.S. National Security Council (NSC), the Soviets did not

Pursuant to NSSM 184, 6 July 1973, SRG Meeting, NSSM 184 Horn of Africa, 7/25/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

⁵⁰⁸ Analytical summary– NSSM 184– The Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia, and the French territory of the Afars and the Issas), SRG Meeting, NSSM 184 Horn of Africa, 7/25/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

⁵⁰⁹ Martin Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence*. (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 244-246.

“flatly [turn] down the Ethiopians,” an indication that “Moscow thinks it can have it both ways in East Africa—as long as it does not give the Ethiopians too much.”⁵¹⁰ In this sense, the Soviets were double-crossing the Somalis since they were happy enjoying the tension between Somalia and Ethiopia, knowing that each of them resented Soviet overtures to the other. Just as they would during the Iran-Iraq War, the Soviets took advantage of this tension, avoided tipping the scales toward open hostilities, and stayed content with keeping both options open.⁵¹¹

The U.S. State Department noted that Somalis “widely disliked” the Soviets, despite the latter’s “ideological camouflage.” Within the Somali officer corps, officers resented their Soviet mentors. Even Siad worried that the Soviets were conspiring to “[cultivate] a more pliant and ideologically pure candidate for a top position in the party and government of Somalia.”⁵¹² Needless to say, the flirtation of convenience between the Soviets and Somalis was short-lived— with the regime of Haile Selassie ended and the imperial monarchy abolished, the Soviets viewed a relationship with Ethiopia and its new Marxist military dictatorship as worth more than developing their relationship with Somalia. Forsaking their relationship with Somalia, the Soviets viewed the new Marxist regime in Addis Ababa as the main prize.⁵¹³

⁵¹⁰ Memorandum from Richard Kennedy of the National Security Council Staff to Secretary of State Kissinger, Washington, October 16, 1974, *FRUSA*, Documents on Africa 1973-1976, Volume 1969-1976, E-6, Document 114.

⁵¹¹ Horn of Africa, Study Pursuant to NSSM 184, 6 July 1973, SRG Meeting, NSSM 184 Horn of Africa, 7/25/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL. Interagency Memorandum DCI/NIO 1076-75, Washington, May 7, 1975, *FRUSA*, Documents on Africa 1973-1976, Volume 1969-1976, E-6, Document 142.

⁵¹² Siad was worried about First Vice President Mohamed Ali Samatar. Airgram A-86 From the Embassy in Somalia to the Department of State, November 25, 1976, *FRUSA*, Documents on Africa 1973-1976, Volume 1969-1976, E-6, Document 168.

⁵¹³ This one of many examples in the Cold War where ideological preferences of the superpowers were trumped by geopolitical concerns. Both Ethiopia and Somalia were socialist regimes, but Ethiopia carried more geopolitical value for the Soviets. The U.S.S.R. also viewed their activity and interest in East Africa as comparable to the

In July 1977, Somali forces invaded and occupied Ogaden. The Somali invasion was part of a long-term gamble. According to the NSC, the Somalis had been “extracting aid...from a wide range of countries who would like to see them draw away from their friendship with the Soviets during the very period when they were putting the finishing touches on their plans for invading Ethiopia and seizing nearly a third of its territory.”⁵¹⁴ The NSC also believed that the “Somalis have played a wily game with everybody and, so far, have come out way ahead. They have built up a highly effective army with Soviet equipment and advice. They have put it to use against Soviet advice (at least so it seems) and are, in effect, blackmailing the Soviets into continuing military assistance to them. At least we have seen no evidence yet that the Soviets have cut off military aid to Somalia.”⁵¹⁵

For the Americans, the more pressing concern was the influx of Soviet and Cuban military advisors into the region. U.S. intelligence reported that there were over 10,000 Cubans in Ethiopia, including a mechanized infantry brigade, and 40 pilots.⁵¹⁶ Yet any U.S. strategy to confront the Soviets and Cubans over Ethiopia was deemed “misbegotten” by the DOD. Instead,

Americans in Latin America, viewing their activities as no less “provocative” than their capitalist competitors. Scarnecchia, “Africa and the Cold War,” 395.

⁵¹⁴ Memorandum from Paul B. Henze of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski): “Where Do We Go with Somalia,” August 24, 1977, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 26.

⁵¹⁵ The NSA memorandum continued: “Their propaganda would be admired by Goebbels. They would have had a more difficult time if the Ethiopian forces in the Ogaden had not already been demoralized and they would have a tougher time diplomatically if Mengistu’s government had not acquired such a disgraceful reputation in Africa and in the world at large.” Memorandum from Paul B. Henze of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski): “Where Do we Go with Somalia,” August 24, 1977, *FRUSA*: Foreign Relations, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 26.

⁵¹⁶ Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting: The Horn of Africa, February 23, 1978, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 62.

the DOD wagered that “Ethiopia will turn out to be a quagmire for the Soviets; in short, it may be in our interest to let them wallow.” Essentially, the Americans wondered how to jam the Soviets in the Horn. The Carter administration considered seeking support from Arab allies—primarily assuming Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iran in this case—to pressure Syria and Iraq to refuse Soviet overflight rights.⁵¹⁷

According to U.S. intelligence, Iraq “has made it clear that despite its close ties with Moscow and Havana, Baghdad would take a very dim view of a significant Soviet and Cuban combat role.”⁵¹⁸ However, the Iraqis did observe Ethiopian frustration with Soviet meddling. Following the 1977-1978 war between Ethiopia and Somalia, U.S. intelligence argued, Baghdad believed that there “will be a disagreement sooner or later between the Ethiopian regime and the Socialist countries or the Soviet Union initially. This disagreement is about the party they want to form in Ethiopia. Moreover, there is no trust...” From Baghdad’s viewpoint, this disagreement opened up possibilities “to exploit this situation...so as to save the stance of the Eritreans through [Arab intervention].”⁵¹⁹

However, Iraq did not do much to help the Somalis. Despite its disdain for Soviet activity in the Horn, Iraq sat on the sidelines, refusing to seriously assist Somalia.⁵²⁰ Although the Iraqis continued to supply Eritrean fractions, going too far in helping Somalia would risk prompting

⁵¹⁷ Memorandum from the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs to Secretary of Defense Brown: Ethiopia, December 20, 1977, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 36.

⁵¹⁸ Interagency Intelligence Memorandum: Ethiopia: Likelihood and Implications of Possible Outcomes in Eritrea, May 22, 1978, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 84.

⁵¹⁹ CRRC, SH-SHTP-A-000-851 “Saddam and High-Ranking Officials Discussing Khomeini, the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict, the Potential for Kurdish Unrest, and the Iranian Economy,” 20 February 1979.

⁵²⁰ Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting: The Horn of Africa, February 23, 1978, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 62.

even more backlash from the Soviets, who took Somalia's deceitful gamble personally. Even Saudi Arabia and Iran—who were also usually active in the region—remained neutral. Somalia's claims to Ogaden and its isolation within Africa resulted in little to no outside support to either side in the conflict. The Iraqis were eager to support the Eritrean factions, but they were not willing to challenge Moscow so openly.⁵²¹

As a result of the invasion, the Soviets did in fact cut off aid to Somalia, refusing the latter's request for more arms, while simultaneously increasing their commitment to Ethiopia in its wars in Ogaden and Eritrea. The Soviets had even discouraged Somalia from going to war with Ethiopia and even tried to confine Somali actions within the region where the Eritrean insurgency was present.⁵²² Despite Somalia's early successes, fighting against Cuban and Soviet-backed Ethiopian forces proved too much. The Somalis were defeated in Ogaden in March 1978, forcing their withdrawal from the region.⁵²³

The Eritrean independence movement posed a conundrum for the Soviets. For one, the EPLF generally adhered to Marxist ideals and was a “genuine national liberation movement.” But Ethiopia was a greater prize for the U.S.S.R., and they had to tread carefully. Moving against the Eritreans would have been extremely difficult to justify, especially in the light of Somali aggression against Ethiopia in Ogaden in 1977. U.S. intelligence noted that the Soviets were “committed to helping Mengistu resolve the Eritrean issue on terms acceptable to him,” but

⁵²¹ Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting: The Horn of Africa, February 23, 1978, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 62.

⁵²² National Intelligence Estimate 11-10-76, Soviet Military Policy in the Third World, 21 October 1976, *FRUSA* Documents on Africa 1973-1976, Volume 1969-1976, E-6, Document 55. Interagency Memorandum DCI/NIO 1076-75, Washington, May 7, 1975, *FRUSA*, Documents on Africa 1973-1976, Volume 1969-1976, E-6, Document 142.

⁵²³ Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence*, 466-467.

Moscow also knew that moving against Eritrean would likely “antagonize a wider circle of Arab and possibly African states that view Eritrea as an internal affair.” The Soviets also wanted to avoid a quagmire, fully aware of the difficulties facing the Eritreans in achieving independence.⁵²⁴

Soviet preference for the Ethiopian regime did not stop the Soviet dialogue with the Eritreans. This was especially evident when Moscow thought that meeting with the Eritreans would help create leverage with Addis Ababa. The first meeting between the Soviets and the ELF occurred in June 1978. In February 1980, representatives of the ELF were invited to Moscow, a visit prompted by the U.S.S.R.’s fear of Ethiopia’s stability. Moscow had hoped to be able to take some of the pressure off Addis Ababa. Even the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Syria urged the ELF to accept the Soviet invitation. Using declassified documents from Soviet and East German archives, Michael Weldeghiorghis Tedla argues:

[Moscow’s] objective... [was] to find an appropriate solution for Eritrea within the framework of the Ethiopian state... The policy of the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] was... aimed at the unity of Ethiopia...[and] to convince Ahmed Nasser [Chairman of the ELF-RC] that the future development of the Eritrean people can only evolve in a unified Ethiopian state.

Not to be left out of the diplomatic jostling, the East Germans, ever in competition with the Soviets for Third World clients in the Arab world, also invited the ELF to Berlin for their own talks, separate from the Soviets.⁵²⁵ Brezhnev and Castro separately pushed for Mengistu to

⁵²⁴ Interagency Intelligence Memorandum: Ethiopia: Likelihood and Implications of Possible Outcomes in Eritrea, May 22, 1978, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 84.

⁵²⁵ Michael Weldeghiorghis Tedla, *The Eritrean Liberation Front: Social and Political Factors Shaping Its Emergence, Development and Demise, 1960-1981*, (MA Thesis, University of Leiden, The Netherlands, 2014): 119-120. For more on the Soviet-East Germany rivalry, see Jeffery Herf, *Undeclared Wars with Israel: East Germany and West German Far Left, 1967-1989*. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

permit a form of autonomy for Eritrea, hoping that this would preserve Ethiopian sovereignty within the region.⁵²⁶ These interactions—by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries—with Eritrea, and in the Horn of Africa generally, alarmed the Iraqis.

Baghdad wanted to push the boundaries of its relationship with the Soviets. By challenging the Soviets, Iraq could send two messages to Moscow and the world: Iraq was a true friend of the Arab nation, and Iraq had its own interests, patron desires be damned.⁵²⁷ The 1970s had proven to be a tumultuous time in Iraqi-Soviet relations. Communists had been purged in Iraq, and the Soviet Union had backed the Kurds who sought freedom from Iraqi control. The Soviets were continuing to make overtures to the Iranians at the same time that Moscow was growing closer with Damascus. Baghdad and Moscow also disagreed over the Arab-Israeli conflict. By the late 1970s, Soviet enthusiasm for Iraq had cooled. For their part, the Iraqis were looking for an area in which they could challenge the Soviets. Baghdad believed Moscow had been consistently undermining Iraqi interests and security. In East Africa, the Iraqis were especially upset over Soviet support for Ethiopia against the Eritrean Liberation Front, and they had no qualms making several public statements against U.S.S.R.⁵²⁸

To be sure, the Soviets did not ignore Iraqi interests, nor did they let Baghdad operate without challenge in Eritrea. For example, in 1978, the Soviets retaliated against the Iraqis for challenging Soviet policies in Eritrea and the Horn of Africa by suspending Soviet flights to Baghdad. Others noticed, too—including the Americans. The United States had noted that other

⁵²⁶ Interagency Intelligence Memorandum: Ethiopia: Likelihood and Implications of Possible Outcomes in Eritrea, May 22, 1978, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 84.

⁵²⁷ Shemesh, *Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988: in the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict*, 158-160.

⁵²⁸ “Untitled Iraq-Soviet study, circa February 1986,” William Burns Files. OA 91834, 01840, 91843 Iran-Iraq War [February 1986] (5) Box 90192, RRPL.

Soviet-allied Arab states, including Syria, Libya, and Algeria, had reduced aid to the Eritreans, refusing to risk upsetting their patron, the U.S.S.R. However, Iraq was viewed as an “exception,” and according to U.S. intelligence, Baghdad was “willing to oppose [Soviet blandishments] openly and to continue to provide support to the insurgents.”⁵²⁹ The Carter administration mused: “we might wish to take advantage of the present climate to let Iraqi leaders know informally that we have not lost interest in improved relations.” The State Department was instructed to send signals to the Shah of Iran, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, and King Hussein of Jordan that the United States was looking to improve Iraqi-U.S. relations; Presidents Assad and Sadat of Syria and Egypt, respectively, were also to be notified.⁵³⁰

Not oblivious to realities on the ground, the Iraqi government noted the difficulties Eritrea faced and believed that, “if the Eritrean revolution continued this way, it would never achieve anything.”⁵³¹ The EPLF, despite making significant gains at times, including in 1977-1978, was constantly factionalized, with various tribes, leaders, religious, political and ideological groups all vying for their own power.⁵³² The two main groups—the ELF and the EPLF—at times fought each other while simultaneously fighting the Ethiopians. They were, at times, able to set aside their differences and form joint committees and coordinate operations.

⁵²⁹ Interagency Intelligence Memorandum: Ethiopia: Likelihood and Implications of Possible Outcomes in Eritrea, May 22, 1978, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 84.

⁵³⁰ The Carter administration considered sending a private American emissary to Iraq – the most recent former president of Pan American World Airways, Najeeb Halaby, who was also a personal friend of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. Memo for ZB from William Quandt, Subject: U.S.-Iraqi Relations, 13 June 1978, Iraq: 1/77-3/80, Country File, Iran, 4/79 through Israel, 4-6/77 Box 34, National Security Affairs (Brzezinski Material) 6, JCL.

⁵³¹ CRRC, SH-SHTP-A-000-851 “Saddam and High-Ranking Officials Discussing Khomeini, the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict, the Potential for Kurdish Unrest, and the Iranian Economy,” 20 February 1979.

⁵³² One such group was the Eritrean People’s Socialist Party who changed their name from “Marxist” to “Socialist” after the U.S.S.R. supported Ethiopia. Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government: the Eritrean People's Liberation Front*, 91.

However, according to U.S. intelligence, real political union remained a “long shot.”⁵³³ Efforts led by the Somalis, Libyans, and Iraqis to bridge this gap were unsuccessful. These fractures frustrated efforts to increase action against Ethiopia, giving Ethiopia time to make diplomatic headway in staving off foreign support for the EPLF. In 1973, the Nixon administration noted that the EPLF consisted of fewer than 2,000 fighters and therefore was not a legitimate threat to Ethiopian control over the territory.

On top of this, the EPLF lost support from Sudan after the Sudanese and Ethiopians settled their differences after war ended in Sudan in 1972.⁵³⁴ Along with cutting off aid, the agreement called for Sudan to cut off sanctuaries for the EPLF fighters, resulting in a “serious blow to [rebels].”⁵³⁵ However, the EPLF still received aid from Somalia. The Americans judged that the EPLF, despite its small size and reliance on hit-and-run tactics, would remain active and that it would continue to be an “internal security problem” for Ethiopia. The Nixon administration also believed that Ethiopia “appears incapable” of ending the rebellion, and that, although the EPLF “may not jeopardize Ethiopia control over Eritrea...the movement is not dead and a future increase in insurgent activity seems probable.”⁵³⁶ This assessment would eventually ring true, especially in in the 1980s.

⁵³³ This intelligence memorandum also goes into more detail about the different personalities and competing political factions. Interagency Intelligence Memorandum DCI/NIO 2461/75, November 25, 1975, *FRUSA*, Documents on Africa 1973-1976, Volume 1969-1976, E-6, Document 153.

⁵³⁴ Raymond H. Anderson, “Sudan Appears at Peace After Long, Fierce War,” *NYT*, March 24, 1972, <https://nyti.ms/1ijuSZ7>

⁵³⁵ Horn of Africa, Study Pursuant to NSSM 184, 6 July 1973, SRG Meeting, NSSM 184 Horn of Africa, 7/25/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

⁵³⁶ Horn of Africa, Study Pursuant to NSSM 184, 6 July 1973, SRG Meeting, NSSM 184 Horn of Africa, 7/25/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

Eritrean factionalism directly affected Iraqi diplomacy in the region, especially when the Iraqis were arming, training, and coordinating with various members of the ELF. In some cases, Baghdad's favored factions were sidelined by other leaders within the ELF.⁵³⁷ For example, in 1979, when one of the Iraqi-preferred ELF factional leaders was increasingly targeted by his fellow ELF members, the Iraqis cut off monetary aid (up to \$250,000), military training, and hardware.⁵³⁸ The U.S. State Department cast doubt on whether the Iraqis could surmount Eritrean factionalism. There was also a large Eritrean Christian population to contend with. If the Iraqis were to push for Eritrea to join the Arab League, the State Department argued that it would have to "be over the objections of the Christian population."⁵³⁹ However, despite the factionalism and other difficulties, Iraq truly believed it could assist Eritrea, thus also asserting itself in another important region and challenging Soviet hegemony in the Third World. As Saddam told his comrades, "I want you to be reassured about your revolution more than the way it was one year ago, two years ago, one day ago, one week ago, or six years ago; more than at any time before. Be reassured that colonial powers will never be able to find any gap in this revolution, neither in its command, nor its services, nor its message."⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁷ Certain ELF factions resented Iraq's "expansionist aims" as well. Roy Pateman, "Eritrea, Ethiopia, And the Middle Eastern Powers: Image and Reality." *Northeast African Studies* 8, no. 2/3 (1986), 23-39: 30.

⁵³⁸ Tedla, *The Eritrean Liberation Front: Social and Political Factors Shaping Its Emergence, Development and Demise, 1960-1981*, 118.

⁵³⁹ Minutes of the Secretary of State's Staff Meeting, Washington, January 3, 1975, *FRUSA*, Documents on Africa 1973-1976, Volume 1969-1976, E-6, Document 125.

⁵⁴⁰ CRRC, SH-SHTP-A-000-851 "Saddam and High-Ranking Officials Discussing Khomeini, the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict, the Potential for Kurdish Unrest, and the Iranian Economy," 20 February 1979.

Iraqi Embassy Organizations in East Africa

The Iraqis ran their political and diplomatic operations in East Africa through their Embassy Organizations (EOs). In particular, documents in the Ba‘th Regional Command Collection (BRCC), which is housed at the Hoover Institution, illustrate how the headquarters for these operations in Eritrea, Ethiopia, and elsewhere ran through EO Khartoum in Iraq’s embassy in Sudan. The Iraqis would also create other EOs throughout the decades in East Africa. EOs coordinated with various local groups—students, politicians, media personalities, officers, refugees, dissidents, unionists, and the like—and relay reports back to Baghdad. In the late 1980s-early 1990s, as Iraq’s diaspora population grew, the EOs were renamed Organizations of Iraqis (OIs).⁵⁴¹ Although the name change came along with some structural changes, the mission of the OIs was much the same as it had been for the EOs.⁵⁴²

The Ba‘th Regional Command Collection (BRCC) shows the importance the Iraqis placed on foreign student groups—both those the Iraqis encountered abroad and those foreign students who visited Iraq—and their activities. Iraq hosted students from Eritrea and Somalia because these students were again seen as bringing vital political and cultural connections. After confirming their educational backgrounds, Iraqi officials would determine the political value of

⁵⁴¹ Samuel Helfont, “Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba‘th Party as a Transnational Actor,” *The Middle East Journal* 72, No. 2. (2018): 229-245. Pp 233. Regarding the diaspora, Helfont argues that “the population of Iraqis in the United States jumped by 40% between 1980 and 1990 to just under 45,000. In Middle Eastern and European countries, the diaspora grew at an even quicker pace. One study estimated that by the end of the 1980s, the total number of Iraqis who lived abroad had reached somewhere between 500,000 and 1,000,000.

⁵⁴² EOs were part of Baghdad’s Office of Organizations Outside the Region in Baghdad, which later became the Branch of the Bureau of Iraqis Outside the Region. For more see Chapter 2: Iraqi Foreign Policy, 1968-1989, and Chapter 5: Iraq and Russia in the 1990s. See also Helfont, “Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba‘th Party as a Transnational Actor.”

these students.⁵⁴³ These students were seen as important connections, assets, and potential agents who could be counted on in the future. Essentially, the students were seen as ripe for Iraqi manipulation.

In April 1983, Eritrean officials met with Iraqi officials in Baghdad; members of Iraq's EO Khartoum were also present. The meeting concluded with a commitment for all parties to political and organizational action at national and party levels. Although some military affairs were discussed, much more emphasis was placed on political cooperation. A budget and other means of financing were agreed upon, with the Iraqis agreeing to transfer 3,074,000 Iraqi dinars for anything deemed necessary, including items related to politics, media, military, health, and foreign media. An additional 500,000 Iraqi dinars were earmarked for miscellaneous expenditures, including clothes, cars, and communication devices.⁵⁴⁴ Money and other resources were transferred from Baghdad to EO Khartoum; this money was meant to help develop political connections with the Eritrean revolutionary forces. In May 1983, the Iraqis sent 3,574,000 Iraqi dinars to Khartoum.⁵⁴⁵

EO Khartoum also reported on the political ramifications of this conflict in both local and regional contexts. The EO regularly sent reports back to Baghdad, filled with economic, political, and military details of the fighting between Ethiopia and Eritrea. For example, a June 1983 report detailed pockets of resistance in northern Ethiopia, but it noted that Ethiopian forces were making gains and were even massacring civilians and burning Eritrean villages. This

⁵⁴³ Student Degrees, 1977/8/2 and 1977/8/29, BRCC, 0023-0024, 024-4-4. HB, HIA.

⁵⁴⁴ Annual Budget, 1983/5/8, BRCC 0195-0196, 2958-0002. HB, HIA. For a comparison of Iranian-Hezbollah funding see Matthew Levitt, "Hezbollah Finances: Funding the Party of God," in *Terrorism Financing and State Responses: A Comparative Perspective* via *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, February 2005.

⁵⁴⁵ Revolutionary Council, 1983/5/16 BRCC 0192, 2958-0002. HB, HIA. In 1982, one Iraqi dinar was worth about \$3.22 USD.

incident was part of a larger Ethiopian campaign, which began after Mengistu assumed power in Ethiopia. In 1976, the Americans concluded that the Ethiopians had attempted their own “final solution” against the Eritreans, aiming to kill all Eritreans under the auspices of their anti-insurgent campaign codenamed Operation Raza.⁵⁴⁶ In the 1980s, facing famine and insurgency, Ethiopia launched a campaign against civilians, removing people from the Tigray region in what Richard Reid described as “part of a brutal villagization program.”⁵⁴⁷ EO Khartoum also reported famine in several regions in Ethiopia, noting the massive influx of refugees into Sudan and even the number of Jewish Ethiopians fleeing to Israel, known as the “Zionist entity” within Iraqi documents. In the south, Ethiopian forces faced fierce fighting and resistance from factions of the ELPF forces and the Tigray Liberation Front, another ethnic group fighting to break away from Addis Ababa’s rule.⁵⁴⁸

In response to famine and insurgency, the Ethiopians were preparing to offer concessions including pockets of self-determination, as part of broader considerations for a “republican union.” EO Khartoum argued that Ethiopia was trying to replicate the U.S.S.R.’s model of governance. With Ethiopia assuming de facto control over contested territories without a peace settlement or a treaty and allowing a “government” to operate there, the EO countered that this “is just a mere imposition of status quo and limiting [of] the principle of self-determination.”⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁶ Report No. 572 Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, August 26, 1976, *FRUSA*, Documents on Africa 1973-1976, Volume 1969-1976, E-6, Document 164.

⁵⁴⁷ Reid, *Warfare in African History: New Approaches to African History*, 168. See also Human Rights Watch, “30 Years of War and Famine in Ethiopia,” *An Africa Watch Report*, September 1991, 131-155.
<https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/Ethiopia919.pdf>

⁵⁴⁸ See Berhe, Aregawi. "The Origins of the Tigray People's Liberation Front." *African Affairs* 103, no. 413 (2004): 569-92.; Young, John. "The Tigray and Eritrean Peoples Liberation Fronts: A History of Tensions and Pragmatism." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 34, no. 1 (1996): 105-20.

⁵⁴⁹ Political Situation, 1983/6/7, BRCC, 0230-0232, 3471-0002. HB, HIA.

The Iraqis believed that the Ethiopians would renege on this arrangement, just as they had on the U.N. agreement with Eritrea in the 1950s.

Intelligence and political operations continued to run through EO Khartoum throughout the 1980s, only with its bureaucracy expanding. When the war with Iran concluded by ceasefire on 20 August 1988, the Iraqi regime was free to refocus its attention on promoting liberation movements across the globe. Within the headquarters in Baghdad, a special office called the Bureau of Arab Affairs was dedicated to promoting liberation movements in Eritrea and other parts of Africa. However, this office was more focused on intelligence operations than its mandate suggested. Did the Iraqi regime truly value these liberation movements or were they merely taking advantage of internal and local conflicts to better their foreign relations? As one Ba‘th Party report emphasized, “the truth of the matter is that every office is [about] intelligence.”⁵⁵⁰

The sponsoring and subsequent surveillance of student organizations was a vital component of Iraqi foreign policy. The goal for these connections, or “alliances” as the Iraqis often characterized them, with the next generation was to help guide and influence other movements of “liberation” and revolution both in the Arab world and anywhere else where the forces of imperialism were being opposed.⁵⁵¹ Essentially, relationships with these student groups were seen by the Ba‘th Party as propaganda tools and ways to cultivate influence with current and future political forces within those states.⁵⁵²

⁵⁵⁰ Part B, 1989/2/22, BRCC 0003, 023-2-4, HB, HIA.

⁵⁵¹ Student groups, 1987/6/4, BRCC 0197, 3471-0002, HB, HIA.

⁵⁵² For a list of countries with Iraqi affiliated student groups, see Untitled, 1993, BRCC 0605, 033-4-2, HB, HIA. See Chapter 5: Iraq and Russia in the 1990s.

This Ba‘thist policy of connecting with local student groups was used in East Africa.⁵⁵³ Throughout the 1980s, the Iraqis continued to meddle in the Eritrean-Ethiopian conflict, using student groups as their main source of influence and intelligence. Various factions of Eritreans, most often students, met with Iraqi officials for conferences and meetings with Ba‘th party members; sometimes these meetings occurred in Sudan (through EO Khartoum) or in Baghdad.⁵⁵⁴ The Iraqis believed that, by bringing in various factions of Eritreans, they could transcend the increasingly factional nature of the conflict. Although the Eritreans were divided, with infighting increasing among them, the Iraqis felt that they could bypass Eritrean factionalism. However, hosting and promoting conferences did not translate easily into clear-cut leadership. Rather, it often translated into even more factionalism among the Eritreans and greater frustration for the Iraqis. One conference in June 1987 illustrates this factionalism especially well. The Iraqis had hoped that their meetings and panels would foster cooperation among all groups. However, the Eritrean students had other ideas. To their dismay, the Ba‘thists discovered that the students were coordinating among themselves, bypassing the Iraqis, and using the conference to form alliances among themselves. The conference ended with ambiguous results.⁵⁵⁵

The fact that the success of their efforts in Eritrea had been so limited did not deter the Iraqis from continuing to try. After Ba‘th Party co-founder Michel Aflaq died in Paris on 23 June 1989, he was buried in Baghdad. His funeral and burial ceremony made Baghdad the city at the center of the Arab world for the duration of the event. Iraqi intelligence recorded all the nationalities and political affiliations of guests, dignitaries, and foreigners who had come to pay

⁵⁵³ Student groups, 1987/6/4, BRCC 0193, 3471-0002 HB, HIA. The full report goes from 0193-0199.

⁵⁵⁴ Student groups, conferences, 1983/6/9, BRCC, 0188, 3471-0002 HB, HIA.

⁵⁵⁵ Factional issues, 1987/6/4, BRCC, 0198, 3471-0002, HB, HIA.

their respects. There were the expected Iraqi, Yemeni, Qatari, Lebanese, Egyptian, and Jordanian and Moroccan mourners, but there were also Sudanese, Libyan, Somalian, and Eritrean attendees.⁵⁵⁶ With the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea tapering off in the 1990s, Iraqi intelligence still kept vigil over Eritrean media outlets.⁵⁵⁷

Iraq & Sudan

The year 1969 saw a military dictatorship succeed in Sudan, led by Jaafar Numayri. Since its independence from Great Britain in 1956, Sudan had been marred by conflict between those in the north and in the south—the northern tribal leaders and government officials had seized control of formerly British-controlled institutions and were moving to consolidate their power in the south. Sudan was divided ethnically and religiously by its west-east axis, with the population in the north predominantly Arab and Muslim and the people of the south mostly African and Christian. Fighting off Islamists, who wanted to transform Sudan into an Islamic republic, Numayri concluded peace negotiations with southern factional leaders in 1972, granting regional governors more autonomy.⁵⁵⁸ Numayri also created a new constitution, which proclaimed Sudan a secular state, granting freedom of worship for “people of the book” and for those practicing African religions. According to Martin Meredith, Numayri’s triumph “was a rare example in Africa of a negotiated end to a civil war.”⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁶ Names, nationalities, and party affiliations of those who attended the memorial service for Michel Aflaq, BRCC 0288-0289, 3268-0002, HB, HIA.

⁵⁵⁷ Media, 1998/8/16, BRCC, 0616, 3474-0000. HB, HIA.

⁵⁵⁸ Raymond H. Anderson, “Sudan Appears at Peace After Long, Fierce War,” *NYT*, March 24, 1972, <https://nyti.ms/1juSZ7>

⁵⁵⁹ Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence*, 346-347.

Both superpowers were interested in Sudan. Soviet support for Sudan began in 1960, but the Sudanese tried to walk a tightrope between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., joining the Non-Aligned Movement. But the relationship with the Soviets was severely limited after Numayri's accession, and especially after the failure of an attempted coup by communists in 1971, ending what the NSC called a "flirtation."⁵⁶⁰ However, the Soviets did not completely abandon Sudan. In 1976, nearly 100 Soviet advisors remained, as well as old Soviet jet fighters delivered as a "gift" for Sudan.⁵⁶¹

Arab countries also took interest in Sudan, especially the Egyptians and the Saudis. Saudi Arabia saw Sudan's "immense agricultural potential," viewing it as the future breadbasket of the Middle East and also as a buffer against hostile advances by Soviet-supported regimes such as Ethiopia and Libya.⁵⁶² Iraq was also interested in Sudan, in part because of Khartoum's support of the Eritrean independence movement; the Eritreans used Sudan as both a refuge and a base from which to launch guerilla operations into Ethiopia. But Iraq wanted more from Sudan than merely its support for Eritrea. Rather, Sudan's tension with Libya, the rise of Islamist groups, and the arrival of Americans in Khartoum all meant that Iraq was very interested in keeping an eye on the region.

Because of Sudan's support for Eritrea, Iraq also invested a lot of time, money, and effort in Sudan. The Sudanese favored the Eritrean cause, offering sanctuary for Eritrean fighters,

⁵⁶⁰ Soviet support for the communists in Sudan, and their operatives behind the attack, did not help Sudanese-Soviet relations. Paper Prepared by the Policy Review Committee, undated, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 10.

⁵⁶¹ National Intelligence Estimate 11-10-76,": Soviet Military Policy in the Third World, October 21, 1976, *FRUSA*, Documents on Africa 1973-1976, Volume 1969-1976, E-6, Document 55.

⁵⁶² Paper Prepared by the Policy Review Committee, undated, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 10.

political exiles, and refugees. Numayri tried to place himself in the middle of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, going as far as to ask the Washington for its blessing in pursuing negotiations between the warring parties. However, while trying to facilitate some sort of agreement with Ethiopia, the Sudanese struggled to bring all parties to the negotiating table. In 1975, the Sudanese failed to mediate a deal between the Eritrean factions and Ethiopia because Khartoum had overplayed its hand publicly. This prompted the Ethiopians and Eritreans to raise their demands and to arrive at the negotiating table with predetermined positions.⁵⁶³ Khartoum also grappled with Eritrean factionalism. In one instance, as EO Khartoum noted, the Sudanese government met with EPLF leaders in early 1983. According to EO Khartoum, the Sudanese tried to pressure the different factions into signing a joint agreement, but factional differences amongst the EPLF prevented this.⁵⁶⁴

To further secure his regime, Numayri began co-opting another group of Sudanese who posed a threat to his regime—the Islamists. In 1977, he invited two prominent Islamist politicians to join the government: Sadiq al-Mahdi, who had tried to overthrow Numayri in a Libyan-backed coup in 1976, and Hassan al-Turbani of the National Islamic Front, a militant Islamist party. By 1983, Numayri openly welcomed Islamists into the fold, proclaiming that there was to be an Islamic revolution in Sudan with Islamic law replacing the secular constitution.⁵⁶⁵ However, the decline in foreign investment in Sudan left the regime with \$12

⁵⁶³ Memorandum of Conversation, May 7, 1975, *FRUSA*, Documents on Africa 1973-1976, Volume 1969-1976, E-6, Document 229.

⁵⁶⁴ Political Situation, BRCC, 0230-0232, 3471-0002 HB, HIA.

⁵⁶⁵ The National Islamic Front would come to encompass other Islamist parties within Sudan, including the Umma Party, serving as a quasi-umbrella organization; its name changed to National Congress in 1990. For more on the inner workings of the National Islamic Front see Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: On the Trail of Political Islam*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

billion in debt. Massive civil unrest followed. Numayri abrogated the 1972 peace treaty with the southern factions, thereby driving Sudan into civil war. Rebel groups in the south proliferated as a result.⁵⁶⁶ By April 1985, facing strikes, riots, protests, and rebellion in the South, Numayri could not hold back the Islamists, and he was overthrown by an Islamist-inspired military coup. The new regime, led by Sadiq al-Mahdi under the banner of the National Islamic Front, maintained the Sharia law code of 1983. But even al-Mahdi could not keep control, and, after making a peace deal with Garang's rebels, he was overthrown in 1989 by his fellow Islamists. General Omar al-Bashir, the new leader, would declare that "Khartoum will never go back to being a secular capital."⁵⁶⁷

Ironically, al-Bashir's mentor was Hassan al-Turabi, the founder of the National Islamic Front and head of the Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan. Under his tutelage, al-Bashir would rule Sudan in a brutal Islamic dictatorship, using punishments including stoning, crucifixion, and public hanging. The country would also begin a program of "Arabization" in which the Arabic language and Arab culture were emphasized above all others. Under al-Bashir, Sudan would become an important center for Pan-Islamic thought, as well as a center for terrorism—elements of al-Qaeda, including Osama bin Laden, would train in Sudan. Sudan was linked to the World Trade Center Bombing in 1993—Turabi's friend Sheikh Omar was implicated in this – and to

⁵⁶⁶ One of the more famous rebels was an officer named Colonel John Garang, who broke away from Khartoum and formed his own faction, the Sudan People's Liberation Army, known as the SPLA and sometimes as the Movement. He was supported by Uganda, Libya, and Ethiopia. The Iraqis struggled to understand Ugandan support for Garang, believing "if Uganda supports the Garang movement, the "Islamic Front" system supports a similar contradiction in Uganda." They believed that because Ugandans strongly supported Islamist groups tied to Idi Amin's tribe, support for Garang, who was anti-Islamist, was contradictory. The Iraqis were further confused because the Islamic Front was also supplying the Lord's Resistance Army, a Christian militant group based in Uganda. Report on current state and events in southern Sudan, 1995/12/3, BRCC 0050, 2851-0001, HB, HIA.

⁵⁶⁷ Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence*, 361.

the attempted assassination of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 1995. Sudan was then isolated by its neighbors and by the West, forcing it to abandon its support for terrorist cells.⁵⁶⁸

The rise of Islamist groups within Sudan set off alarm bells in Iraq, especially at the mention of the Islamist group, the Muslim Brotherhood.⁵⁶⁹ Iraq's complicated relationship with Islam is beyond the scope of this work, but, essentially, the Ba'athist state both feared and used Islam. Beginning in 1979, upon Saddam Hussein's open takeover of the party and state, the Ba'ath began a "Faith Campaign" in which the state used institutions within the party and security apparatuses to control and monitor all religious entities within Iraq. Ba'athist authorities used Islam in the regime's symbols, propaganda, and rhetoric when it best suited the Ba'ath Party, but it also granted the Ba'athists the power to control any who tried to use Islam to contest the Ba'ath. To the Ba'athists, Islam was a subset of Arab nationalism – not a separate, and therefore competing, ideology or identity. In a sense, knowing he could not squelch Islam entirely, Saddam sought to use the Ba'athist interpretation of it as another way to justify the state's rule. The Faith Campaign targeted prominent Islamists—including the brutal torture and murder of influential Shi'a cleric Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr in 1980—and Saddam's attempts to establish

⁵⁶⁸ However, in August 1998, al-Qaeda cells carried out the bombing of American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Factories in Khartoum were bombed by the Clinton administration after it was alleged that Sudan had supplied some of the chemical weapons needed for the attack. Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence*, 588-593.

⁵⁶⁹ The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in Egypt by Hassan al-Banna in the 1920s, is an Islamist political party, with its accompanying military wing, which believes in a theocracy based strictly on the teachings and scripture of the Koran. Since it challenges any government with a "human" head of state, the group has been hunted down by authorities in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and others. See Eugene Rogan. *The Arabs: A History*. (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 271-272, 399-405. Also see CRRC SH-BATH-D-001-769, Correspondence from the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party Office of Sudan's Affairs, 1988-12-11.

and prove his direct lineage to The Prophet Muhammad, including having the Koran recorded in Saddam's blood.⁵⁷⁰

The rise of Islam in the Horn of Africa troubled Iraq as well. Members of the Ba'ath Party in Sudan reported on rising tensions in the country as communists and secularists faced increasing hostility from the new Islamic regime.⁵⁷¹ The Iraqis also received reports of divisions within the Sudanese Army.⁵⁷² According to EO Khartoum, the new Islamic regime was also moving to diminish Iraq's role in Sudan by “[blacking out] the nationalistic leading role of Iraq in Sudan by the official media services.”⁵⁷³ In a conversation with Saddam and other high-ranking Iraqi officials, Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz argued that the Muslim Brotherhood had not “assume[d] power”; rather, “they became like the communists during the era of Karim Qasim.” Here, Aziz likened the Muslim Brotherhood to the first Ba'athist coup in 1963. Qasim failed to fulfill his promises and was then overthrown by the Ba'athists. In this coup the Ba'athists had “emulated the [Iraqi Communist Party]” by realizing “the importance of being able to control—or to give the impression of being able to control—the ‘street’ at moments of political crisis.”⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷⁰ For more on Iraq and Islam, see Samuel Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion: The Authoritarian Roots of Saddam Hussein's Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Also see Ofra Bengio, *Saddam's Word Political Discourse in Iraq*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 176-191.

⁵⁷¹ CRRC SH-BATH-D-001-769, Correspondence from the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party Office of Sudan's Affairs, 1988-12-11.

⁵⁷² Report, “The Islamic Front receives huge funding from Iran, and the International Organization of Muslim Brotherhood; and the youth of the al-Ummah Party” October 2, 1988, CRRC SH-BATH-D-001-769, Correspondence from the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party Office of Sudan's Affairs, 1988-12-11

⁵⁷³ Report, “Impact of Arabic Aid among the Sudanese People, and Blackout on the Visit of Mr. Muhammad” October 4, 1988, CRRC SH-BATH-D-001-769, Correspondence from the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party Office of Sudan's Affairs, 1988-12-11.

⁵⁷⁴ Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), 162-163, 164.

Most alarming, according to Aziz, was that members of the Muslim Brotherhood were moving against Ba‘thists within the country. In one example, a newly elected governor in Magashi, in northern Sudan, who was affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood began executing Ba‘thists. The governor accused the Ba‘thists of being atheists. Action must be taken, Aziz argued: “...the opposition they have in Sudan against the Ba‘th party and others is not a regular and limited matter where we can be tolerant toward it.” Saddam replied that they should follow an example from their own history—in the early 1970s, the Ba‘thist party feigned friendship with the Iraqi Communist Party, only to later turn on the communists and purge them from both government and society.⁵⁷⁵ Instead of making friends with the Muslim Brotherhood, Saddam asked if the Iraqis should “act with flexibility toward the political and religious movements whenever possible?” He continued:

we can do this without isolating or paving the way for it to become a permanent danger trying to take power. On the other hand, criticism will always be allowed...that’s why we can initiate a dialogue with them stating that an attack is one thing, while expressing the doctrine is something completely different... . We can also tell them, “If you stop talking about the religious state, we will stop criticizing the religious state....”

Instead of attempting to clamp down on the Muslim Brotherhood, Saddam called for a “truce.” He noted that “they came to power.... They know people in the army, some them belong to the old regime.”⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁵ See Chapter 2: Iraqi Foreign Policy, 1968-1989.

⁵⁷⁶ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-167, “Saddam and Ba‘th Party Members Discussing the Status of the Party in the Arab World and Potential Cooperation with the Muslim Brotherhood,” 24 July 1986. See also Kevin M. Woods, David D. Palkki, and Mark E. Stout. *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 107-114.

The Iraqis could not eradicate the Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan as they had the ICP in Iraq—distance severely limited their power and capabilities, for one—but the Iraqis believed history would be on their side. Saddam believed that the Iran-Iraq War would lead to the downfall Ayatollah Khomeini’s regime in Iran and, once that happened, he predicted, “the religious currents are going to be affected very much.” To assure Khartoum that the Iraqis would not abandon Sudan, Saddam argued, “we should not let the religious political currents believe that the fall of Khomeini means their collapse... one of the factors that will alleviate this feeling is our good relations with them” To keep Iraqi influence in Sudan despite the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Saddam believed, “we leave to the field command the freedom to act in this regard, so that we don’t lose strategically or tactically.”⁵⁷⁷

Iraq decided to tread lightly with Sudan. Part of this certainly had to do with Sudanese support for the Eritrean rebels. Another determining factor was Sudan’s relationship with Libya. During Numayri’s tenure, relations between the countries were tense, to say the least, thanks in part to the competing narcissistic personalities of both Numayri and Gaddafi. Libya and Sudan also had competing geopolitical interests. Numayri had supported anti-Gaddafi groups in Libya, including the National Front for the Salvation of Libya, and he had anti-Gaddafi propaganda broadcast within both Sudan and Libya.⁵⁷⁸ On the other hand, besides supporting southern separatists, Libya was enlisting the Ethiopians to help arm and train Sudanese exiles then living

⁵⁷⁷ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-167, “Saddam and Ba’th Party Members Discussing the Status of the Party in the Arab World and Potential Cooperation with the Muslim Brotherhood,” 24 July 1986. See also Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*, 107-114.

⁵⁷⁸ Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence*, 358.

in Ethiopia.⁵⁷⁹ Gaddafi was also linked to the bloody coup attempted against Numayri in Khartoum in 1976.⁵⁸⁰

Iraq also had a contentious relationship with Libya. Ironically, within the Arab world, both countries were considered pariahs.⁵⁸¹ Besides personality clashes between Gaddafi and Saddam, Libya supported Iran during the Iran-Iraq War, including supplying Scud missiles, Soviet T-55 and T-62 tanks, and other military equipment.⁵⁸² Saddam's enemy in Syria, Hafiz al-Assad, had close ties to Gaddafi as well. The two formed a close alliance during the 1980s and signed economic and military agreements. The Libyan relationship with Syria was nowhere near the size and strength of the Soviet-Syrian relationship, but it still further fueled Saddam's paranoia.⁵⁸³ The Iraqis also saw Libya as a Soviet proxy. During the Iran-Iraq War, notably, the Soviets posed as "neutral," yet this still allowed the Libyans to sell Soviet materiel directly to Iran.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁷⁹ Ethiopia resented Sudan for hosting and training Eritrean rebels. By cooperating with Libya, Ethiopia hoped to stop Libyan support for Eritrea. According to the Carter administration, when Ethiopia publicly denounced Sudan, Numayri abandoned his "previous public neutrality on the Eritrean question" and formally put Sudan in the pro-Eritrean independence camp. Paper Prepared by the Policy Review Committee, undated, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 10.

⁵⁸⁰ Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence*, 351.

⁵⁸¹ Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski) to President Carter, Subject line: U.S. Relations with Libya and Iraq, 24 February 1977, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume XVIII, Middle East Region; Arabian Peninsula, Document 130.

⁵⁸² Pesach Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2017), 89, 146, 188, 280, 453.

⁵⁸³ Memo, "Current Syrian Situation," CPG Meeting on Syria, November 4, 1986, OA 91834, 01840, 91843, William Burns Files, RRPL.

⁵⁸⁴ Untitled Iraq-Soviet study, circa February 1986, Iran-Iraq War [February 1986] (5) Box 90192, OA 91834, 01840, 91843, William Burns Files, RRPL.

Therefore, from Baghdad's point of view, Libyan action in East Africa constituted action against Iraq. However, although Iraq saw Libyan action in East Africa as detrimental to its own geopolitical interests, it also noted the tensions and disputes between Libya and the new Islamist government in Sudan. Disparaging the Islamic Front, which allegedly was "under the illusion of liberating the world from Khartoum," the Iraqis believed that the new regime would prove to be problematic for Sudan's regional interests. The Islamic Front's overt mission to spread Islam and establish Islamist governments threatened to upset Sudan's neighbors including Libya. The Iraqis detected intelligence that the new government in Khartoum was exploring options to support Islamist factions in Libya, a move that Gaddafi surely saw as a threat to him personally and to his regime.⁵⁸⁵

Iraq blamed Libya's conflict with Chad—the two had long fought over the Aouzou Strip along the border between them—for drawing the United State military into Sudan.⁵⁸⁶ The Iraqis were not pleased with U.S. military presence in Sudan. EO Khartoum wrote to Baghdad that "America is a superpower that Sudan cannot fight" and that "America has repeatedly declared explicitly against the Islamic trend in Sudan." The Iraqis were concerned with American forces and personnel in Sudan, including the deployment of the Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS). EO Khartoum reported on these activities, including one report from the EO which indicated the presence of "four hundred [American] commandos, a number of military experts, and some of those involved in African affairs." The report also bemoaned that the Americans and

⁵⁸⁵ Report on current state and events in southern Sudan, 1995/12/3, BRCC 0051, 2851-0001 HB, HIA.

⁵⁸⁶ AWACS Planes and American forces in Sudan, and statement from People's Congress of Sudan, 1983/8/25, BRCC 0030-0032, 3471-0002 HB, HIA. Report, "Regarding the Libyan Presence and Tribal Conflict in Sudan and Miscellaneous Articles," SH-BATH-D-001-769, September 10, 1988; CRRC, For more on the conflict between Chad and Libya, see Geoffrey Simons, *Libya: The Struggle for Survival*. (New York: St Martin's Press, 1996).

their security teams were afforded a comfortable stay in the Hilton Hotel. American soldiers, according to Ba‘thist reports, were “staying in first class hotels, roaming the markets, and using taxis.”⁵⁸⁷

The Iraqis were especially interested in American airpower in the region. For one thing, the Iraqis had Scud missiles in northern Sudan themselves, and they were aimed at Egypt’s Aswan High Dam.⁵⁸⁸ EO Khartoum noted the growing relationship between Sudan and the Americans, frustrated that Sudan was increasingly relying on the U.S. presence to protect the regime. The Iraqis resented the “strength of the Sudanese-U.S.” relationship, which was most evident to Baghdad in joint Sudanese-U.S exercises. In one example, in August 1983, 450 Americans were in Sudan for the Bright Stars maneuvers.⁵⁸⁹ The Iraqis noted an increase in security precautions around American military bases and “unusual movement of aircraft” in Khartoum. The Iraqis were also concerned about the twelve F-15s deployed to protect the AWACS.⁵⁹⁰ However, following Numayri’s overthrow, the Sudanese withdrew from future

⁵⁸⁷ AWACS Planes and American forces in Sudan, and statement from People’s Congress of Sudan, 1983/8/25, BRCC 0030-0032, 3471-0002 HB, HIA.

⁵⁸⁸ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-671, “Saddam and his advisors castigate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, discuss Iraqi Scud Missiles in Sudan aimed at Egypt’s Aswan High Dam, and joke about Arab unity under various leaders, 30 September 1990,” See Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*, 91-94.

⁵⁸⁹ According to the *NYT*, 5,500 American troops trained “alongside Egyptian troops to see how well American troops can stand the heat of the desert. The Army will send tank, helicopter, paratroop and artillery units. The Navy will have an aircraft carrier and its battle group, and the Air Force will have fighters, bombers, early warning planes, cargo planes and fuel tankers in action. In the Sudan, 450 Americans will train with Sudanese forces. United States forces will include Special Forces, air defense units, paratroopers and tactical aircraft. In Somalia, an 1,800-man Marine Amphibious Unit, including Marine aircraft, will conduct an amphibious operation alongside Somali force.” Richard Halloran, “U.S. Said to Delay Some War Games, *NYT*, 31 July 1983. <https://nyti.ms/2UmjHHo>

⁵⁹⁰ AWACS Planes and American forces in Sudan, and statement from People’s Congress of Sudan, 1983/8/25, BRCC 0030-0032, 3471-0002 HB, HIA.

Bright Star exercises, including Bright Star 85. U.S. officials attributed this to the increasing role Libya was now playing in Sudan.⁵⁹¹ The Iraqis were pleased to learn that the Americans were withdrawing from Sudan; however, they were frustrated that the Sudanese were looking to Libya. Nevertheless, the Iraqis remained involved with Sudan's air force. In the second half of the 1980s, the Iraqis dispatched senior Iraqi pilots to train the Sudanese in pilot extraction and rescue missions.⁵⁹²

Arabs and the Horn of Africa

Baghdad was well aware that other players in the Middle East were watching events unfold in the Horn of Africa.⁵⁹³ Several Arab states shared Iraq's geopolitical concerns; and, as the Ethiopian campaign intensified, more Arab states joined the Eritrean cause.⁵⁹⁴ King Hussein of Jordan relayed his fears of Soviet expansion in Ethiopia to the Ford administration.⁵⁹⁵ Hafiz al-Assad shared his opinions with U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger when Kissinger visited Syria in March 1975, countering Kissinger's accusation that even Syria was joining the scramble for the Horn of Africa. Assad retorted that of course he was involving Syria in Eritrea, explaining that in part it would be against Israel's interests. He also argued that it would in

⁵⁹¹ Almost 9000 American service members participated in this maneuver, the "largest Mideast exercise ever conducted by the United States." Jordan, Somalia, and Egypt also participated. Norman Black, "Sudan Declines to Participate in Maneuvers", *The Associated Press*, 1 August 1985.

⁵⁹² Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 755.

⁵⁹³ Horn of Africa, Study Pursuant to NSSM 184, 6 July 1973, SRG Meeting, NSSM 184 Horn of Africa, 7/25/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

⁵⁹⁴ Paper Prepared by the Policy Review Committee, undated, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 10.

⁵⁹⁵ Check List for Jordan, March 15-16, 1975, Kissinger Reports on U.S.S.R., China, and Middle East Discussions (Box 3- March 7-22, 1975—Kissinger's Trip- Vol. I (10), GFL. Available online at, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0331/1553958.pdf>.

Washington's interests to do the same. He stated: "...it would be in your interest, given the difference between Communism and capitalism—because those in the saddle in Ethiopia are Communist..."⁵⁹⁶ From Addis Ababa's point of view, Arab interest in the region threatened future "Arab encirclement." Although the rhetoric in Addis Ababa was that the Arab states wanted to "destroy Ethiopia's socialist revolution," the reality was that because of Eritrea's location along the Red Sea, the Arab states viewed a guerilla victory as a way to guarantee that they would have bases of operations in the region in the future.⁵⁹⁷

Many Arab states were also focused on the Ethiopian-Israel alliance. Until the Yom Kippur War in 1973, according to U.S. intelligence, Ethiopia had been the "cornerstone of Israel's East African policy." Israel had supplied Ethiopia with economic aid and military assistance after Ethiopia had maintained a neutral stance in prior Arab-Israeli conflicts.⁵⁹⁸ Under pressure from other Arab states, Ethiopia reluctantly broke with Israel in 1973, but the Arab states remained skeptical of Ethiopia's true intentions and commitments. Assad argued: "Eritrea wants to be an independent country...[this would be] against the interest of Israel."⁵⁹⁹ Libya also supported the EPLF. For one, Libya resented the Ethiopian regime's close ties to Israel and

⁵⁹⁶ Memo of Conversation between President Hafiz al-Asad of the Syrian Arab Republic with Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State, 9 March 1975, Kissinger Reports on U.S.S.R., China, and Middle East Discussions (Box 3- March 7-22, 1975—Kissinger's Trip- Vol. I (2), GFL. Available online at, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0331/1553950.pdf>.

⁵⁹⁷ Interagency Intelligence Memorandum: Ethiopia Likelihood and Implications of Possible Outcomes in Eritrea, May 22, 1978, *FRUSA*, 1977-1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 84

⁵⁹⁸ Interagency Memorandum, DCI/NIO 1076-75, May 7, 1975 *FRUSA*, Documents on Africa 1973-1976, Volume 1969-1976, E-6, Document 142.

⁵⁹⁹ Memo of Conversation between President Hafiz al-Asad of the Syrian Arab Republic with Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State, 9 March 1975, Kissinger Reports on U.S.S.R., China, and Middle East Discussions (Box 3- March 7-22, 1975—Kissinger's Trip- Vol. I (2), GFL. Available online at, <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0331/1553950.pdf>.

therefore sought to pressure Israel by pressuring Ethiopia.⁶⁰⁰ In this sense, Libya served as an African base for Arab states' operations against Israel .

Arab states generally feared Soviet intrusion in the Middle East. The conflict in Africa, to them, only foreshadowed what was to come. The Arabs knew that the Eritreans were severely disadvantaged by Soviet military assistance to Ethiopia and by Eritrean factionalism. And even the Arab states were factionalized—after Haile Selassie's overthrow, Libya, South Yemen, and Algeria tilted more toward Ethiopia, while Syria and Iraq remained firmly in the pro-Eritrean camp. But even those in the pro-Ethiopian camp had a difficult time justifying relations, especially when the new military government started executing alleged political opponents and taking an increasingly hard line towards the Eritreans.⁶⁰¹ According to the C.I.A., staying in the

⁶⁰⁰ The relationship between Ethiopia and Israel has been debated by scholars and policy makers. Some characterize the relationship as a Christian-Jewish alliance, contextualize the relationship in geopolitical terms, or suggest the relationship was not as strong as some suggest. In the Nixon administration, the Department of Defense did not believe the link between the two was as strong as suggested by their colleagues in the State Department, who believed Arab support for Somalia was a direct result of this Ethiopian support for Israel; State firmly believed this was why Libya supported action against Ethiopia. Israel indeed had geopolitical interests in the region, primarily keeping the Bab-el-Mandeb, the strait between Yemen and the Arabian peninsula, open for oil leaving from Iran. They also did not want the Soviets, who were arming and supplying Egypt and Syria, to assume hegemonic control over the region. The Arab nations, for that matter, definitely could have seen Ethiopia as an extension of the Arab-Israeli conflict. How much of this logic was pushed because anti-Zionist rhetoric proved to stir up support for foreign campaigns—see the chapter on Iraq in Lebanon—versus the realities on the ground is still debated among scholars and the likes. Analytical summary— NSSM 184— The Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia, and the French territory of the Afars and the Issas), SRG Meeting, NSSM 184 Horn of Africa, 7/25/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL. Horn of Africa, Study Pursuant to NSSM 184, 6 July 1973, SRG Meeting, NSSM 184 Horn of Africa, 7/25/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL. See Haggai Erlich, *Alliance and Alienation: Ethiopia and Israel in the Days of Haile Selassie*, (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2014).

⁶⁰¹ In February 1974, American intelligence reported mutinies within the Ethiopia military; in some cases, it was Eritrean officers rebelling, while in others it was Ethiopian soldiers frustrated with the heavy losses stemming from the Eritrean insurgency. The EPMG Chief of State, Eritrean-born General Andom, was also assassinated in 1974.

pro-Eritrean camp meant that Syria and Iraq “would probably try to find some middle way out to avoid having either opening going in a direction different from that of their Communist friends or appearing to buckle under to them.” Despite this “pessimistic assessment,” the Arab states, of both camps, continued to send money and political aid to the Eritreans. As U.S. intelligence argued, this was their attempt to “keep trying to broaden the number of players by raising in various international forums the issue of possible foreign military involvement in the fighting.”⁶⁰²

The Iraqis noted high levels of Saudi Arabian and Egyptian interest regarding the Eritrean conflict. The Saudis and the Egyptians resented Soviet and Cuban attempts to mediate the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict, fearing that the Soviets would not only sell Eritrean independence short but, in the words of the C.I.A., would also become “peacemakers in the region.”⁶⁰³ The worst case for these Arab states was that the Soviets might make further inroads in Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya. In attempts to forestall Soviet encirclement, both the Saudis and the Egyptians sought to control the delegates in the negotiation over Eritrea. EO Khartoum noted conflict between Cairo and Riyadh over this, despite their having a common goal, because each was attempting to seize the initiative over the other and each was trying to assert its own designs of self-determination in the region. The ELPF was under pressure from Saudi Arabia to agree to Saudi terms, fueling resentment among the ELPF. As the Americans

Interagency Memorandum, DCI/NIO 1076-75, May 7, 1975 *FRUSA*, Documents on Africa 1973-1976, Volume 1969-1976, E-6, Document 14. Paper Prepared by the Policy Review Committee, undated, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 10.

⁶⁰² Interagency Intelligence Memorandum: Ethiopia: Likelihood and Implications of Possible Outcomes in Eritrea, May 22, 1978, *FRUSA*: 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 84.

⁶⁰³ Interagency Intelligence Memorandum: Ethiopia: Likelihood and Implications Of Possible Outcomes In Eritrea, May 22, 1978, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 84.

noted, the Saudis thought that the “Eritreans were a bunch of radicals,” whom they should work to contain as quietly and quickly as possible.⁶⁰⁴ Tensions ran high between the Eritreans and the Saudis, as reported by the EO, but this pressure did not rule out a possible settlement on Eritrea.⁶⁰⁵

The Egyptians had supported the Eritreans during the Derg’s vicious 1974-1975 cleansing campaign against them. Both supported by the United States, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Sudanese President Jaffar Numayri were also allies. Iraq was dismayed when Numayri supported Sadat despite Sadat’s signing of the Camp David Accords. The Iraqis were so disturbed that they withdrew Sudan’s invitation to attend the meeting of foreign and finance ministers of Arab League countries in Baghdad scheduled for March 1979. It was at this meeting where Egyptian membership to the Arab League was suspended and the League’s headquarters were moved to Tunis. As Saddam remarked to his advisers, “we thought we should announce in all the newscasts the fact that Sudan will not attend and that the ruler of Sudan supported the traitor Sadat and thus became his partner in treason.”⁶⁰⁶ But by December 1979, Sudan had reconsidered its relationship with Egypt, a reconsideration stemming from Arab backlash.⁶⁰⁷ No matter, Numayri’s relationship with Sadat meant that Iraq remained skeptical of Sudanese actions in the region.

⁶⁰⁴ Minutes of the Meeting of the Washington Special Action Group, Washington, February 27, 1975, *FRUSA*, Documents on Africa 1973-1976, Volume 1969-1976, E-6, Document 136.

⁶⁰⁵ Political Situation, 1983/6/7, BRCC, 0230-0232, 3471-0002 HB, HIA.

⁶⁰⁶ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-553, “Saddam Hussein and his advisers discussing how to punish countries that sided with Egypt after Anwar Sadat made peace with Israel,” 27 March 1979. See Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*, 118-121.

⁶⁰⁷ Christopher Wren, “Sudan Reappraising Close Ties to Egypt” *NYT*, December 7, 1979, <https://nyti.ms/2X1AQmD>

Players Outside the Horn

The Iraqis monitored the actions of non-superpower and non-Middle Eastern states in East Africa. Despite their colonial past, the Italians often acted as the conduit or go-between for the Americans and the nations of East Africa. For example, in 1973, the Italians passed along intelligence to the Americans that Somalia wanted to “wean off the U.S.S.R.” Generally speaking, the Italians kept pressing the U.S. to resume economic aid to Somalia to counter Soviet influence.⁶⁰⁸ North Korea and Cuba were also involved, largely operating as trainers and advisors for various guerilla cells. In June 1973, for example, 175 Somalis trained in North Korean warfare training centers, while another 1,600 guerillas were trained by Cuban advisors after a Cuban delegation visited Somalia in mid-April 1973.⁶⁰⁹

Cuban support for Ethiopia angered the Iraqis. For one, it complicated Iraqi-Cuban diplomatic relations, especially after Saddam Hussein’s visit to the island nation in 1978.⁶¹⁰ In Havana, Saddam had urged the Cubans to reconsider their stance on Eritrea, arguing that “if [Cuba is] really eager to maintain good relations with the Arab world and the Arab countries, [it has] to know that the way we see Eritrea is different than our view of Ogaden.” The Cubans had previously told the Iraqis that they supported both Ethiopia and Eritrea and reaffirmed their commitment to finding a “peaceful solution” for the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict during Saddam’s visit. Since Iraqi intelligence had no indication of Mengistu’s political affiliation before his ascension, Saddam asked: “Is Mengistu Mariam a general only or a revolutionary general?” The

⁶⁰⁸ Analytical summary– NSSM 184– The Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia, and the French territory of the Afars and the Issas), SRG Meeting, NSSM 184 Horn of Africa, 7/25/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

⁶⁰⁹ Horn of Africa, Study Pursuant to NSSM 184, 6 July 1973, SRG Meeting, NSSM 184 Horn of Africa, 7/25/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

⁶¹⁰ Cuban doctors allegedly visited Iraq, and they even operated on Saddam’s injured leg following this visit.

Cubans answered that he was a revolutionary general. This response triggered Saddam's arguing that Ethiopia would be engulfed in debates and fights over the role of Marxism-Leninism. To justify this argument, Saddam cited Iraqi intelligence that the General of the Ethiopian Communist Party had defected after a "disagreement" with the Cubans. The Iraqis did, however, take glee in the fact that the new regime in Ethiopia was "ready to disagree with the Soviet Union [and Cuba]" over Eritrea."⁶¹¹

The Iraqis also monitored Chinese activity in the region. In 1971, China gave Ethiopia \$84 million interest-free credit for economic aid.⁶¹² Eritreans also received training in China as early as the 1960s and into the 1970s.⁶¹³ Chinese interest in "Black Africa," according to the NSC, rested on expanding Chinese political influence in the region and to advance Chinese industry in the region.⁶¹⁴ The Chinese were trying to strengthen their interests in the entire Indian Ocean, both for their own self-interest and in pursuit of their global ambitions to surpass the Soviets. However, Somalia's reliance on Soviet weapons and provisions prevented the Chinese from making significant political headway. Undeterred, the Chinese informed the Somalis that, if the Soviet Union were to back out and end its assistance, the Chinese would be a phone call

⁶¹¹ An Iraqi delegation attended the 1979 meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana as well. CRRC, SH-SHTP-A-000-851 "Saddam and High-Ranking Officials Discussing Khomeini, the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict, the Potential for Kurdish Unrest, and the Iranian Economy," 20 February 1979.

⁶¹² Horn of Africa, Study Pursuant to NSSM 184, 6 July 1973, SRG Meeting, NSSM 184 Horn of Africa, 7/25/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

⁶¹³ Reid, *Warfare in African History: New Approaches to African History*, 165.

⁶¹⁴ NSC Confidential Note for HAK from Harold E. Horan, "SRG Meeting on the Horn this afternoon," 25 July 1973, Telegram from Embassy Mogadiscio to Secretary of State, "Siad Asks for U.S. Help to Restrain Ethiopia" 24 July 1973, SRG Meeting, NSSM 184 Horn of Africa, 7/25/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

away; the Chinese also continued to expand their economic development in the region.⁶¹⁵ The same went for Ethiopia—the Chinese were the largest provider of economic aid, but they could not compete with the level of Soviet military materiel. As the Carter administration noted, “the Chinese run a poor second to the Soviets.”⁶¹⁶ Chinese entry into the Horn was discreet, however, since they refused to entangle themselves in interstate disputes or to openly support domestic dissidents. After Emperor Selassie formally recognized the CCP, the Chinese ceased supplying the EPLF.⁶¹⁷

The Ba‘th documents at the Hoover Institution suggest that Chinese influence in Africa did not set off alarms in Baghdad. The Iraqis were aware of Chinese activity in southern Africa, especially in Uganda, Tanzania, and South Africa, but they made little public mention of the Chinese in the Horn.⁶¹⁸ Iraq had supported Beijing’s push for official recognition in the United Nations in 1971, and China began moving to support the Ba‘thist regime in the 1970s by offering weapons and other forms of assistance whenever the latter felt slighted by the Soviets. As they did in Africa, the Chinese considered Soviet interests and Soviet-dominated alliances as

⁶¹⁵ Horn of Africa, Study Pursuant to NSSM 184, 6 July 1973, SRG Meeting, NSSM 184 Horn of Africa, 7/25/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

⁶¹⁶ The United States assessed that China’s move “[demonstrates] commonality with the Africans on major North-South issues and in defining Third World interests as basically opposed to those of both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R....” Despite the PRC seeking to divide the U.S.S.R.’s interests, the Americans could not coordinate with the Chinese. They argued that “while PRC efforts in the Horn may be helpful to our interests from this standpoint, our motivations are sufficiently different to provide an unsatisfactory basis for coordinating our policies in opposing Soviet moves.” Paper Prepared by the Policy Review Committee, undated, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 10.

⁶¹⁷ Analytical summary—NSSM 184—The Horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Somalia, and the French territory of the Afars and the Issas), SRG Meeting, NSSM 184 Horn of Africa, 7/25/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

⁶¹⁸ Press Statement, 20 April 1993, BRCC 0232, 2920-0000, HB, HIA.

detrimental to Chinese interests and therefore sought to assist new potential new clients for themselves among those who were already frustrated with the Soviets.⁶¹⁹ During the Iran-Iraq War, angry at Iraq's invasion of Iran, the Soviets cut down on deliveries of weapons to Iraq. This created a vacuum for the Chinese to fill. Seeking to expand their own political and economic influence, China became Iraq's third largest provider of weapons, including missiles and tanks; Chinese aid to Iraq throughout the war totaled around \$6 billion USD.⁶²⁰ This was not altruism on China's part, because Chinese support for Iraq rested on China wanting to contain the Soviet Union, find new markets, and maintain balance in the Arab world.⁶²¹

However, China was just as opportunistic as the Soviet Union. Fearing the détente emerging between Iran and the U.S.S.R. in 1982—the two had fallen out after the Islamic Revolution and because of the subsequent persecution of communists in Iran, among other reasons—China began courting Tehran; the Chinese ended up supplying the Iranians with around \$3 billion USD.⁶²² Unsurprisingly, the Iraqis were none too pleased, calling Chinese actions “immoral.”⁶²³ Further increasing Iraqi anger was the Chinese government's public declarations

⁶¹⁹ Report on visit to China, 1974/2/16, BRCC, 0087-0088, 3378-0000. Syria and Russian Aids, 02/17/1974, BRCC, 0257, 3378-0000, HB, HIA.

⁶²⁰ Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 146, 459, 473, 477-479, 761. Pierre Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015), 547.

⁶²¹ Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, 86-87, 241-42.

⁶²² Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 389, 477, 479. Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, 190, 551.

⁶²³ William Kazer, “China's WU to Face Iran Arms, Other Thorny Issues on U.S. Tour,” *Reuters*, 1 March 1988, FCO 21/3965, TNA.

of neutrality, going as far as to maintain this mirage during Tariq Aziz's visit to China in February 1988.⁶²⁴ Chinese and Soviet proposals for ending the war also incensed the Iraqis.⁶²⁵

The East Africans also supplied the Iranians—Libya gave around \$2.5 billion USD and Ethiopia \$70 million USD to Iran.⁶²⁶ Saddam attempted to negotiate with Djibouti and Somalia to open bases within those states. He wanted to use those bases—with four frigates and six missile corvettes—to attack and block Iranian naval activities within the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. However, both Djibouti and Somalia refused, acquiescing to Western pressure. The Americans had no intention of trading Iraqi Ba'athism for Iranian Islamic fundamentalism, and they were intent on stopping both from spreading.⁶²⁷ Western pressure, however, was likely not the only reason for Somalia's refusal, at least. Iraq, which had been Somalia's sole supplier of oil, cut off shipments due to its war with Iran. This only worsened Somalia's economic situation, and it also severely hindered getting aid to refugees fleeing the region.⁶²⁸

Iraq in East Africa in the 1990s

In the post-Gulf War environment, East Africa was still on the Iraqis' radar screen.⁶²⁹ Sudan protested Operation DESERT STORM and the ensuing sanctions, accusing the Americans

⁶²⁴ Memorandum, "Visit by the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister," 23 February 1988, FCO 21/3965, TNA.

⁶²⁵ Record of Conversation Between the Foreign Secretary and the Iraqi Foreign Minister held at the Foreign Office on 15 March 1988, FCO 21/3965, TNA. Memorandum, "Iran/Iraq at the U.N.: Arms Embargo: Discussions among the Five," 6 February 1988, FCO 21/3965, TNA.

⁶²⁶ Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, 552, 555.

⁶²⁷ Razoux, *The Iran-Iraq War*, 232.

⁶²⁸ Donna R. Jackson, *Jimmy Carter and the Horn of Africa: Cold War Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia*. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2007), 169.

⁶²⁹ CRRC SH-BATH-D-001-769, Correspondence from the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party Office of Sudan's Affairs, 1988-12-11.

and the coalition of fighting “because their goal has developed into [causing] a change of the regime in Iraq.”⁶³⁰ Iraq repaid the favor by sending delegations to Sudan to help repair various aspects of the Sudanese military. Between 1990 and 1992, the Iraqis largely built the element for Sudan’s air force within the local staff college.⁶³¹ On one of these visits, in February-March 1992, an Iraqi military delegation consisting of 38 officers, including brigadier generals and lieutenant colonels as well as non-commissioned officers, traveled to Khartoum in response to “the government of Sudan's request, and responding to the national call of duty.” Iraqis met with Sudanese military intelligence and with the command of the Air Force. The specific mission was to help repair Sudan’s helicopters and aircraft, to provide spare parts, and to instruct the Sudanese in how to conduct repairs.

After arriving in Sudan in February 1992, Iraqi officers, along with the Iraqi ambassador, the military attaché, and the chargé d’affaires. A ceremony was held upon their arrival. High-ranking Sudanese officials were in attendance, including the Revolutionary Council Leadership General Director, the General Staff Corps Commander, the commander of the Air Force Commander, and several other high-ranking officers in the Sudanese air force. Sudanese President al-Bashir praised Iraq, stating that “Iraq is truthful in its promises and support to its brothers.” According to the report written by the Iraqi delegation, al-Bashir continued by stating his admiration for Iraq’s reconstruction efforts after the “occident” tried to send Iraq back to the “stone age.” Al-Bashir praised Iraq for its handling of the First Gulf War, adding that “the aggression against Iraq caused a great shock but the cloud will eventually go away.... We are sure that the change is coming with no doubt.... Iraq with its leadership will remain strong and

⁶³⁰ International Reaction to Iraqi Withdrawal Offer, 26 February 1991, Desert Storm [3], OA/ID CF01095-003, Riedel, Bruce O. Files, Subject Files, NSC Files, GHWBL.

⁶³¹ Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*, 755.

honored.” Al-Bashir then recited a poem that he had written to commemorate the first Iraqi missile hitting Tel Aviv. In the poem, he praised Saddam Hussein and, according to the Iraqi report, “[defamed] all the weak regimes.” The event ended with the Director General of the Revolutionary Command Council expressing solidarity with Iraq and sympathy for their current situation under the economic embargo.⁶³²

But things did not go smoothly for the Iraqis. The delegation’s stay had to be extended, as requested by the military attaché in the Iraqi embassy in Khartoum, when repair parts for the planes did not arrive on time.⁶³³ The Iraqis reported a sad state of affairs in the Sudanese Air Force. Sudan’s helicopter division consisted of only four pilots. Many of their planes, including the MiG-24s, were damaged because of hard landings. Although some planes did not require repairs, such as the cargo planes, these planes could not fly because there were not enough capable pilots. Even more frustrating for the Iraqis was that, although the MiG-21 jets needed repairs, Sudan did not have motivation to repair them due to the lack of pilots.⁶³⁴ Even many trained aviators had not flown for an extended period of time. Classes and flight instruction also

⁶³² CRRC, SH-MISC-D-000-445, Memo with subject line “Delegation,” from Staff Brigadier General `Abbud Khalaf Mghayyir, Military Attaché Khartoum, dated 21 March 1992, “Memos and Correspondence Issued from the Iraqi Military Attaché in Al-Khartoum Concerning Helicopters that Need Maintenance for Sudan's Air Forces”

⁶³³ In this instance, an Aviator Brigadier General and Engineer Lieutenant Colonel were requested to remain behind for an extra week. CRRC, SH-MISC-D-000-445, Memo with subject line “Opinion disclosure,” from Staff General Ibrahim Rajb 'Ali, Officer's administration Director, Army Staff Headquarters, dated 16 February 1992, “Memos and Correspondence Issued from the Iraqi Military Attaché in Al-Khartoum Concerning Helicopters that Need Maintenance for Sudan's Air Forces.”

⁶³⁴ This was due to both retirement, and pilot transfers to other aircraft because the MiG-21s were unflyable. CRRC, SH-MISC-D-000-445, Memo with subject line “Opinion disclosure,” from Staff General Ibrahim Rajb 'Ali, Officer's administration Director, Army Staff Headquarters, dated 16 February 1992, “Memos and Correspondence Issued from the Iraqi Military Attaché in Al-Khartoum Concerning Helicopters that Need Maintenance for Sudan's Air Forces.”

had to cease because “the planes [were broken] down, and [it is impossible] to repair them at the present time because of the lack of the spare parts.” Many planes were beyond repair—some of them had not had repairs in fourteen years, and some of them required parts that were no longer available.⁶³⁵

The Iraqis even had to repair some of these planes by foraging and repurposing parts from nonrunning engines, but this met only with limited success —planes repaired this way could then be used only for training and not combat. New engine covers, cockpit glass doors, hydraulic systems, wing balances, propeller shafts were required as well. The Iraqis initiated classes for rivet repairs as well as flight instruction and flight recertification. The Iraqi delegation also recommended further training for the pilots. The Iraqi delegation recommended that the Sudanese should continue flying the planes in order to improve pilot effectiveness; they also stressed that the Sudanese must maintain better technical records and push for more flying hours.⁶³⁶

In a report written for Saddam Hussein, the delegation praised the accomplishments of the mission, citing the “brotherhood” between the Sudanese and Iraqi forces. The delegation claimed that “the collaboration of our brothers in the Sudanese air forces and the responsiveness of the officials at all levels, was the best help for U.S. to accomplish our mission in this short

⁶³⁵ CRRC, SH-MISC-D-000-445, Memo with subject line “The completed works of the Iraqi Army Aviation” from Technical Lieutenant Colonel, Aviator Colonel, Yasin Muhammad Farhan Faysal 'Ali 'Abbas, Delegation Head, via Military Attaché, Khartoum, dated circa 21 March 1992, “Memos and Correspondence Issued from the Iraqi Military Attaché in Al-Khartoum Concerning Helicopters that Need Maintenance for Sudan's Air Forces.”

⁶³⁶ CRRC, SH-MISC-D-000-445, Memo with subject line “The completed works of the Iraqi Army Aviation” from Technical Lieutenant Colonel, Aviator Colonel, Yasin Muhammad Farhan Faysal 'Ali 'Abbas, Delegation Head, via Military Attaché, Khartoum, dated circa 21 March 1992, “Memos and Correspondence Issued from the Iraqi Military Attaché in Al-Khartoum Concerning Helicopters that Need Maintenance for Sudan's Air Forces.”

time.” The delegation reported that it had been able to repair airplanes that had previously been abandoned. It had also been able to prepare other planes for future use by Sudanese airmen. The report also mentioned the Iraqis leading training and certification classes for these airmen. The report stated: “we as well retrained all the aviators to practice flying, starting from the highest-ranking officers and ending with the cadets.” As with other delegations sent abroad, those writing this report praised the training they had received in Iraq, attributing their successes in Sudan and in the “Arab homeland” to the “military training, which we received from the school of the leader, the symbol, the fighter, and the president Saddam Hussein.”⁶³⁷

Sudan in the 1990s was marred by civil unrest and war following Al-Bashir’s 1989 coup. The Second Sudanese Civil War, often dated back to 1983, saw the deliberate targeting of civilians, famine, starvation, disease, child soldiers, slavery, and close to two million deaths.⁶³⁸ In 1999, Egypt and Libya had attempted to get the Sudanese to enter into a peace agreement. However, they refused to commit on issues related to possible secession of the southern regions, leading the SPLA to withdraw from the proceedings. U.N. and other foreign aid to Sudan was limited; deliveries were often delayed or even canceled because of the violence and human rights violations. As a result, refugees poured from the country. Iraq noted the massive influx of

⁶³⁷ The report also asked, “the almighty, the most high God to preserve the relationship among our armed forces to serve our Arab homeland and our great Islamic nation.” This highlights the increasing, but conflicted, role of Islam in Iraq in the post First Gulf War. For more information on this, see Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion: The Authoritarian Roots of Saddam Hussein’s Islam*.

CRRC, SH-MISC-D-000-445, Speech from Delegation, through Military Attaché Khartoum, dated 21 March 1992, “Memos and Correspondence Issued from the Iraqi Military Attaché in Al-Khartoum Concerning Helicopters that Need Maintenance for Sudan’s Air Forces.”

⁶³⁸ The war ended in 2005, and South Sudan formally gained independence in 2011. The Sudanese government was also formally accused of genocide by the United States government on 21 October 2002. President George W. Bush signed the Sudan Peace Act which formally accused Sudan of committing genocide and violating human rights. See <https://www.congress.gov/107/plaws/publ245/PLAW-107publ245.pdf>

refugees fleeing Sudan into Ethiopia, especially near the southeast border. Baghdad estimated the total number of refugees to be around 100,000. Famine and the lack of humanitarian aid only exacerbated the refugees' plight.⁶³⁹

The Iraqis continued to monitor the Sudanese crisis for any political or military developments.⁶⁴⁰ As always, the Iraqis were carefully checking for any communist party activity. The Ba'athists believed that their activities were evidence of "African or American auspices" and influence.⁶⁴¹ Explaining Numayri's overthrow and subsequent internal turmoil, Iraq blamed external forces and argued that Sudan had been divided by "foreign intervention"—specifically by Uganda, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Eritrea.⁶⁴² Any talk of dividing the north and the south was attributed to "...foreign intervention in Sudan and the placation of it." The establishment of opposition parties in the south, including religious groups like the Party of Jihad, was under "the auspices of the United States," according to the Iraqis.⁶⁴³ But it was not just the United States facing the ire of the Iraqis; the United Kingdom was accused of cover-ups and false statements about its involvement and support of regional players.⁶⁴⁴

⁶³⁹ This document within the Hizb al-Ba'ath BRCC dataset appeared to be a speech given to the United Nations Security Council. By whom remains the question. There are no documents prior to or after this one that mentions the situation in Sudan. Given the chaotic of the dataset, at the time of this writing, it appears this document was either misplaced or mis-organized when the documents were compiled, or even mis-shuffled during the Iraq War in 2003. Sudan famine 1993, BRCC 0509, 003-4-2, HB, HIA.

⁶⁴⁰ CRRC SH-BATH-D-001-769, Correspondence from the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party Office of Sudan's Affairs, 1988-12-11

⁶⁴¹ Report on current state and events in southern Sudan, 1995/12/3, BRCC 0050, 2851-0001, HB, HIA.

⁶⁴² Iraq argued this intervention started in 1984. Report on current state and events in southern Sudan, 1995/12/3, BRCC 0049, 2851-000, HB, HIA.

⁶⁴³ Report on current state and events in southern Sudan, 1995/12/3, BRCC 0051, 2851-0001, HB, HIA.

⁶⁴⁴ Report on current state and events in southern Sudan, 1995/12/3, BRCC 0048-0049, 2851-0001, HB, HIA.

Somalia and Djibouti

Chaos in East Africa did not spell the end of Iraqi involvement in the region. By the 1990s, Somalia as a functioning state essentially ceased to exist. “Politics” consisted of various warlords and clans fighting to dominate the streets, the country’s resources, and even humanitarian aid. According to Richard J. Reid, part of this violence resulted from the re-emergence of militant Islam in the region, itself a response to the “abject failure of secularism.” Using the large pool of disenfranchised men, groups like Hizb al’Islam (Party of Islam), al-Shabaab (The Youth), and al-Qaeda (The Base) “[tapped] into [an] extant network of Islamic militancy of some antiquity.”⁶⁴⁵

Cold War tensions also contributed to Somalia’s political upheaval. Somalia’s defeat in Ogaden in 1978 prompted Siad to preemptively quash one attempted takeover and to protect himself against future attempts at a coup. Along with heavy oppression, Siad began relying on his own family’s clan, the Marehan of the Darod. By 1987, more than half of the senior officer corps in Somalia belonged to this clan or to one of its affiliates.⁶⁴⁶ The pivoting of the Soviets away from Somalia had also opened the country up to Western assistance, but the state’s dependence on foreign aid as its main means of survival resulted in open clan warfare when the United States suspended military and economic aid by 1989 as part of their winding down of financial support that had been justified as an expense in the Cold War. Clan factions were angered by Siad’s corruption, greed, tyranny, and betrayals – for example, he made a deal with Ethiopia in 1988 for the two countries to cease operations against one another so that both could focus on quelling their own internal strife, a deal many Somalis “likened...to the Hitler-Stalin

⁶⁴⁵ Reid, *Warfare in African History: New Approaches to African History*, 174.

⁶⁴⁶ Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence*, 468.

pact of 1939.”⁶⁴⁷ Clan factions broke into revolt, driving the country into civil war. Siad escaped to exile in Yemen in 1992; but General Muhammad Farah Aideed and Ali Mahdi Muhammad, both of whom had fought against Siad, split and formed their own factions, thus continuing the civil war.⁶⁴⁸ By the end of the 1990s, over 250,000 Somalis would lose their lives.⁶⁴⁹

In response to this humanitarian crisis, the United Nations authorized the establishment of United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) in late April 1992 to help secure a tenable ceasefire between the warring factions. U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali had strongly pushed for action in Somalia, arguing that “national security should be overridden by the United Nations Security Council in cases where it was deemed necessary for peace enforcement.”⁶⁵⁰ After failing to secure the peace, UNOSOM was replaced by UNOSOM II, a task force led by the United States, to use “all necessary means to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in Somalia.”⁶⁵¹ Operation RESTORE HOPE, as the mission was generally known, sent American troops to Mogadishu on 9 December 1992.⁶⁵²

⁶⁴⁷ Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence*, 468.

⁶⁴⁸ Both Aideed and Muhammad belonged to the rival Hawiye clan.

⁶⁴⁹ In 2006 and in 2009, Ethiopia re-occupied south Somalia. Border disputes continue to this day. Reid, *Warfare in African History: New Approaches to African History*, 174.

⁶⁵⁰ Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence*, 471.

⁶⁵¹ S/RES/794 (1992) 3 December 1992, Resolution 794 (1992), Adopted by the Security Council at its 3145th meeting, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/794>

⁶⁵² See *The Associated Press*, “Transcript of President's Address on Somalia,” published in the *NYT*, December 5, 1992, <https://nyti.ms/29bqGci>. Ironically, it was an Iraqi diplomat who pushed for intervention in Somalia. Ismat Kittani, who replaced UNOSOM I commander Mohamed Sahnoun, allegedly fed the U.N. exaggerated ground reports of civilian suffering, including a claim that 2 million Somalis faced starvation after 70-80% of all relief food had been looted. Kittani’s figures, while disputed by Red Cross officials, were cited as just cause for further

Somalia's descent into chaos rattled Saddam Hussein, and U.S. intervention only heightened his fears. Saddam classified U.S. entry into Somalia as an attack against the Somali people, not an intervention in their defense. In a discussion with his advisors, Saddam remarked that "[the Americans] will face difficulties in Somalia...the method used in attacking Somalia is unfair, since they had no government or stability. If you were fighting an average country, you could strike its factories or buildings. What could you do to a starving naked people, fighting with their AK-47s? They have no government you could send tanks to attack and that they could send their tanks to defend. The Somalis did not even own one plane in order for American to strike it." He continued: "The Somalis were desperately fighting the Americans to obtain their shirts off their back...if the Americans continue such politics, they are going to face major troubles...."⁶⁵³

After some initial success in mediation between Aideed and Mahdi, Operation RESTORE HOPE only galvanized and stoked more tension, suspicion, and fighting among the clans. Aideed came to see the Americans as pro-Mahdi partisans, When the Americans moved to shut down his propaganda operations, including "Radio Aideed," forces backing Aideed allegedly told UNOSOM officers: "This is unacceptable. This means war."⁶⁵⁴ On 3 October 1993, U.S. soldiers of the Army Rangers, Delta Force, Tenth Mountain Division, the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, and other units attempted to capture two of Aideed's closest lieutenants in what was expected to be an hour-long raid. Instead, eighteen American

escalation in the region. Kittani, a Kurd himself, had a peculiar relationship with the Iraqi government. See Paul Lewis, "Isamat Kittani, 72, Kurdish Diplomat Who Loyalily Served Iraq," *NYT*, 27 October 2001.

⁶⁵³ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-753, "Saddam and his advisors discuss the decline of the United States and the possibility of rapprochement in the incoming Clinton administration," circa 14 January 1993. See Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978-2001*, 47-52.

⁶⁵⁴ Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence*, 479.

soldiers were killed—with two bodies dragged through the streets, all broadcast on television—and 72 were wounded. Two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters were downed during rescue attempts.⁶⁵⁵ Public outrage over this event prompted the Americans to cease the hunt for Aided and then to withdraw from Somalia on 31 March 1994. Without U.S. backing, UNOSOM collapsed. All U.N. personnel evacuated Mogadishu by March 1995, and civil strife continued in Somalia.

But Saddam was ever the man of opportunity. In a discussion with his top political advisors early in October 1994, Saddam justified deploying the Republican Guard, the vanguard of the Iraqi military, to southern Iraq in early October 1994.⁶⁵⁶ He said: “We do not accept dying of hunger...we do not accept that our people will die of hunger, and we are just sitting idle watching it become like Somalia, or like Haiti, or the other countries whose people were dying of hunger, and watch our people receive leftovers thrown in by the Westerners in a humiliating manner, without affording our people an actual rescue.”⁶⁵⁷ The goal, according to Saddam, was to trigger an international crisis that would draw attention to Iraq. The world would then see the “truth” about the American injustices towards the Iraqi people. The Iraqi people were indeed suffering under sanctions, but Saddam wanted to use their suffering—suffering caused by his

⁶⁵⁵ For more on this incident, see Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War*. (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1999).

⁶⁵⁶ Michael Gordon, “U.S. Sends Force as Iraqi Soldiers Threaten Kuwait”, *NYT*, 8 October 1994, <https://nyti.ms/2pIHvDN>

⁶⁵⁷ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-253. “Saddam and Top Political Advisers Discussing Relations with Saudi Arabia and Other Neighbors,” circa 9-10 October 1994. See Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*, 266-269. On pg. 266, note 23 lists other tapes where Saddam discusses deploying the Republican Guard to the south, hoping to create a crisis.

refusal to adhere to United Nations mandates—to portray Iraq and himself as victims of unjust American aggression and greed.⁶⁵⁸

Civil war continued in Somalia throughout the 1990s—with various peace talks and conferences failing to secure peace—and Eritrea and Ethiopia were back at war between 1998 and 2000. Eritrea used its alliance with its neighbor to the south, Djibouti, to facilitate trade. The two shared common territorial grievances against Ethiopia, thus giving them common cause, at least initially. Previously incorporated as the French Territory of the Afars and the Issas, in June 1977, Djibouti declared independence after France’s 1976 declaration that it would be vacating the region.⁶⁵⁹ Iraq wanted neither U.S. nor Soviet influence in the newly independent country, and it feared that the Americans wanted to set up permanent U.S. naval and aircraft facilities.⁶⁶⁰ The C.I.A. wagered that “Baghdad would be inclined to use economic and political pressure to make its point with the Djiboutians.” However, they also bet that “Baghdad might be too preoccupied to do more than protest loudly,” as the Iraqis were more preoccupied with the consequences of the Camp David Accords and the Iranian Revolution.⁶⁶¹ Nor had the Soviets

⁶⁵⁸ Richard D. Lyons, “U.N. Council Decides to Keep Economic Sanctions on Iraq,” *NYT*, 15 November 1994, <https://nyti.ms/2GiZiu8>

⁶⁵⁹ For U.S. policy debates on France’s withdrawal, see National Security Study Memorandum 239, March 22, 1976 & Study Prepared by the Ad Hoc Inter-Departmental Group for Africa, May 27, 1976, *FRUSA*, Documents on Africa 1973-1976, Volume 1969-1976, E-6, Document 159, Document 161.

⁶⁶⁰ Djibouti today hosts the highest number of foreign military bases in Africa, including those of France, China, the United States, and Germany. It is now home to a forward U.S. base of the Combined Joint Taskforce—Horn of Africa, which falls under United States Central Command. This base opened in 2002. Awet T. Weldemichael, “The Horn of Africa from the Cold War to the War on Terror,” in *A Companion to African History*, edited by William H. Worger, et al. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 409-410.

⁶⁶¹ Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, Djibouti: Prospects for Stability and Implications of U.S. use of Facilities in Memorandum from Paul B. Henze of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski): Djibouti—C.I.A. Assessment, July 31, 1979, *FRUSA*: Foreign Relations, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 95.

contested Somalia's claims to Djibouti, prior to the latter's independence, further increasing Iraq's paranoia over Soviet intentions in the region.⁶⁶²

Regardless of other pressing regional concerns, the Iraqis had established an OI office, housing its intelligence capabilities, in Djibouti. Like other OI offices around the world, the OI Djibouti maintained lists of that country's politicians and personalities who "have positive attitudes towards Iraq" as well as individuals involved in television, radio and other media.⁶⁶³ Women's groups were tracked along with individuals who had political or economic connections in Turkey and France.⁶⁶⁴ OI Djibouti also produced propaganda pieces to be distributed within the country. One pamphlet claimed that the British admitted to their "crimes against Iraq," and it further alleged that the UK was in a conspiracy with Iraq's other two enemies—the Americans and the Jews.⁶⁶⁵ Intelligence about Djibouti's internal political strife also reached Baghdad. In one example, OI Djibouti at first reported to Iraqi intelligence about an attempted military coup in the capital in August 1998. The OI noted that the coup had failed and that the responsible officers and soldiers were being rounded up and arrested.⁶⁶⁶ Upon receiving confirmation, the intelligence agency passed the news up to the office of the General Secretary of the Ba'athist office, the uppermost echelon of the party.⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶² The Americans believed it was because the Soviets wanted to gain a naval base in Djibouti. National Intelligence Estimate 11-10-76: Soviet Military Policy in the Third World, 21 October 1976, *FRUSA* Documents on Africa 1973-1976, Volume 1969-1976, E-6, Document 55.

⁶⁶³ Information, lists, 1993/1/4, BRCC 0781, 0784-0786, BRCC 003-4-2, HB, HIA.

⁶⁶⁴ Information 1993, BRCC 0781, 003-4-2, HB, HIA.

⁶⁶⁵ Statements of Disapproval, OI Djibouti via General Secretary to Ministry of Culture and Media, 1998/10/28, BRCC 0283, 3474-0000, HB, HIA.

⁶⁶⁶ Coup Attempt, 1998/10/28, BRCC 0280, 3474-0000, HB, HIA.

⁶⁶⁷ Coup Attempt, 1998/10/17, BRCC 0282, 3474-0000, HB, HIA.

Iraqi foreign policy in the 1990s was largely preoccupied with U.S-led sanctions in the aftermath of the First Gulf War (1990-1991).⁶⁶⁸ However, this did not mean that Iraqi intelligence operations ceased in East Africa. OI Djibouti kept an eye on developments on the Somalia crisis and the Somalia-Ethiopian border disputes. The OI sent back intelligence reports related to the November 1996 conference in the resort town of Sodere, Ethiopia (about 75 miles southeast of Addis Ababa). There regional states and various East African actors, including factions of Somalia's warring clans, gathered to discuss both the fallout of Aideed's death in August 1996 and the "Ethiopian occupation" of Somaliland in southern Somalia. According to the OI, the conference was spearheaded by the Americans, whose aim was "to show the so-called Somaliland as a legitimate state and [encourage] neighboring countries and their allies to recognize them."⁶⁶⁹

The conference, which met in January 1997, created a 41-member National Salvation Council (NSC), which was then put in charge of organizing a transitional government in Somalia.⁶⁷⁰ The OI reported that the most "powerful Somali political fronts" approved and accepted the NSC. However, the conference was boycotted and rejected by Aideed's son and heir apparent, Hussein Farrah Aideed, as well as by the government of Somaliland. A rival conference was held at Sana'a in Yemen, but this meeting was rejected by those in attendance in Sodere. The OI chastised Yemen for its involvement, noting that Yemen wanted to promote its own choice for Somalia, Muhammad Ibrahim Ayqal. However, the OI gleefully reported,

⁶⁶⁸ See Chapter 5: Iraq and Russia in the 1990s.

⁶⁶⁹ Developments in the Somalia crisis, 1997/6/21, BRCC 0295-0297, 3553-0000, HB, HIA.

⁶⁷⁰ For a list and timeline of all conferences which were convened to secure peace in Somalia, see African Union Mission in Somalia's (AMISOM) "Somalia Peace Process" article, accessed 14 February 2019. <http://amisom-au.org/about-somalia/somali-peace-process/>

Muhammad Ibrahim Ayqal did not see himself as merely the head of a faction, and so he refused to visit Yemen unless Yemen was prepared to call him the president of Somaliland. This they were not prepared to do.⁶⁷¹

Intelligence that was filtered through OI Djibouti noted that the number of factions and foreigners within Somalia was growing, including Islamist groups. It was these groups and the subsequent collapse of the Somali state that prompted Ethiopia to invade Somalia in August 1996. The Iraqis rejected Ethiopia's justification that it was chasing Somali Islamic extremists out of Ethiopia—Addis Ababa had claimed to be chasing Islamist groups who were using Ogaden as a base of operations. Instead, the Iraqis argued, Ethiopia was acting as a conqueror, an imperialist nation, and its action had resulted in an unwarranted "occupation." Although Iraq did acknowledge the growth of these Islamist groups, the Iraqis still saw action in the Horn of Africa in the 1990s as mostly a product of geopolitical wrangling, a consequence of foreign intervention, and a challenge to Iraq's interests in the region.⁶⁷²

Iraq and the Horn of Africa

In March 1988, the EPLF defeated the Ethiopians at the Afabat front in Eritrea, killing or capturing over 18,000 Ethiopian soldiers; three Soviet military advisers were also captured.⁶⁷³ This Eritrean victory was a major turning point of the war. Shortly after, facing famine, financial difficulties, and military failure, the Ethiopians vacated western Eritrea. By 1991, the Eritrean rebels, having *de facto* control over the region, formed a government in the city of Asmara,

⁶⁷¹ Developments in the Somalia crisis, 1997/6/21, BRCC 0295-0297, 3553-0000, HB, HIA.

⁶⁷² Developments in the Somalia crisis, 1997/6/21, BRCC 0295-0297, 3553-0000, HB, HIA.

⁶⁷³ A fourth Soviet advisor was killed in battle. Shelia Rule, "Eritrean Rebels Claim Big Victory Over Ethiopia," *NYT*, March 27, 1988, <https://nyti.ms/29z5KPh>

without hindrance from Addis Ababa. Eritrea declared independence in 1991.⁶⁷⁴ Independence, however, did not spell the end of hostilities between the two states. In 1998, fighting along their border resulted in over 100,000 dead and in one third of Eritrea's population fleeing from the border region.⁶⁷⁵

Arab interest in the Eritrean conflict, let alone the Horn of Africa, was not a new or sudden phenomenon. But as interest in the region was renewed, there were different players. The race began in 2015 when the UAE, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar—with all focusing on the Bab-el-Mandeb strait and proximity of civil war-torn Yemen—started making new inroads into the region, such as with the construction of seaports and military outposts in Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan.⁶⁷⁶ By the second decade of the 21st century, events were all a part of their larger efforts “to redefine the regional order and assert themselves as players on a global stage.”⁶⁷⁷ The most prominent successor to the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation, continued to meddle in African affairs, including in Sudan. The Russians moved to protect and arm al-Bashir's regime in Sudan with security training, weapons, and mercenaries, and they even went

⁶⁷⁴ Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government: the Eritrean People's Liberation Front*, 156-157.

⁶⁷⁵ Meredith, *The Fate of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence*, 688. James C. McKinley, Jr., “Ethiopians and Eritreans Resume Border Battle,” *NYT*, June 4, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/06/04/world/ethiopians-and-eritreans-resume-border-battle.html>. The war officially ended in July 2018. To many, the mediator who facilitated the end of the fighting was more surprising than the fact that an agreement was made. It was thanks to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that the two sides signed a formal agreement.

⁶⁷⁶ Eritrea is also within the crosshairs of the Americans, given Djibouti's alleged request to have the American vacant Obock station to make room for an incoming Chinese military base. Weldemichael, “The Horn of Africa from the Cold War to the War on Terror,” 414.

⁶⁷⁷ Zach Vertin, “Red Sea Rivalries: The Gulf States Are Playing a Dangerous Game in the Horn of Africa”, *Foreign Affairs*, 15 January 2019.

so far as to shield him from the International Criminal Court.⁶⁷⁸ What cannot be denied, however, is that the legacy of the Cold War continues to affect today's events in East Africa. As historian Timothy Scarnecchia has suggested, "Given the heavy price Africans paid for the proxy wars and violent liberation wars that occurred during the Cold War, it is not surprising . . . that such legacies and influences did not end abruptly with the same celebratory finality compared to the Cold War in Europe."⁶⁷⁹

From cultivating relationships with local populations—including students, politicians, and the media – to funding rebel fighters and setting up intelligence agencies to run out of their embassies, the Iraqis were fully devoted to the Eritrean cause. Even the Carter administration gave credit where credit was due, arguing that Iraq was "probably the staunchest backer of the Eritrean cause."⁶⁸⁰ But as Baghdad entrenched itself in the conflict, Iraqi interests in the region expanded—to Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, and Djibouti.⁶⁸¹ By focusing on conflict in East Africa, Iraq could keep an eye on Egypt and Libya, and it could exploit local and regional tensions in hopes of gaining more influence in East Africa. The Eritrean-Ethiopian conflict, therefore, served as an avenue on which to advance and achieve Iraq's ambitions.

⁶⁷⁸ And yet, as of this writing, al-Bashir was placed in house arrest by the Sudanese military after months of protests against his regime in the streets of Khartoum. What Russia will do next remains to be seen. What the Arab states will do also remains to be seen. The Chinese, who have stepped up their influences in Africa, will surely be in the arena as well. Simon Shuster, "Putin's Empire of Autocrats," *TIME* Magazine, 15 April 2019, 28-35. See Declan Walsh, "The Son Protested the Dictator. The Father Helped Throw Him Out." *NYT*, April 23, 2019. Alex de Waal, "What's Next for Sudan's Revolution" *Foreign Affairs*, April 23, 2019.

⁶⁷⁹ Scarnecchia, "Africa and the Cold War," 397.

⁶⁸⁰ Interagency Intelligence Memorandum: Ethiopia: Likelihood and Implications of Possible Outcomes in Eritrea, May 22, 1978, *FRUSA*, 1977–1980, Volume XVII, Horn of Africa, Part 1, Document 84.

⁶⁸¹ The Iraqis were also interested in Kenya. However, more research in the BRCC to be able to fully analyze the Iraqi-Kenya relationship. Even then, this would go beyond purview of this chapter.

The Iraqis used the same playbook as the Soviets when it came to intervention in East Africa: exploitation of local tensions, provision of arms, and economic aid.⁶⁸² The Horn of Africa was another arena in which the Iraqi-Soviet relationship was tested – one in which the Iraqis saw the opportunity to challenge the Soviet’s “anti-imperialist” credentials on both the Arab and global stages and in which the Iraqis tested the limits of Soviet patience with Iraqi ambitions. Iraq did not see itself as acting as an imperialist. In fact, they believed themselves to be liberators. Any local and regional decisions which ran counter to Iraq’s desires, in Baghdad’s mind, obviously indicated international malice. Even well into the 1990s, Iraq believed that “there are interventions by regional and international powers to arrange the conditions of the Horn of Africa.”⁶⁸³

The Iraqi relationships cultivated in East Africa were not always focused on foreign policy. In all its foreign interactions, the Ba‘th used these relationships to both glamorize their forces and missions and to supervise their own domestic forces. Upon returning from training in Iraq, Sudanese military units wrote reports on their experiences, reports that were circulated among Ba‘thist leadership. Some returnees reported “positive impressions” of the Iraqi Ba‘th Party and the Iraqi Army. Other Sudanese soldiers were noted for paying tribute to “[Iraq’s] amazing army” and they relished in the “adoration” they felt from Saddam Hussein. However, not all reports were so positive. One Iraqi armored force commander reportedly warned his Sudanese trainees against replicating “the formation of a [Ba‘thist type] organization of the army.” The report does not state either who said this or to which unit he belonged, nor does it report his fate. However, given the paranoia within the Ba‘th Party and its boundless fear of

⁶⁸² Analytical Summary, 19 July 1973, “A U.S. Strategy for the Region of the Soviet Southern Flank”, SRG Meeting—Arabian Peninsula, NSSM 181, 7/20/73, Box H-068, NSC Meetings, H-Files, 1969-1974, RMNL.

⁶⁸³ Report on current state and events in southern Sudan, 1995/12/3, BRCC 0050, 2851-0001 HB, HIA.

military coups, one could reasonably assume that this officer was relieved of his command, at the very least.⁶⁸⁴

By examining Iraq's role in East Africa, historians can see further evidence of African agency in these conflicts. Too often, conflicts in the Third World pitted the U.S.S.R. and its allies, clients, and cronies against the U.S. and its allies, clients, and cronies. The Americans and Soviets were indeed involved in East Africa, and their own allegiances shifted due to local and regional circumstances. The third world actors in this region—Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia—all had their own agendas. Inspired by other global revolutions, Eritrea sought assistance, training, and support from the Iraqis and the Chinese at the same time, and it launched a complex campaign of resistance, including operations based on guerilla tactics, against forces backed by other Cold War powers. Although the superpowers may have prolonged these conflicts, the people and history of East Africa were the most powerful drivers in this era. No matter how many times they tried during the Eritrean-Ethiopian conflict, and in subsequent conflicts, even the Iraqis could not surmount this fact, no matter how hard they tried.

⁶⁸⁴ Impressions of Sudanese military units returning from Iraq, 1983/7/26, BRCC, 0112, 0114-0115, 3471-0002, HB, HIA.

Chapter 5 - Iraq and Russia in the 1990s

A global audience watched in shock and awe as the Berlin Wall, arguably the most iconic physical manifestation of the Cold War, was torn down by West and East Berliners on 4 November 1989. After receiving no word from Moscow, East German authorities did not impede the breach of the wall. The fall of the Berlin Wall would later symbolize the unification of Germany and the end of communism in Eastern Europe. Between 1988 and 1989, communist regimes all over Eastern Europe faced open defiance, civil resistance, and political change—some peaceful, some violent. Poland was the first to fall in April 1988, followed by uprisings in Hungary in May 1988, East Germany in May 1989, Bulgaria in October 1989, Czechoslovakia in November 1989, and Romania in December 1989. With no backing from Moscow—financially, politically, or militarily—Soviet puppet governments lost their strength, ability, and nerve to continue to rule. Many of these collapsing governments gave way to new and rising political powers, including new unions and political parties, and many older parties were soundly defeated in the first free and fair elections.

This chapter examines how Iraq navigated the fall of the Soviet Union. The end of the U.S.S.R. came shortly after the Iraqis were expelled from Kuwait by U.S.-led coalition forces in March 1991. From then on, Iraq faced over a decade of United Nations sanctions and intermittent U.S.-led bombing campaigns. Baghdad felt abandoned and even betrayed by Moscow, given the perceived inaction of the Soviet Union to resist the American counter-invasion of Kuwait. But this did not stop the Ba'athist regime from seeking to re-establish relations with the new Russian Federation. Even then, Iraqi diplomatic operations continued to run across the globe—while their missions shifted, Iraqi organizations that facilitated these types of operations were by and large structured in the same manner as they had been before. By

1993, with the political situation settling down in Russia, Moscow and Baghdad renewed their relationship. However, the dynamic between Iraq and Russia drew on the legacy of the relationship between Iraq and the Soviet Union from the years of the Cold War. Although bound by their mutual interests, Baghdad and Moscow still struggled to trust one another. Their relationship during the Cold War had been turbulent at times, and the two states could neither walk away from one another nor forget their conflicted past. Iraq learned important lessons during the time period, lessons that it would use in a new decade and era.

The End of Soviet Union

By 26 December 1991, the Soviet Union ceased to exist. The fall of the Soviet Union was ordained well before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Decades of corruption and mismanagement, changing demographics, ethnic tensions, the rise of labor unions and other workers' groups, resistance in satellite states, overspending in the arms race, competition with the United States, environmental and nuclear disasters, technological backwardness, and the war in Afghanistan all contributed to the Soviet Union's demise. This demise was not necessarily a surprise for Soviet clients in the Middle East, who had seen economic investment and monetary aid from Moscow all but dry up by the end of the 1980s.

The Soviets began a rapid expansion of arms sales to Third World states in the 1960s. Other factors played key roles in this change: economic aid was replaced with military aid as a means of guaranteeing greater returns; the Soviets began a massive military buildup under Leonid Brezhnev; Soviet naval transportation and infrastructure expanded; the 1965 Indo-Pakistani and 1967 Six-Day wars prompted other non-Western states to seek Soviet arms; Israel's destruction of Egypt's armed forces, pressuring the Soviets to begin supplying modern,

rather than outdated, equipment to their clients; the Soviets were pursuing arms parity with the Americans; and a rise in Soviet confidence to exert influence in any conflict where their interests might arise.⁶⁸⁵

But troubles first materialized in the mid-1970s. Grain crop failures in the U.S.S.R. and the Soviets' increasing need for hard currency were the first signs of trouble. Tensions appeared with clients in the Third World, such as Egypt's expulsion of the Soviets in 1972; and the poor showing of Soviet equipment in combat, such as Lebanon in the 1982 war, foreshadowed further trouble. The behavior of Soviet military advisors was a serious problem. They often came across as arrogant towards their clients, even though the Soviets were usually afraid that their equipment would fall into the wrong hands and thus were reluctant to pass on everything they knew about the equipment and its production. The lack of adequate training left clients even more frustrated. This frustration prompted many Third World states to seek Western arms instead. Nor was the Soviet Union well placed to compete in that moment. The price of oil per barrel had declined in the 1980s, and, as Mark Kramer argues, this severely hurt the Soviet Union's most "lucrative source of hard currency earnings." Also, massive debts incurred by most Middle Eastern states and owed to the Soviet Union remained unpaid, so that Soviet coffers were often in the red in the 1980s.⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸⁵ Middle Eastern and South Asian countries received approximately 74% of Soviet arms shipments, between 1980-1985. Between 1983-1987, Soviet weapon shipments to Iraq exceeded those to any other country. The shipments included some of the most advanced weapons available such as the MiG-29 Fulcrum fighter and the Su-25 Frogfoot fighter-bomber. This was part of Soviet overtures to keep Baghdad within Moscow's grip. Mark Kramer, "The Decline in Soviet Arms Transfers to the Third World, 1986-1991: Political, Economic, and Military Dimensions." in *The End of the Cold War and the Third World*, eds. Artemy M. Kalinovsky and Sergey Radchenko, (London: Routledge, 2013), 50-52, 60-61.

⁶⁸⁶ Mark Kramer, "The Decline in Soviet Arms Transfers to the Third World, 1986-1991: Political, Economic, and Military Dimensions," 62-66, 88.

By 1986, Soviet arms sales and shipments began to decline markedly. This was due in part to the global saturation in arms and weapons, as well as to the “new political thinking” in Soviet foreign policy. This new policy encouraged the use of political means to end conflicts in the Third World rather than the continuation of an armed conflict; in one example, the Soviets encouraged Ethiopia to end its long-time war with Eritrea.⁶⁸⁷ This change in policy was part of Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev’s attempts to improve East-West relations, a major area of focus for Gorbachev’s new foreign policy. The Soviets had originally traded sophisticated equipment and arms to curry favor and win access in the Third World, including in Syria, Egypt, and Iraq, but this dynamic was in serious jeopardy by the end of the 1980s.⁶⁸⁸

Even Gorbachev’s ambitious internal reforms—perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness)—could not stem the Soviet decline.⁶⁸⁹ In describing the decline of the Soviet Union, the Iraqis pointed toward the lack of “individual entrepreneurial bureaucracy”—an interesting remark given the highly centralized bureaucratic nature of the Ba‘thist regime itself— and also toward limited Soviet resources and low productivity as the main drivers for decline. A June 1990 Iraqi political report argued that the Soviet experience produced “harmful results,” including an economic crisis that was produced by the “inability of the productive apparatus” to

⁶⁸⁷ See Chapter 4: Iraqi Foreign Policy in East Africa.

⁶⁸⁸ United Nations sanctions against Iraq following the latter’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 further “[deprived] the Soviet Union of one of its prime customers.” The Soviet Union was so desperate for hard currency that between 1989 and 1990 the U.S.S.R. renewed its attempts to sell weapons abroad, even arms and weapons that had just entered into the inventory of the Soviet armed forces themselves. Mark Kramer, “The Decline in Soviet Arms Transfers to the Third World, 1986-1991: Political, Economic, and Military Dimensions,” 46-47, 87, 89-90.

⁶⁸⁹ See Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted: the Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

meet the needs and demands of the Soviet people. With their needs unaddressed, the Soviet people were waging a “silent revolution,” demanding democracy.⁶⁹⁰

For the Iraqis, the collapse of the U.S.S.R. was inevitable from the beginning of its foundation, but not all the fault rested in the Soviet government’s actions. Yes, according to Ba‘thist literature, the Soviet system was inherently flawed, but its demise was expedited by external factors—mainly its confrontation with the West. According to the Iraqis, since 1917, the West had sought the destruction of the Soviet Union, starting with the American, British, and Czech invasion of Russia; this was an attempt to forestall and even defeat Bolshevik forces.⁶⁹¹ The West’s victory in 1945—in this instance, the Iraqis do not seem to have considered the U.S.S.R. as part of the Allied victors—however, changed everything. As Baghdad viewed it, the Soviets had to sacrifice their national income for massive military expenditures, and thus began their decline.⁶⁹²

All of this, according to the Ba‘thists, showed the Soviet model of governance to be a “poor” one. Gorbachev, therefore, was left with only two possibilities: He could accept Brezhnev’s approach, in which the U.S.S.R. was to wait for the “inevitable explosion” of the Soviet population, as the Ba‘thists viewed it, or else he could prevent the crisis by implementing new reforms. The Iraqis noted that the last Soviet leader who had tried to implement reforms, Nikita Khrushchev, had failed; and the failure had cost him his political career. Reformist

⁶⁹⁰ A Study on Russia and Perestroika, the New Political Russians Environment, Russian Jews in Palestine, the goals of the Russian Jews, and international and Arab opinions on Russian Jewish immigration to Palestine, 1990/6/7, 0046-0069, BRCC 2465-0001, HB, HIA.

⁶⁹¹ See David Bullock, *The Czech Legion 1914–20*. (Oxford: Osprey Publishers, 2008).

⁶⁹² A Study on Russia and Perestroika, the New Political Russians Environment, Russian Jews in Palestine, the goals of the Russian Jews, and international and Arab opinions on Russian Jewish immigration to Palestine, 1990/6/7, 0046-0069, BRCC 2465-0001, HB, HIA.

leaders in the Soviet Union, held the Ba‘thists, had to confront a “double edge sword.” Their attempts to win over the people would often bring on confrontation with the conservatives within their own party. From Khrushchev’s experience, Gorbachev learned, as did the West, that reform could only come if the regime was open to criticism and allowed the broadcast of criticisms that did arise. This, to the Ba‘thists, explained the need for glasnost first.⁶⁹³

Gorbachev’s attempts to outmaneuver the conservatives in his party by means of glasnost did not convince the Iraqis. The Ba‘th Party still doubted the prospects of these reforms, believing it would be nearly impossible to transcend the history and legacy of the Soviet Union’s one-party state. “There was a violent shake-up in the party,” according to an Iraqi report, but establishing a “multi-party policy,” and thus a democratic framework, within the Soviet Union remained improbable. The Ba‘th were self-aggrandizing here. The Iraqi government “permitted” other political parties to operate, but the Ba‘th party was the only meaningful party in Iraq. Elections were held , but they were merely another means to legitimize Saddam’s regime.⁶⁹⁴ However, the Iraqis did note that there were murmurs and complaints about perestroika and its likelihood of success emanating from Soviet media and parts of the Soviet government, including the Communist Party and Council of Soviets.⁶⁹⁵

In 1989, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, Eduard Shevardnadze, conducted his final diplomatic tour of the Middle East. In his first stop in Syria, Hafez al-Assad grilled the

⁶⁹³ A Study on Russia and Perestroika, the New Political Russians Environment, Russian Jews in Palestine, the goals of the Russian Jews, and international and Arab opinions on Russian Jewish immigration to Palestine, 1990/6/7, 0046-0069, BRCC 2465-0001, HB, HIA.

⁶⁹⁴ Aaron M. Faust, *The Ba‘thification of Iraq: Saddam Hussein’s Totalitarianism*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 65-66, 86, 144.

⁶⁹⁵ Information on Special Political Parties and Movements not in the Arab Countries, September-October 1989, 0307-0312, BRCC 2099-0000, HB, HIA.

Soviet statesman, arguing that Soviet leadership was failing to fulfill its promise to protect the region from American imperialism. Worse, according to Assad, the Soviets had forsaken the Middle East, favoring Asia, Africa, and East Europe in terms of time, money, and effort. The Syrian dictator expressed little sympathy or support for Moscow's situation.⁶⁹⁶ After this bruising encounter, Shevardnadze travelled to Baghdad. When informed that the U.S.S.R. wanted to improve relations with both Iraq and Iran, an oddly jovial Saddam Hussein joked: "May Allah help you. Only let it be our Allah and not the Iranian one!" Finally, in Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini did everything he could to avoid meeting the Soviet entourage and refused to greet them in Tehran. Eventually, and only begrudgingly, he allowed them to visit his home in Qom. Even there, the Ayatollah refused to discuss anything related to foreign policy, only finally agreeing to consider buying Soviet weapons. He did not commit to any purchases.⁶⁹⁷

This trip is emblematic of declining Soviet prestige and influence in the Middle East at the end of the 1980s. Iraq watched this decline with trepidation. The collapse of the Soviet Union was problematic in that the U.S.S.R. was Iraq's most important and powerful Cold War ally. But the new political era of the 1990s offered a new chance for Russia and Iraq to review and renew their relationship. Guided by many of those who had been part of the Soviet state, the new Russian Federation sought to capture the glory that the new leaders saw in old Russia.⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁶ The C.I.A. assessed that Syria was "one of the first Soviet clients to sense the impending changes that Gorbachev and his 'new thinking' would bring to the Middle East." Assad began courting the Egyptians and the Americans as means to "maintain Syrian credibility with Israel and Iraq in the wake of the Soviet retrenchment." C.I.A. Memorandum, "Syria: Assessing Asad's Regional Politics," 25 October 1990, Desert Shield/Desert Storm (November 1990) [1], OA/ID 91144-008, Desert Shield/Desert Storm Files, Chronological Files OA/ID 91143 Box 36, Brent Scowcroft Files, GHWBL.

⁶⁹⁷ Robert Service, *The End of the Cold War, 1985-1991*. (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2017), 384, 393.

⁶⁹⁸ For more, see Andrei Soldatov, and Irina Borogan. *The New Nobility: The Restoration of Russia's Security State and the Enduring Legacy of the KGB*. (New York: Public Affairs, 2010).

However, it would not be that easy. Russia had a history of vacillating in the Middle East during the Cold War. Its legacy of playing both sides of the fence with its clients and their enemies left the Ba‘thists feeling embittered. Both the Soviet Union and Iraq had a habit of saying one thing and doing the exact opposite, much to the frustration of their supposed partners. As they saw it, each had been burned by the other numerous times. This was not an easy legacy to escape.

However, given their common enemy—American hegemony—these two states could not bear to sever or even to lessen their relationship.

In terms of organizational structure, the Iraqi state reflected much of the Soviet system, just without the ideological zeal for communism. Ba‘thist Iraq and the Soviet Union each had strict hierarchies, along with an overly complicated bureaucracy. The regimes operated by means of party patronage, a deep security apparatus, corruption, and favoritism. Saddam Hussein and the Politburo used their own visions of nationalism to justify their rule and to expand control over the people.⁶⁹⁹ But the Ba‘th Party watched the collapse of the Soviet Union, along with its puppet governments in the satellites in Eastern Europe, with both glee and fear. On one hand, Saddam cited the collapse of communism as both a triumph and a vindication of Ba‘thism. On the other hand, the fall of the Soviet Union meant Iraq lost its most important ally.

⁶⁹⁹ For more on “Iraqi nationalism”, see Kamyar Abdi, “From Pan-Arabism to Saddam Hussein’s Cult of Personality: Ancient Mesopotamia and Iraqi National Ideology.” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 8, no. 1 (February 2008): 3–36. See also Faust, *The Ba‘thification of Iraq: Saddam Hussein’s Totalitarianism*; Joseph Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein’s Ba‘th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). For nationalism in the Soviet Union see Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2001); Robert John Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the U.S.S.R.* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994); Jan W. Bezemer, Robert Van Voren and Alexander Bon, *Nationalism in the U.S.S.R.: Problems of Nationalities*. (Amsterdam: Second World Center, 1989).

Although “socialism” appears in the formal Ba‘th Party name, Saddam Hussein and the Ba‘thists abhorred communism. On one hand, communism offered an alternative to the Ba‘thists, and so it was perceived to be a threat to the regime. On the other hand, the Soviets attempted to use communism to make inroads into Iraqi internal affairs during the Cold War; this included support for communist elements in Kurdistan and for the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). Although Ba‘thist regime long tolerated the existence of the ICP, historians of Iraq often identify May 1978 as the turning point in a different direction . It was then that 21 Iraqi communists were executed, accused by the regime of “traitorous” and subversive activities.⁷⁰⁰ From then on , the Ba‘thists openly persecuted any confirmed or suspected communists, along with their families and other associates. This obsession with eradicating communism within Iraq, according to prominent historian Joseph Sassoon, stemmed from the perspective that the “Ba‘th ideology was not as successful as Communism in attracting young people and intellectuals. Time and again, Saddam called for fighting Communist ideology with a more creative Arab worldview.”⁷⁰¹ In Saddam’s mind, the collapse of the Soviet Union confirmed his theory.⁷⁰²

⁷⁰⁰ See Chapter 2: Iraqi Foreign Policy, 1968-1989.

⁷⁰¹ In the 1990s, Saddam Hussein also became increasingly convinced that Islam, rather than Ba‘thist ideology, was more appealing to young people. Joseph Sassoon, “The East German Ministry for State Security and Iraq, 1968-1989,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*. 16 (1), Winter 2014, 4-23: 8-9, 9n20. See also Ofra Bengio, *Saddam’s Word Political Discourse in Iraq*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) (in particular the chapter titled “Manipulation of Islam); Samuel Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion: The Authoritarian Roots of Saddam Hussein’s Islam*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Sassoon also cites a report by the General Security, “Study: The Iraqi Communist Party and the Military forces,” 11 November 1987, in NIDS, PUK 017, Box 071 (310013– 310021) to illustrate how the Ba‘th Party feared the lures of Communism over Iraqi Ba‘thism.

⁷⁰² In discussing Poland’s 1993 elections, where the Communist Party faired with 30% of the vote, Saddam remarked: “Because now [Poland] is going back to communism, well, well, where will things end up? Not communist but socialist, in the end the same way as us. We concluded very, very, very early in Gorbachev’s era.” Tariq Aziz says that “they [the Poles] lost their minds.” CRRC, SH-SHTP-A-000-755, “Saddam meets with Tariq Aziz and Iraqi high-ranking officials regarding Ekeus, inspections, and other matters,” unknown, after July 1993.

This rejection of communist ideology, however, did not stop the Iraqis from tracking how communist parties viewed the Ba‘thist regime. Official political affiliations and protocols were established with communist and socialist parties in Italy, China, Finland, Bangladesh, Germany, Egypt, Yemen, Cape Verde, Greece, and Mauritius. Communist parties partook in celebrations of the al-Faw campaign (during the Iran-Iraq War, in 1988, the Iraqis recaptured al-Faw peninsula from Iran in a decisive victory) and the July 14 anniversary of the Ba‘thist takeover in 1968.⁷⁰³ Celebrations were noted in Cuba, Argentina, Venezuela, Brazil, Peru, Mexico, Australia, China, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Spain, Czechoslovakia, West Germany, Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, and Switzerland.⁷⁰⁴ The Ba‘thists also took great pleasure in receiving letters of condolences from the Chinese Communist Party when Michel ‘Aflaq, who had a founding role with the Ba‘th Party, passed away in 1989; ‘Aflaq’s exile and eventual passing in Iraq gave the Ba‘thists a greater feeling of regional and ideological legitimacy in their dispute with Syria.⁷⁰⁵ The Ba‘thists abhorred communism at home, but they had no qualms about establishing official party channels and communications with communist parties abroad. This policy allowed the Iraqis to expand the geographical scope of their influence by not refusing support or aid from anyone or anything that wanted to support Baghdad. The regime also relished the admiration that

For another Iraqi critique of communism, see “A Study on Russia and Perestroika, the New Political Russians Environment, Russian Jews in Palestine, the goals of the Russian Jews, and international and Arab opinions on Russian Jewish immigration to Palestine,” 1990/6/7, 0046-0069, BRCC 2465-0001, HB, HIA.

⁷⁰³ Patrick E. Tyler, “Iraq Claims It Has Regained Faw Peninsula from Iran,” *The Washington Post*, April 19, 1988

⁷⁰⁴ There were other party affiliations in Mozambique, Zambia, Senegal, Mauritius, Mali, Kenya, Chad, Cape Verde, and many more. The countries listed here are but a few of those listed within the BRCC dataset. Activities Report (1989), 0285, 0294-0296, 0300, 0301, BRCC 3268-0002, HB, HIA. The full report is 0277-0303.

⁷⁰⁵ Chinese Communist Party condolences, 1989/6/28, 0102-0103, BRCC 3854-0001, HB, HIA.

left-leaning governments abroad bestowed upon Iraq. The Ba‘thists took it as a sign of legitimacy and respect.⁷⁰⁶

But Iraqi celebrations over the Soviet Union’s demise went far beyond ideology. Too many times, according to Saddam, the Soviet Union had slighted Iraq. This list of slights included, but was not limited to, Soviet betrayal of them during the Iran-Iraq War, working with the Kurds, assisting the Iranians, cooperating with the Americans, and allying with Israel. The fate suffered by the Soviet Union, therefore, befitted those who had betrayed Iraq. In the aftermath of the U.S.S.R.’s collapse, Saddam pointed to the Soviet Union’s previous power, noting that it “had national willpower not long ago.” Then, with Gorbachev’s arrival, it all ended, leaving Saddam to boast: “In spite of the missiles, atomic arms, and everything [Russia] has, Iraq, which does not have any atomic arms, is currently more powerful.”⁷⁰⁷

Changes in Iraqi-Soviet relations were developing well before the fall of the U.S.S.R. The Soviets played both Iran and Iraq during the 1980-1988 war, and Iraq was vocally critical of the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan. However, the U.S.S.R., under Gorbachev’s leadership, also began improving its relations with Israel as part of its attempts to bolster cooperation with the Americans and the West. This change in policy came at a cost for Arab states, because the Soviets also began cutting back their support for radical Arab regimes,

⁷⁰⁶ Support for Iraq from communist and other left-leaning parties was also sought in the 1990s as Iraq tried to build a vast coalition to support Iraq in its fight against U.N. sanctions. For example, see Guidance, 1993/7/19, 0101-0105, 100-3-5, BRCC, HB, HIA.

⁷⁰⁷ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-186, Saddam Hussein meeting with Ba‘th Party Members to discuss U.N. weapons inspections, 23 July 1992.

including Iraq.⁷⁰⁸ With the decline in arms sales and a shift in Soviet policy, the Iraqis knew that the Soviets were in trouble.

From the point of the view of the Iraqis, the Soviets had betrayed the Iraqis during the Cold War over and over by supplying and remaining friendly with Syria and Iran, Iraq's long-term enemies. Intelligence in the northern part of Iraq in 1989, for example, had detected that "special contracts were signed with the Soviet Union providing Iran with munitions including aircraft (including 20 MiG 29s, accompanied by Soviet pilot trainers), tanks, surface-to-surface missiles, radar, surveillance devices, and wireless devices."⁷⁰⁹ The Iranians had sent military, industrial, and agricultural assistance and also increased their gas exports to the U.S.S.R.⁷¹⁰ Throughout the Iran-Iraq War, Iraqi intelligence had also discovered that some prominent Kurdish communists, as well as lawyers, had fled to the Soviet Union; these refugees had assisted others in escaping to the Soviet Union as well.⁷¹¹ The Ba'ath Party had also spent decades rooting out and destroying elements of the ICP, driving any surviving members well underground or into exile. Iraqi communists had had assistance from the U.S.S.R. in the 1980s, and some, including Kurdish communists, had fled Iraq to the U.S.S.R. as well, much to the frustration and anger of the Ba'athists.⁷¹²

⁷⁰⁸ Tareq Y. Ismael and Andrej Kreutz, "Russian-Iraqi Relations: A Historical and Political Analysis", in *Arab Studies Quarterly*. 23(4), Fall 2001, 87-115: 91.

⁷⁰⁹ Soviet Union and Iran, NIDS, 0439907, HB, HIA.

⁷¹⁰ Soviet Union and Iran, NIDS, 0439895-0439897, HB, HIA.

⁷¹¹ Kurdish Lawyers, Russia, NIDS 24940 and 27316, HB, HIA.

⁷¹² Report Commissioned, March 1989, North Iraq Dataset, 1065969 in PUK 11329. Lawyer fled to Russia circa 1981-1982, NIDS, 1539774, PUK 21260. Communist fled to Russia, 1986, NIDS, 1689125, PUK 24931. Communist Kurds fleeing to Russia, 1983-1985, NIDS, 1689293, PUK 24940, HIA.

Despite the anger at the Soviets, the collapse of communism still created shock and confusion in Iraq, just as it had in the rest of the globe. The Iraqis had even signed another round of economic and technical deals with the Soviets in 1988 and 1989, and, in spite of the tumultuousness of their relationship, the Iraqis still saw the economic importance of ties with the Soviets.⁷¹³ However, in early December 1989, with the dust barely settled across the globe after the events in Berlin, a memo released by the Central Planning Office reflected the Iraqi government's confusion. In it, the office recommended releasing a newsletter from the Ministry of Culture and Media to "explain [to the party] the dimensions of these transformations" from the point of view of Saddam Hussein. "In light of the changes occurring in the socialist countries and the fall of the Berlin Wall," the memo also called for "clarifications" from Saddam on Iraq's stance on these events for the sake of unity within the Ba'ath party.⁷¹⁴

The collapse of communism jeopardized Iraq's relations with the Eastern bloc and the Soviet republics. Besides running intelligence operations out of these countries, Iraqi students and military officers were sent for education, training, or other missions, often on the behalf of the Iraqi government or industries connected to the Ba'athists. The Soviet republics, including Azerbaijan, for example, were crucial for the Iraqis. To Baghdad, these states not only possessed natural resources, but they offered more political thrusts into the Soviet system. Often, military officers and diplomats received education in one area of the Soviet Union, and then they were later posted in a different area.⁷¹⁵ The Soviet Republics were also seen as key to keeping an eye

⁷¹³ Ratification of Agreement Between Iraqi Republic and U.S.S.R., 1988/9/13, 0222-0224, BRCC 022-1-3, HB, HIA.

⁷¹⁴ Suggestion/Proposal dated 1989/12/9, BRCC 0123, 001-5-3, HB, HIA.

⁷¹⁵ Report, 1985/7/14, 0038, BRCC 2760-0001, Party Summary of [Comrade Name withheld], 1992/7/15, 0033-0034, BRCC 3869-0002, and Information, 1992/2/6, 0487-0490, BRCC 033-4-2, all located within HB, HIA.

on Iran. The Ba‘th party feared that the Iranians were covertly transporting goods through this region, and they also had suspicions that the Iranians were also trying to establish their own relations with these republics. These concerns later materialized. During the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), Iraqi intelligence noted that the Soviets were allowing contraband and weapons from North Korea to be delivered to Iran through Azerbaijan.⁷¹⁶ In the 1990s, Iraqi intelligence detected that some of the newly independent states were cooperating with Tehran’s nuclear and oil infrastructure projects.⁷¹⁷

The events in Romania particularly rattled Saddam Hussein. Dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife were captured and subsequently executed by firing squad on Christmas Day 1989 after anti-regime revolutionaries reacted violently to Ceausescu’s attempts to solidify his control in the aftermath of fall of the Berlin Wall. Video of their execution by firing squad and of their bodies after the shooting aired on both Romanian and international television. According to Ofra Bengio, Ceausescu’s fall prompted Saddam to “[jump] on the bandwagon of glasnost...at least, he wished to appear to move with the times.” But, as Bengio argues, this was no more than “lip service” to the idea of democratization as Saddam sarcastically mused that “Iraq needed democratization and ‘openness’ just as a person opens the windows ‘lest they shatter at the moment of an explosion.’”⁷¹⁸ Back in Romania, OI Romania’s organization was not in the best shape. There were 485 Iraqis in the Bucharest embassy (145 of whom were

⁷¹⁶ Information, 1983/12/15, 0083-0085, BRCC 2498-0002, HB, HIA.

⁷¹⁷ SH-GMID-D-000-342, Intelligence Study Titled "The Possible Effects of the Strategy of Iranian Nuclear Arms Program on Iraqi National Security," February-March 1994. SH-MODX-D-001-291, A 1992 report on Iranian efforts to obtain nuclear weapons after the collapse of the Soviet Union, 1992-03-31.

⁷¹⁸ The Ba‘th Party continued to serve as the “leading party” over all other political and civil entities. Bengio, *Saddam’s Word Political Discourse in Iraq*, 67.

students, along with others of various party levels and membership), but the Iraqis were losing more Eastern European associates than they could count.⁷¹⁹

In terms of geopolitics, the Ba'athists were also anxious about the power vacuum in the region. Saddam told U.S. officials in early 1990 that "the collapse of the Soviets left the U.S. as the only outside power that counted in the region." They speculated that "[Saddam's] subsequent paranoia about perceived slights may only testify to his genuine fear of us. This is an asset, if used wisely."⁷²⁰ The Americans believed that they could use the collapse of the U.S.S.R. to further their interests in the Middle East. Syria's economy was extremely weak, and it felt abandoned by the Soviets who disagreed with Syrian involvement in Lebanon.⁷²¹ Also, the Syrians were diplomatically isolated in the Arab world with the Palestinian Intifada (uprising) in 1991 stripping Assad of credibility as an influence over the Palestinians. As the U.S. government noted, "[Syria] is a tired regime." With Assad's decline, they speculated, Iraq under Saddam would be "free to bid for Arab leadership." Because of this, the U.S. government wagered that they should prepare policy suggestions in case of a war between Iraq and Israel.⁷²²

⁷¹⁹ Party organization in Romania, 1989/1/21, 0154-0156, BRCC 3854-0001, HB, HIA.

⁷²⁰ Memo for Brent Scowcroft from Peter W. Rodman, 5 April 1990, "Iraq", OA/ID 91143-002, Box 36, Desert Shield/Desert Storm (April 1990), Desert Shield/Desert Storm Files, (Chronological Files), Brent Scowcroft Files, GHWBL.

⁷²¹ See Chapter 3: Iraqi Intervention in the Lebanese Civil War, 1975-1990.

⁷²² To hedge their bets, the Americans also wanted to keep tabs on Syria, keeping "a quiet relationship" just in case "Iraqi dialogue proves fruitless...." Memo for Brent Scowcroft from Peter W. Rodman, 5 April 1990, "Iraq", OA/ID 91143-002, Box 36, Desert Shield/Desert Storm (April 1990), Desert Shield/Desert Storm Files, (Chronological Files), Brent Scowcroft Files, GHWBL.

The First Gulf War (August 1990-February 1991)⁷²³

Iraqi actions in the Middle East forced the Soviets to expose their deterioration one last time. On 2 August 1990, Iraqi forces crossed the border and invaded Kuwait. Under the guise of recovering Iraq's "stolen" 19th province, as the Iraqis saw Kuwait,⁷²⁴ Saddam was moved by his desire to control the small country's abundant oil fields, expand Iraq's shoreline on the Persian Gulf, and find a quick solution to Iraq's rapidly deteriorating financial situation. After a brutal eight-year war with Iran (1980-1988), which was largely financed with loans, the Iraqi economy was in dire straits.⁷²⁵ Saddam contended that the loans should be forgiven considering that, in his war with Iran, he had been protecting the Arabs from Persian encroachment. Needless to say, the Kuwaitis did not buy this logic and refused to cancel Iraq's debt. Saddam began increasing his political attacks on Kuwait in the mid-1990s, arguing that Kuwait was deliberately manipulating oil prices and production to further hurt Iraq's economy and that Kuwait was stealing oil from the Rumaila oil field, an oil field that was near the border.⁷²⁶ Saddam also feared losing face and prestige at home, and he feared plots against his regime. Therefore, by invading Kuwait, Saddam hoped for two outcomes: immediate economic relief, thanks to

⁷²³ In the Middle East, this is often colloquially referred to as the "Second Gulf War," with many Arabs, especially those residing on the Arabian Peninsula, considering the Iran-Iraq War to be the "First Gulf War." Other times, it is also referred to as the "Invasion of Kuwait" or the "Liberation of Kuwait." Operation IRAQI FREEDOM is therefore considered the "Third Gulf War" or the "American Invasion."

⁷²⁴ This narrative goes back to 1961, when Kuwait was given independence by Britain. Then Iraqi Prime Minister General 'Abd Al-Karim Qasim threatened to invade Kuwait, calling it an "integral part of Iraq" since it had been part of the Ottoman Empire's territorial control. Although Iraq eventually backed down, thanks to British military threats, the Ba'athist regimes after Qasim never accepted Kuwait as a formally independent country, and occasional border clashes—such as the 1973 Samita border skirmish—continued.

⁷²⁵ Some estimates total these loans around \$37 billion USD by 1990.

⁷²⁶ For compensation, Saddam also demanded that Kuwait turn over sovereignty of both Bubiyan and Warbah Islands to Iraq.

Kuwait's massive oil fields and reserves, and a distraction for any disgruntled elements of Iraqi society.

Saddam began maneuvering Iraqi forces to positions near the Kuwaiti border in July 1990, but his maneuvers were largely interpreted by the American government as feints and mere shows of force.⁷²⁷ However, Saddam called everyone's bluff on the morning of 2 August. Kuwait's small armed forces were no match for the Iraqis, and they collapsed within hours of the invasion. This prompted the Kuwaiti ruling family to flee to Saudi Arabia while the rest of the country fell under Iraqi rule.⁷²⁸ Almost immediately, the United Nations Security Council sanctioned Iraq under Resolution 660 (UNSCR 660), condemning the invasion and demanding Iraq's immediate and unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait, while Resolution 661 imposed economic sanctions on Iraq, including banning Iraqi export commodities, prohibiting importing any Iraqi goods, and turning away Iraqi ships calling at international ports.⁷²⁹

U.S. and coalition forces were deployed to Saudi Arabia as part of the buildup for both the defense of Saudi Arabia and the counterinvasion of Kuwait as soon as 7 August; Operation DESERT SHIELD was launched by the Americans on 8 August. Aerial bombing of Iraq began on 17 January 1991, with bombs targeted on military and civilian infrastructures, including Scud

⁷²⁷ The U.S. Ambassador to Iraq sent a note back to Washington, D.C. in July 1990 arguing that Saddam "has never summoned an ambassador and [is] worried. He does not want to further antagonize us. With the United Arab Emirates (UAE) manouvers [sic] we have fully caught his attention, and that is good. I believe we would now be well-advised to ease off public criticisms of Iraq until we see how the negotiations develop." Ambassador April Glaspie telegram to President, after meeting with Saddam, Desert Shield/Desert Storm (July 1990), OA/ID 91143-005, Box 36, Desert Shield/Desert Storm Files (Chronological Files), Brent Scowcroft Files, GHWBL.

⁷²⁸ For a detailed overview of the Iraqi invasion, see Pesach Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2017), 503-516.

⁷²⁹ Resolution 662 also declared Iraq's annexation of Kuwait to be "under any form and whatever pretext has no legal validity and is considered null and void." For UNSCR 660, see <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/660> , UNSCR 661, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/661> and UNSCR 662, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/662>

missile sites, power stations, and Ba‘th party facilities. After Saddam refused to adhere to the conditions set by UNSCR 660, the ground invasion began on 24 February 1991. U.S. Marines pushed into Kuwait while Army units swung into southern Iraq. Within 100 hours, the Iraqi forces were expelled from Kuwait and were retreating back to Baghdad. A ceasefire was signed, and subsequently UNSCR demanded that Iraq pay reparations to Kuwait. UNSCR 687 also established the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) to investigate Iraq’s suspected program in chemical and biological weapons.⁷³⁰

Just like the Americans, the Soviets interpreted Iraqi maneuvers near the Kuwaiti border in July 1990 as a bluff.⁷³¹ Even though the Soviets did issue a statement condemning the invasion, in the form of a joint communiqué with the Americans on 3 August, there were nonetheless some initial hesitations in Moscow. First, Iraq and the Soviet Union were still bound by the Iraqi-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation Pact. Joining an U.S.-led coalition presented problems since Article 10 of the Pact specified that “each of the two high contracting parties declare that it will not enter into any international alliance or grouping to take part in any actions or undertakings directed against the other high contracting party.”⁷³² There was acknowledgment that the invasion was illegal and carried all the hallmarks of imperialism, but

⁷³⁰ For more on the military buildup, coalition building, and military action, see Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals War: the Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf*. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995). For UNSCR 687 see: <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/687>

⁷³¹ Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals War: the Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf*, 35.

⁷³² Never mind that Iraq violated Article 4 (which specified that “the high contracting parties condemn imperialism and colonialism in all forms and manifestations”). See Appendix B. Russian sources believed that disregarding the Pact seriously damaged Russian standing in the Arab world. Ismael and Kreutz, “Russian-Iraqi Relations: A Historical and Political Analysis”, 91n39. The C.I.A. also estimated that “Moscow probably had little to no knowledge of Iraq’s invasion, or direct knowledge of Saddam future military planning/operations.” C.I.A. Intelligence Memorandum, “Soviet Intelligence on Iraq,” 14 August 1990, FOIA Collection, Document Number 0001466695, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001466695.pdf

many Russian statesmen were worried about Iraqi debts owed to them and Russian credibility in the region—this was a client after all.⁷³³

Second, many Soviets, including Yevgeny Primakov, still held onto the U.S.-Soviet rivalry and did not want the U.S. leading the coalition or assuming responsibility in the region.⁷³⁴ These hardliners believed that the Soviet Union following an American initiative would signal the decline of the U.S.S.R. – as if it was not already evident it. Primakov and others instead called for an Arab solution. The Soviets believed that the size of U.S. contingents in the region and the American ability to enforce the embargo of Iraq indicated a desire among U.S. leaders to expand the “Pax Americana.” Secretary of State James Baker’s promises of “no permanent force presence” in the Arab world, along with assurances that the Americans were going to keep force numbers at a minimum, did not assuage fears of hardliners in Moscow.⁷³⁵

⁷³³ Russian sources indicate Soviet-Iraq contracts were worth around \$37.4 billion USD in 1990. Ismael and Kreutz, “Russian-Iraqi Relations: A Historical and Political Analysis,” 91n31. Tariq Aziz discusses the unhappiness emulating from the pro-Iraq but anti-Kuwait invasion faction in Moscow, CRRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-670, Saddam Meeting with the Revolutionary Command Council about Iraqi Foreign Policy after Invading Kuwait and the Likelihood of an American Attack, 11 October 1990.

⁷³⁴ Primakov served as a member of Gorbachev’s Presidential Council until 1991, where he was then appointed First Deputy Chairman of the KGB. The KGB changed to the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) after the fall of the U.S.S.R. and Primakov served as its director until 1996. After that, he was appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs. He became Yeltsin’s Prime Minister in 1998, only to be fired in 1999 after Russia’s economic and agriculture conditions continued to deteriorate. After a long political career, Primakov died in 2015. For more on his firing, see Andrew Higgins and Mark Whitehouse, “Yeltsin Fires Prime Minister Primakov; Crisis Clouds IMF Loans, Kosovo Pact,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 13 May 1999. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB926472695362778967>

⁷³⁵ Baker even hoped his promises could be used to calm “right-wing” critics in Moscow, but also noted that because the Soviets were worried about their future, future policy and action, they faced “some potentially tough sledding.” Telegram from Secretary of State Baker to the President, “Thursday Meeting,” 14 March 1991, Persian Gulf Conflict -February 1991, OA/ID CF00946, Roberts M. Gates Files, NSC, GHWBL.

However, third, conversations between Secretary of State Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze showed that the Soviets were worried about Soviet families and advisers in the Kuwait and Iraq—totaling about 534 persons in Kuwait and 7,380 in Iraq. Thus, they did not want to partake in action against an “old friend.” Privately, Shevardnadze called them hostages.⁷³⁶ The Soviets also had over 1,000 military advisors in Iraq, further complicating their worries.⁷³⁷ Saddam was clearly aware of this fear, and he continually promised and then reneged on freeing Soviet workers. Seeking leverage against the United Nations and the United States, Saddam promised to release Soviet workers specifically to forestall Soviet support for Resolution 678, which offered Iraq one final chance to implement Resolution 660 before the UNSCR authorized the United Nations to enforce it by any means necessary.⁷³⁸ In the end, however, the Soviets did vote for UNSCR 678, and all foreign hostages were released by Iraq in December 1990.⁷³⁹

⁷³⁶ Saddam Hussein’s use of foreign hostages as political pawns, including broadcasting his visits with them on television, did not ease the worries of the Americans or the Soviets. Dana Priest, “Saddam Orders the Release of all Hostages” *The Washington Post*, 7 December 1990. Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals War: the Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf*, 35; Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict, 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), 80, 140-141. Table 1: Foreign Nationals in Kuwait and Iraq (early August 1990). The citation for this simply states “Sources: Various.” Ismael and Kreutz, “Russian-Iraqi Relations: A Historical and Political Analysis,” 9In33 also cite around 8,000 Soviet citizens. The C.I.A. also estimated that there were around 1,000 Soviet military advisors in Iraq at the time as well. C.I.A. Intelligence Memorandum, “Soviet Intelligence on Iraq,” 14 August 1990, FOIA Collection, Document Number 0001466695, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001466695.pdf

⁷³⁷ By 21 August 1990, the Soviets had confirmed Soviet advisers were working with the Iraqis but only on “repairs, education, and construction,” adding that the “advisers would be coming home as soon as their contracts were fulfilled.” Graham E. Fuller, “Moscow and the Gulf War,” *Foreign Affairs*, 1 June 1991. Bill Keller, “The Iraqi Invasion; U.S. and the Soviets as Allies: It’s the first time since 1945,” *NYT*, 8 August 1990. <https://nyti.ms/2PYM6O9>

⁷³⁸ Freedman and Karsh. *The Gulf Conflict, 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order*, 240.

⁷³⁹ Dana Priest, “Hostages Pour Out From Iraq, Kuwait,” *The Washington Post*, December 11, 1990.

The Soviets were therefore divided into two major camps: Eduard Shevardnadze adamantly agreed with the Americans, whereas Primakov led the hardliners, who resented the rise of the Americans at the cost of the decline of Soviet influence.⁷⁴⁰ The Americans were well aware of the divisions within the Soviet government. They were concerned about Primakov in particular. Special Assistant to the President, Richard Hass, argued that the Americans needed to “ensure that ‘Primakovism’ and its search for face-savers is not getting out of hand.” The main focus was to keep the Soviets in line for whenever the time to use military force materialized.⁷⁴¹ The Americans and Soviets agreed on three basic principles regarding the Persian Gulf crisis: they must work together, Saddam “must clearly, unmistakably fail,” and sanctions must be given their due process before force was used against Iraq. The Soviets thought that it was too early to use force as authorized by the UNSCRs. But there were nuances of difference among the Soviets. U.S. Secretary of State James Baker believed that Eduard Shevardnadze was more “inclined to think [force] will have to be used eventually.” Baker also felt that Gorbachev struggled to “reconcile” the use of force, since he wanted this newly emerging “era to be different from the Cold War and based on different kinds of norms.”⁷⁴²

Gorbachev tried to walk the middle— although he believed Saddam’s actions ran against all international norms, Gorbachev still sought to exhaust all diplomatic avenues before accepting that force must be used to drive Saddam out of Kuwait. From August 1990 through the

⁷⁴⁰ For a more detailed analysis of these divides, see Galia Golan, “Gorbachev’s Difficult Time in the Gulf.” *Political Science Quarterly* 107, no. 2 (1992): 213-30.

⁷⁴¹ Memorandum, “Country-by-Country Package of Objectives” from Richard Haas to Secretary of State Baker, 2 November 1990, Persian Gulf Conflict Pre-1991, OA/ID CF00946, Subject Files, Roberts M. Gate Files, NSC, GHWBL.

⁷⁴² Memo for the President, from James Baker, “My day in Moscow” 8 November 1990, Persian Gulf Conflict Pre-1991, OA/ID CF00946, Subject Files, Roberts M. Gate Files, NSC, GHWBL.

beginning of Operation DESERT STORM, the Soviets tried to act as middleman, carrying on their own form of shuttle diplomacy, between the Americans and Iraq. Delegations were sent between Moscow and Baghdad and between Moscow and Washington D.C., all through the time of the military buildup. Gorbachev met with Iraqi delegations in Moscow, including Tariq Aziz, and he sent Primakov, acting as special Soviet envoy, to Iraq to negotiate with Saddam personally as well.

Primakov's first visit to Baghdad occurred in early October 1990. He was dispatched to help secure the release of 500 Soviet workers after Saddam had refused to meet with the Soviet ambassador following Moscow's vote in support for the UNSCRs.⁷⁴³ Primakov was also tasked with repairing Soviet-Iraqi relations, using this hostage-release mission as an opportunity to meet face to face with Saddam. The meeting was not amicable. Saddam disparaged Primakov for suggesting impossible hypotheticals. "Let me be honest with you, comrade Primakov," Saddam said, "you can't lift the American sanctions against Iraq. Thus, even in a hypothetical promise of [withdrawal] from Kuwait, the sanctions will remain, oil will not be exported, and things will remain the same, waiting for another negotiation with the United States just to allow us food or medicine, and not knowing where it may lead us. This will continue [until] America crushes the regime, economically and socially." Saddam demanded to know where Soviet loyalties truly lay: "You, as the Soviet Union, are you able to give me something, or you are just going to take this flexibility around to Bush and [Saudi Arabia's King] Fahad?"⁷⁴⁴ Saddam wanted to know if the

⁷⁴³ *The Associated Press*, "Confrontation in the Gulf; Gorbachev Aide Meets Iraqi On Soviets Trapped In Gulf," as published in the *NYT*, October 5, 1990, <https://nyti.ms/2WwinBZ>. See also John Hannah, "The Primakov Mission to Baghdad and Washington: What Happened?" Policy Analysis via *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 24 October 1990, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-primakov-mission-to-baghdad-and-washington-what-happened>

⁷⁴⁴ CRRC SH-PDWN-D-000-533, Meeting between Saddam Hussein and the Soviet Delegation, October 1990

Soviets were shopping around policy suggestions to the Americans and Saudis as well. He was worried that the Soviets were waiting to commit entirely to Iraq in the event that better prospects emerged from Washington D.C., and Riyadh.

For his part, Primakov likened the Gulf crisis to the “Caribbean crisis”—the Cuban Missile Crisis. Even though the Soviets pulled their missiles from the island nation, an unpopular decision in Cuba, the Soviet Union, according to Primakov, had still been “considering other means of securing Cuba's security.... Because had we insisted on keeping our missiles and aircraft, a military confrontation with the United States would have been imminent. The deceased Kennedy came to our Embassy, it was raining, and he was wearing a raincoat; he raised his hat and said to us, ‘I beg you, the President has no choice but war.’”⁷⁴⁵ For Primakov, Soviet initial flexibility towards the Americans granted them both crucial time. Therefore, Primakov insisted, the Soviets were not abandoning Iraq but instead following historical precedent, a precedent that had arguably averted World War Three.

At first, the Americans welcomed these Soviet diplomatic efforts. Bush told Gorbachev that he appreciated Gorbachev’s having sent Primakov to the United States after his visit to Iraq. Bush told Gorbachev: “It is yet another indication of just how much the relationship between our two countries has developed.... The two of us—the United States and the U.S.S.R.—have led the way. Our cooperation has cemented the international consensus.”⁷⁴⁶ Bush told Egyptian

⁷⁴⁵ The “Kennedy” referred here is likely Robert Kennedy, brother of President John F. Kennedy. CRRC SH-PDWN-D-000-533, Meeting between Saddam Hussein and the Soviet Delegation, October 1990.

⁷⁴⁶ Message from President Bush to President Gorbachev delivered via U.S. Ambassador Jack Matlock, 20 October 1990, Desert Shield/Desert Storm (October 1990) Part II [1], OA/ID 91144-006, Desert Shield/Desert Storm Files, Chronological Files, OA/ID 91143, Box 36, Brent Scowcroft Files, GHWBL.

President Hosni Mubarak in late October: “We need the Soviets, and they’ve been very good, and I think they’ll stay on the line.”⁷⁴⁷

Consultations with Primakov did not produce the assurances that Saddam so desperately sought. In discussing with the former’s visit, Saddam remarked to his cabinet: “...basically I want to say that nothing important resulted from Primakov coming here.”⁷⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Saddam continued to search for supporters as international pressure to withdraw continued to mount. In attempts to shore up Arab support for his annexation, Saddam tried to link Kuwait’s occupation with the Israeli “occupation” of Palestine. This invasion, according to Saddam, was to draw attention to the plight of the Palestinians and bring their grievances to the forefront of the world’s attention. Saddam also told Primakov that the “the return of legal rights of the Palestinians” was not just for the sake of humanity or for “Pan-Arab reasons,” but for “Iraq’s security.”⁷⁴⁹ But the Arab world, except for PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, was not persuaded.⁷⁵⁰ Saddam persisted, as in early January 1991 when Saddam offered to withdraw

⁷⁴⁷ Mubarak also met with Primakov, telling him that “there can be no rewards for Saddam” and “that there will be no negotiations before an unconditional withdrawal and the return of the legitimate government of Kuwait.” Mubarak told Bush that he was going to “convince Primakov to be aligned with us on the situation. He should not separate with us.” Memorandum of Telephone Conversation with President Mubarak, 25 October 1990, Desert Shield/Desert Storm (October 1990) Part II [2] OA/ID 91144-007, Desert Shield/Desert Storm Files, Chronological Files, OA/ID 91143, Box 36, Brent Scowcroft Files, GHWBL.

⁷⁴⁸ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-670, Saddam Meeting with the Revolutionary Command Council about Iraqi Foreign Policy after Invading Kuwait and the Likelihood of an American Attack, 11 October 1990.

⁷⁴⁹ CRRC SH-PDWN-D-000-533, Meeting between Saddam Hussein and the Soviet Delegation, October 1990

⁷⁵⁰ Arafat’s support for Iraq significantly weakened the PLO cause. See Mattar, Philip. “The PLO and the Gulf Crisis.” *Middle East Journal* 48, no. 1 (1994): 31-46. Also see Chapter 3: Iraqi Intervention in the Lebanese Civil War, 1975-1990.

from Kuwait in exchange for the removal of foreign troops and a settlement of Palestinian issues. The Bush administration, however, immediately rejected this offer.⁷⁵¹

Nonetheless, Soviet diplomatic efforts continued into 1991 as Gorbachev told the Bush administration that he “wanted to take advantage of the even the smallest chance” with Iraq.⁷⁵² After the aerial campaign against Iraq began on 17 January, despite repeating that “Saddam was to blame for the war,” Gorbachev argued that Saddam had “lost the military capability to threaten his neighbors and that the time had come to stop the fighting.”⁷⁵³ However, American patience with Iraq was running out, and Soviet initiatives were increasingly seen as more troublesome and annoying than as helping to resolve the issue. In early February, Gorbachev claimed that the events in the Persian Gulf—the bombing of Iraq and other military actions against Iraqi targets—were “threatening to exceed the [United Nations] mandate.” In short, he believed that the coalition led by the United States was going too far. The Americans fired back that “Iraq’s use of massive force against Kuwait and in defense of the occupation of Kuwait legally justifies massive defensive attacks against the force. The objects of military force therefore may legally include those elements of Iraq’s infrastructure that support and sustain the occupation of Kuwait.”⁷⁵⁴ Differences over objectives divided the two Cold War superpowers.

⁷⁵¹ Knut Royce, “Iraq willing to leave Kuwait in exchange for certain conditions, officials say Offer includes link to Palestinian issue,” *The Baltimore Sun*, January 3, 1991, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1991-01-03-1991003085-story.html>

⁷⁵² Memorandum for the President, from Brent Scowcroft, “Summary of President Gorbachev’s Letter to the President,” circa 6 November 1990, Desert Shield/Desert Storm (November 1990) [1], OA/ID 91144-008, Desert Shield/Desert Storm Files, Chronological Files OA/ID 91143 Box 36, Brent Scowcroft Files, GHWBL.

⁷⁵³ President’s Phone Call with Gorbachev, January 18, 1991, U.S. Relations with Russia—OA/ID CF01430-026, Nicholas R. Burns and Ed Hewett Files, Russia Subject File, NSC, GHWBL.

⁷⁵⁴ Memorandum for Brent Scowcroft, from Nicholas Rostow, “The Gulf War: Gorbachev Statement on Exceeding the U.N. Mandate”, 11 February 1991, Desert Shield/Desert Storm (February 1991) [3] OA/ID 91146-009, Desert Shield/Desert Storm Files, Chronological Files, OA/ID 91143, Box 36, Brent Scowcroft Files, GHWBL.

For example, the U.S. was also upset that Soviet proposals in late February did not mention repatriation of POWs, did not set a time for withdrawal, and did not refer to economic reparations.⁷⁵⁵

The major difference between Soviet and American proposals for Iraqi withdrawal rested on what was meant by the “unconditional” withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait. The Americans wanted Iraq out of Kuwait immediately, and they would only negotiate the end of sanctions and a ceasefire once the Iraqis had crossed the border and left Kuwait. They wanted Iraq to “meet the test of immediacy,” but the Soviets wanted to grant Iraq three weeks to withdraw. To the Soviets, this demand of immediate withdrawal was an American “ultimatum,” and, if the Soviets went with it, they would be in “a very difficult position in the future.” According to Soviet logic, military intervention was not necessary if Saddam agreed to withdraw from Kuwait using a negotiated timetable. However, the Iraqis had their own contingencies—they wanted all economic sanctions lifted before they removed two-thirds of their forces from Kuwait. Even though the Soviets talked Saddam down to removing all troops to ease sanctions, the Americans would accept nothing of the sort. They wanted Iraq out immediately, timetable and contingencies be damned.⁷⁵⁶

The Soviets tried to mediate a deal up until the day of the allied ground invasion on 24 February. On 21 February, Gorbachev tried in vain to convince the Americans that Aziz’s willingness to publicize the Soviet peace proposal must mean that the Iraqis were open to

⁷⁵⁵ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation with President Turgut Ozal of Turkey, 19 February 1991 with President George H.W. Bush, Desert Shield/Desert Storm (February 1991) [5], OA/ID 91147-002, Desert Shield/Desert Storm Files, Chronological Files, OA/ID 91147, Box 40, Brent Scowcroft Files, GHWBL.

⁷⁵⁶ Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between Secretary of State Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Bessmertnykh, 23 February 1991, “Soviet Proposal on the Gulf Crisis,” Persian Gulf Conflict -February 1991, OA/ID CF00946, Roberts M Gates Files, NSC, GHWBL.

change.⁷⁵⁷ Although Gorbachev told Bush that Aziz had “some kind of impression based on realism,” Bush responded that “we have no trust anymore in anything that man says.”⁷⁵⁸ On 22 February, Bush announced a 24-hour ultimatum, giving Iraq one last chance to leave Kuwait; failure to do so would trigger the ground invasion. In yet another conversation with Gorbachev, Bush said that Saddam’s destruction of Kuwaiti oil fields and infrastructure was the final straw, suggesting to Gorbachev that “it seems that he is taking advantage of the talks with you to destroy Kuwait and play for time.”⁷⁵⁹

On 23 February, Gorbachev called Bush again, begging for more time. “George,” he said; “Let’s keep cool.” He then asked Bush to go back to the UNSC.⁷⁶⁰ While he did not want this to “divide the U.S. and the Soviet Union,” Bush responded bluntly, “I don’t want to leave a false impression that there is any more time.... I do not want you to feel that there is any

⁷⁵⁷ President’s telephone conversation with Gorbachev, February 21, 1991, U.S. Relations with Russia—OA/ID CF01430-026, Nicholas R. Burns and Ed Hewett Files, Russia Subject File, NSC, GHWBL.

⁷⁵⁸ Memorandum of telephone conversation, telecon with President Mikhail Gorbachev of the U.S.S.R. on 21 February 1991, Gorbachev Correspondence—Outgoing [1] OA/ID CF00718-002, Condoleezza Rice Files, Soviet Union/U.S.S.R. Subject Files CF 00718, NSC, GHWBL.

⁷⁵⁹ The same file also includes a message from Baker to Gorbachev where Baker informs Gorbachev that the Americans announced the ultimatum without notifying the Soviets first because “we could not get ahold of you.” Memorandum of telephone conversation, Telecon with President Mikhail Gorbachev of the U.S.S.R. on 22 February 1991, Gorbachev Correspondence—Outgoing [1] OA/ID CF00718-002, Condoleezza Rice Files, Soviet Union/U.S.S.R. Subject Files CF 00718, NSC, GHWBL.

⁷⁶⁰ 23 February 23rd is also Red Army Day (known today as Defender of the Fatherland Day), the Russian equivalent of the U.S.’s Memorial Day. Whether this was overlooked, acknowledged, or even intended to be a slight, the issuing of an American ultimatum at this time likely angered Soviet hardliners even more so. In a 22 February phone call with Bush, Gorbachev indicated he was at a rally for Army Day, complaining that “all the T.V. cameras were there, and I had 6000 people there.” Bush sympathized with Gorbachev, responding: “We are both slaves to the TV....” Memorandum of telephone conversation with President Mikhail Gorbachev of the U.S.S.R. on 22 February 1991, Gorbachev Correspondence—Outgoing [1] OA/ID CF00718-002, Condoleezza Rice Files, Soviet Union/U.S.S.R. Subject Files CF 00718, NSC, GHWBL.

inclination for the U.S. and the coalition to delay... I don't want to mislead you. I don't feel inclined to wait."⁷⁶¹ The ground invasion commenced on 24 February, and, less than one hundred hours later, the Iraqis were defeated. On 28 February, the Iraqis agreed to a ceasefire, which was signed in Safwan, Iraq on 1 March.⁷⁶²

After the Gulf War of 1990-1991

The aftermath of the Gulf War shaped Iraqi foreign policy and outlook throughout the remainder of the 1990s.⁷⁶³ For one thing, under UNSCR 687, the United Nations continued sanctions against Saddam's regime as a means to force Iraq to embark on further disarmament. After reports of dire conditions among Iraqi civilians, the U.N. authorized the Oil-for-Food Programme in 1995. This program was marred by controversy and corruption, to say the least.⁷⁶⁴

⁷⁶¹ Bush was also furious that Saddam's spokesperson accused the Americans of lying about the Kuwaiti oil field fires. (The Iraqis had deliberately set them ablaze.) Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between President GHWB and Mikhail Gorbachev, 23 February 1991, Persian Gulf Conflict -February 1991, OA/ID CF00946, Roberts M Gates Files, NSC, GHWBL. John H. Cushman, Jr. "Environmental Toll Mounting in Kuwait As Oil Fires Burn On," *NYT*, 25 June 1991. <https://nyti.ms/2P2NP4k>

⁷⁶² For details of the events of the ceasefire meeting, see Philip Shenon, "After the War: Cease-Fire Meeting; A Hard-Faced Schwarzkopf Sets Terms at Desert Meeting," *NYT*, March 4, 1991, <https://nyti.ms/2Gmx9ip>

⁷⁶³ The Soviets, along with Yugoslavia, did not send any military or economic assistance to support the Coalition. See administration Public Position on Sharing of Responsibility for the Coalition Effort in the Persian Gulf (10 January 1991) Memo, Desert Shield/Desert Storm (January 1991) II [1], OA/ID 91146-003, Desert Shield/Desert Storm Files, Chronological Files, OA/ID 91143, Box 36, Brent Scowcroft Files, GHWBL. Also see, administration Public Position on Sharing of Responsibility for the Coalition Effort in the Persian Gulf (Feb 8, 1991 update) Memo, Desert Shield/Desert Storm (February 1991) [3], OA/ID 91146-009, Desert Shield/Desert Storm (January 1991) II [1], OA/ID 91146-003, Desert Shield/Desert Storm Files, Chronological Files, OA/ID 91143, Box 36, Brent Scowcroft Files, GHWBL.

⁷⁶⁴ Scholars, practitioners, and policymakers have cast serious doubt on the nature, success, and consequences of the program. See Robert McMahon, "The Impact of the U.N. Oil-for-Food Scandal," *Council for Foreign Relations*, 11 May 2006, <https://on.cfr.org/2kVueEN>

A thorough discussion of sanctions and the Oil-for-Food Programme falls out of the scope of this work, but how to maintain a regime under severe sanctions was a key driver of Iraqi foreign policy in the 1990s. For Saddam, whose paranoia about his regime's stability increased throughout the 1990s until his downfall in 2003, a sanctions regime could lead to the end of Ba'athist rule and therefore his own.⁷⁶⁵ A relationship with Russia was seen by Baghdad as crucial to this matter.

The “Mother of All Battles” (the Iraqi name for the First Gulf War) and the collapse of the Soviet Union confirmed, according to the Ba'athists, the “so-called new international order,” one that was already influencing affairs in the Arab world.⁷⁶⁶ In August 1990, as indicated by the Saddam tapes, the Ba'athists believed that the Soviets would continue to support them. Thus, the Soviet backing of UNSCR 660 shocked the Iraqis. In a letter he sent to Gorbachev, Tariq Aziz argued that the “the nature of the relations between Iraq and the Soviet Union do not jell with the hasty stands that were taken by the Soviet Union.” Citing “strong ties, deep and historic ties,” Aziz suggested that the Soviets try to “investigate” and “identify” with Iraq's position— that the annexation of Kuwait was legal and justified—rather than rush to support the American-led efforts against them. Aziz stated: “the relations between the Soviet Union and Iraq, or between the Soviet Union and the Arabs must not be compromised by making this hasty decision, and he asked that the Soviet Union must not follow the American ambitions in the region.” However,

⁷⁶⁵ For UNSCR 687 see <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/687> . Paul Lewis, “After the War; Iraq Approval Starts Peace Schedule,” *NYT*, April 7, 1991, <https://nyti.ms/2XUSOw8> . See Joy Gordon, *Invisible War: The United States and the Iraq Sanctions*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); Faust, *The Ba'athification of Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Totalitarianism*.

⁷⁶⁶ In this instance, the Iraqis were referring to the civil war in Yemen in 1994. Party Obstacles and Developments in Yemen, circa December 1994, 0063 (full report is 0055-0063), BRCC 3453-0001, HB, HIA. *The Associated Press*, “Yemen Claims Victory in Civil War after seizing Rebel City,” *NYT*, July 8, 1994, <https://nyti.ms/2HF26E5>

according to Aziz, the Soviets said that they were under tremendous pressure from the Americans. After a “huge argument” with the Soviet Ambassador, Aziz told the Soviets that “it is a shame that you are joining the Americans.” Even so, in the words of Aziz, the Ba‘thists did not view Soviet action in this matter as “hostile” towards Iraq. Instead, Aziz blamed the “out of control Soviet press” for forcing the Soviet government to tread lightly. Aziz concluded that it was the pressure from the United States that was really to blame, adding that there were “no tangible signs that the Soviet Union is cooperating, except for the diplomatic field and the announcements that are being released due to the American pressure.”⁷⁶⁷

As mentioned above, the Soviets were not able to mediate a deal between the Iraqis and the United States. Even Saddam asked: “...are the Soviets so intent on stopping the war that they would claim there is hope for a peaceful resolution even though they know we are steadfast in our stance and even though they didn’t come back with anything important from Iraq?”⁷⁶⁸ Saddam’s refusal and intransigence to retreat from Kuwait triggered the ground invasion, but the Iraqis put more blame on the Soviets for this than on their own actions. Even hours after the ground invasion commenced, some members of Saddam’s immediate circle believed that the “plot has been accurately executed and the Soviet Union is well aware of that. In fact, it supported the United States in its aggression. Despite all this, I believe it is crucial for us to

⁷⁶⁷ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-233, “Saddam Hussein and Iraqi Officials Discussing Turkish, Russian and Chinese Perceptions of Iraq’s Occupation of Kuwait,” 7 August 1990. For the “Mother of All Battles” narrative, see Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals War: the Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf*. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995), 267-288.

⁷⁶⁸ In the same conversation, Saddam also told the Soviets he would target Israel if his demands were not met. Aziz acknowledged this was a scare tactic. CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-670, “Saddam Meeting with the Revolutionary Command Council about Iraqi Foreign Policy after Invading Kuwait and the Likelihood of an American Attack,” 11 October 1990.

embarrass the Soviet Union in this phase and escalate our political maneuvering.”⁷⁶⁹ As the ground invasion commenced, the Iraqis overwhelmingly felt betrayed by the perceived Soviet inaction during war. Saddam lamented that the Soviet Union had even “tricked” and “trapped” Iraq.⁷⁷⁰

Arguably as a form of revenge against Gorbachev, Iraq supported the late-August 1991 coup in Moscow, in which hardline Communist Party members attempted to remove Mikhail Gorbachev and roll back his efforts at decentralization. Boris Yeltsin would lead the effort against those who plotted the coup, even standing on tanks outside Russia’s Parliament Building to address the protesters and media.⁷⁷¹ Still angry over Soviet inaction during the First Gulf War, official Iraqi media outlets quoted Iraqi government officials saying: “It is natural that we welcome such change like the states and people who were affected by the policies of the former regime.”⁷⁷² His support for the coup was not well received, even in the Middle East—only the PLO, Libya, and Sudan joined in Iraq’s support of the coup. In conversation

⁷⁶⁹ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-931, “Saddam Hussein Meeting with Advisors Regarding the American Ground Attack During First Gulf War, Garnering Arab and Iraqi Support, and a Letter to Gorbachev,” 24 February 1991.

⁷⁷⁰ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-630, “1991 State Command and Council Meeting Discussing the Russian Peace Proposal and Communications between Saddam and Gorbachev,” 24 February 1991. Also see Kevin M. Woods, David D. Palkki, and Mark E. Stout. *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 195-200. Facing an imminent ground invasion, the Iraqis even considered asking Moscow for weapons for both the “frontlines” and elsewhere. CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-931, “Saddam Hussein Meeting with Advisors Regarding the American Ground Attack During First Gulf War, Garnering Arab and Iraqi Support, and a Letter to Gorbachev,” 24 February 1991.

⁷⁷¹ Author unlisted, “Soviet Turmoil the Soviet Coup and Its Aftermath: A Recap,” *NYT*, August 25, 1991, <https://nyti.ms/2WfjarN>

⁷⁷² Julian M. Isherwood, “World reacts with shock to Gorbachev ouster,” *United Press International*, 19 August 1991, <https://upi.com/3994693>

with President George H.W. Bush, in which they discussed the August coup, Turkish President Turgut Ozal remarked that “Saddam is foolish to support the coup.”⁷⁷³

Iraq was hardly on Moscow’s radar between the First Gulf War and 1993. Following the collapse of the U.S.S.R. in December 1991, the newly independent Russian Federation, under President Boris Yeltsin, was in the midst of three simultaneous transformations: the collapse of Communism and the transition to a market economy and democracy; the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the security it had provided to the historically insecure Russia; and the collapse of the Soviet Union itself and with it an empire built over several centuries.⁷⁷⁴ This transition was economically and politically painful for the new country. Russian territory held just 50% of the population of the old Soviet Union, and its GNP was one tenth that of the United States in 1995.⁷⁷⁵ Gruesome wars in the breakaway province of Chechnya (1994-1996 and 1999-2000)

⁷⁷³ Memo of Telephone Conversation between President GHWB and President Turgut Ozal, Turkey, 19 August 1991, U.S.S.R. Coup Attempt, August 1990 [1991] [2] OA/ID CF01308-014, Nicholas Burns, Subject File, NSC, GHWBL. George H.W. Bush also called Yeltsin to inform him that he was not going to communicate with the coup’s leaders since he did want to “legitimize the regime.” Yeltsin was extremely grateful for this gesture. Memo of Telephone Conversation, Subject: Telcon with President Boris Yeltsin of the Republic of Russia, U.S.S.R., 20 August 1991, U.S.S.R. Coup Attempt, August 1990 [1991] [1] OA/ID CF01308-014, Nicholas Burns, Subject File, NSC, GHWBL. George H.W. Bush informed Yeltsin that he was not going to “legitimize the regime” by calling the coup-plotters; Yeltsin responded with his gratitude. Memo of Telephone Conversation President Boris Yeltsin of the Republic of Russia, U.S.S.R., 20 August 1991, U.S.S.R. Coup Attempt, August 1990 [1991] [1] OA/ID CF01308-013, Nicholas Burns, Subject File, NSC, GHWBL.

⁷⁷⁴ William J. Burns, “Witness to the Counter-Revolution: An American Diplomat Looks Back on a Relationship Gone Bad,” *The Atlantic*. 323(3) (April 2019): 83.

⁷⁷⁵ Ismael and Kreutz, “Russian-Iraqi Relations: A Historical and Political Analysis,” 94.

and the loss of the submarine *Kursk* in August 2000 illustrated the weakness of Russia's foreign policy and its inability to project power very far as well as its own domestic instabilities.⁷⁷⁶

In the early 1990s, as argued by scholars Tareq Ismael and Andrej Kreutz, Russian President Boris Yeltsin's administration consisted of political figures with a "neo-liberal and occidentalist" mentality who wanted to leave behind the alliances, legacies, and turmoil of the Soviet period. This regime viewed Iraq with contempt, so much so that the Iraqi ambassador was not received by Russian leaders when he sought to discuss the money that Iraq owed Russia; this prompted the ambassador to complain to various members of the Russian Parliament.⁷⁷⁷ Yeltsin and his liberal supporters sought to move away from the networks created by their Soviet predecessors. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and subsequent intransigence before the United Nations further justified the Yeltsin faction's belief and attitude towards Iraq.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the new Russian Federation struggling to hold on, the Americans were left as the one surviving Cold War superpower. With the overwhelming victory in the First Gulf War, the U.S. government was ready to assume the status of hegemon. Despite losing their Cold War ally and because they had been humiliated on the global stage, the Iraqis were eager to navigate this new political era. The Iraqis began manipulating the memory and narrative of the First Gulf War. Saddam even argued that Iraq was actually *victorious* in the war, since the Americans had requested the ceasefire rather than send troops to conquer

⁷⁷⁶ For more on the Russian wars in the Caucasus region, see David R. Stone, *A Military History of Russia: From Ivan the Terrible to the War in Chechnya*. (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2006). For the Kursk disaster see Michael Winescot, "None of Us Can Get Out' Kursk Sailor Wrote" *NYT*, 27 October 2000, <https://nyti.ms/2mJ3iqZ>

⁷⁷⁷ Ismael and Kreutz, "Russian-Iraqi Relations: A Historical and Political Analysis," 94.

Baghdad.⁷⁷⁸ Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz argued: “we paid the price in 1991 when our weapons were destroyed.... It is not in our interest to remove ourselves from the game....”⁷⁷⁹

Further cementing Iraqi resentment of Moscow, the Russians were of no help to the Iraqis in their fight against the continuing sanctions under UNSCR 687. When informed of the latest renewal in February 1992, Saddam remarked that the Russian representative to the U.N. was “becoming like a little agent” and that Iraq needed to “admonish the Russian representative.” To Saddam and the Ba‘thist state, the Russian representative, and therefore Russia, was acting like an American puppet.⁷⁸⁰ Saddam wanted two Russians to be part of the U.N. inspection team, arguing that Russia’s participation could “revive [the] old role of that dead giant.” However, he also demanded that the Russians be notified that “we still estimate them though [as if they] are

⁷⁷⁸ There are many, many debates in American military and political circles about whether the Americans should have completely destroyed the Iraqi Republican Guard, chased retreating Iraqi units back to Baghdad, or even overthrown Saddam’s regime when it had the chance. For more on those debates, see Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals War: the Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf*. For more on Saddam’s myth-making and narrative manipulation, see CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-241, “Iraqi Officials Briefing Saddam Hussein on the Performance of Iraqi Troops in Kuwait,” November 17, 1991. CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-244, “Iraqi Military Officials Discussing Air Force and Army Performance during the Second Gulf War,” November 27, 1995. CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-241, “Iraqi Officials Briefing Saddam Hussein on the Performance of Iraqi Troops in Kuwait,” November 17, 1991. CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-242, “Saddam Hussein and Military Officials Discussing Lessons Learned from the First Gulf War,” undated. Princeton University’s Department of Near East Studies Doctoral Candidate Michael Brill is working on this phenomenon as part of his research and dissertation of this writing in May 2019.

⁷⁷⁹ Aziz was Foreign Minister from 1983-1991, and Deputy Prime Minister from 1979-2003. CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-011, “Saddam Hussein and High-Ranking Officials discussing Iraqi Biological and Nuclear Weapons Programs,” 2 May 1995. Also see Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*, 277-279.

⁷⁸⁰ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-850, Revolutionary Command Council and Regional Command Meeting about U.N. Inspections and Security Council Resolutions, February 1992.

fruitless and useless.” The Russians for their part rejected this Iraqi request, countering that Baghdad was trying to use Moscow as part of their ploy to try to divide the U.N.⁷⁸¹

The new Russian Federation refused to be an Iraqi pawn. The Iraqis saw that they must avoid the mistake they had made during the Cold War – they could not rely on the Russians to back them. Without completely writing off their relationship with the Soviet Union (and with the soon-emergent Russian Federation), Iraq now sought alliances with and assistance from other European nations and from the United Nations. Using multilateralism, Iraq set out to build coalitions in order to counter American hegemony, a hegemony that was determined to punish Iraq for its transgressions in Kuwait. Therefore, both overtly, and covertly, the Iraqis began courting French, Chinese, and European interest by touting economic possibilities—especially oil—within the country; to be sure, the Iraqis had courted these groups in the Cold War, but this time they did so with much more bravado, both inside and outside the U.N. Emphasizing Europe’s own uncertain future, Saddam firmly believed “that... except for Britain... what we know to be true according to our analysis, [as] the French and Italians are talking about it... is that all of Europe does not want a weak Iraq, because they have started to make the connection between their interests and [having] American control the region by itself, or a weaker America.”⁷⁸² The Iraqis gambled that it was not only the Russians who resented American hegemonic status.

⁷⁸¹ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-562, Meeting between Saddam and Iraqi Military Commanders to Discuss Preparations to Defend against Attacks by Coalition Forces after the Gulf War, early 1990s.

⁷⁸² CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-756, Saddam and Senior Advisers Discussing a Potential Military Conflict with the United States, 9 February 1998. Also see Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*, 56-57.

The idea of developing allies outside the Soviets began even during the Kuwait crisis. In October 1990, Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, the Iraqi Vice Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council, argued: “[N]ow the U.S. has destroyed the Soviet Union. It is destroyed, you see it disbanding, falling apart, the people and the military. That is the international situation.” He then suggested that the Ba‘thist regime instead shift its focus to France, claiming that both the Soviets and the French “have no interest in war” and because France could “influence Europe.” Taha Yasin Ramadan, Vice President of Iraq, argued that, “because of their president and current policies,” the Soviet Union would no longer be able to provide Iraq with a “security buffer.” He echoed Izzat’s calls for Iraq to shift its focus to France; “they will be a better security buffer for us.”⁷⁸³

In the same meeting, Taha also disregarded China, citing the wavering of their support for Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War. During the First Gulf War, the Iraqis had reached out to China, noting that China’s “position is, of course, better than that of the Soviet Union” in that China was not in political turmoil like the Soviet Union. Although China voted for the initial UNSCRs, the Iraqis noted the more “moderate” tone of the Chinese, a signal that the Chinese were not enthusiastic about following the Americans. According to the Ba‘thists, this indicated that the Chinese were willing to cooperate with the Iraqis.⁷⁸⁴

However, the Iraqis were well aware that China would not cooperate with them in the open. Rather, they would operate as they had before. Tariq Aziz argued that, “when we were at war [the Iran-Iraq War], they sold us arms and sold [to] the Iranians as well, and then they would

⁷⁸³ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-670, Saddam Meeting with the Revolutionary Command Council about Iraqi Foreign Policy after Invading Kuwait and the Likelihood of an American Attack, 11 October 1990.

⁷⁸⁴ SH-SHTP-A-001-233, Saddam Hussein and Iraqi Officials Discussing Turkish, Russian and Chinese Perceptions of Iraq's Occupation of Kuwait, 1990-08-07.

turn around and claim they did not send arms to either party.”⁷⁸⁵ During the Iran-Iraq War, the Iraqis courted the Chinese, fed up with the Soviets’ flip-flopping. In 1986, Tariq Aziz visited China at Beijing’s invitation. Iraqi objectives were increased coordination and cooperation between the two states. There he met with the Foreign Ministry, the General Secretary, and media offices.⁷⁸⁶ The Chinese told the Iraqis that they were upset with Iranian intransigence and were alarmed by the West’s support for Iran. The Chinese were also upset that the Iranians had sought weapons from Vietnam, especially abandoned or captured American weapons.⁷⁸⁷

The Americans had other ideas, however. They wanted to convey to the Chinese a sense of “our growing impatience with sanctions and with Saddam’s refusal to withdraw or release hostages.” But the U.S. government essentially wanted to inform the PRC what they were doing and leave it at that. Chinese offers of assistance in the UNSC and other diplomatic avenues were largely disregarded by the American government.⁷⁸⁸ Even then, the Chinese were not as forceful in this regard as the Iraqis would have appreciated. In the aftermath of their use of the military in the suppression of protesters advocating greater democracy in Tiananmen Square in June 1989, the Chinese treaded lightly in the U.N. As scholar Ronald C. Keith argues, the Chinese “acted

⁷⁸⁵ SH-SHTP-A-001-233, Saddam Hussein and Iraqi Officials Discussing Turkish, Russian and Chinese Perceptions of Iraq’s Occupation of Kuwait, 1990-08-07.

⁷⁸⁶ Party delegation visit to Vietnam and China, 1986/4/29, 0680, BRCC 088-5-3, HB, HIA. For Tariq Aziz’s detailed notes from the trip, see ~0351-0354 in BRCC 3358-0000.

⁷⁸⁷ Ba’th delegation visit to China and Vietnam, 1986/8/5 (trip occurred 1986/6/14-23), 0354-0355, BRCC 3358-0000, HB, HIA. However, just like the Soviets, China continued to supply weapons to Iran during the war, much to the ire of the Iraqis. See Chapter 2: Iraqi Foreign Policy, 1968-1989. Not to be outdone, the Iraqis also courted the Vietnamese, including party visits to Vietnam in 1987. See Vietnam/Country Visit, Invite, 1987/2/26, 0351-0353, BRCC 3358-000, HB, HIA.

⁷⁸⁸ Memorandum, “Country-by-Country Package of Objectives” from Richard Haas to Secretary of State Baker, 2 November 1990, Persian Gulf Conflict Pre-1991, OA/ID CF00946, Subject Files, Roberts M. Gate Files, NSC, GHWBL.

with studied circumspection, avoiding any frontal Security Council challenge to the U.S.-led U.N. coalition against Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait."⁷⁸⁹ This lack of action by China was noticed by the Iraqis. In a July 1991 conversation with his advisors, Saddam remarked that "that the whole world is taking orders from the U.S...."⁷⁹⁰

Other events soon confirmed Iraq's decision to seek out new alliances. In June 1992, to protect the Kurdish populations in the northern portion of the country, the Americans used the authority of UNSCR 688 to keep Iraqi aircraft from flying north of the thirty-sixth parallel.⁷⁹¹ Similarly, a boundary was imposed later in the summer in the south. Acting in August 1992 without U.N. authority, the Americans, along with the British and French, instituted a no-fly-zone along the 32nd parallel as means to protect the Shi'a populations in southern Iraq. Answering calls to rise up, the Shi'a and the Kurds had rebelled against Saddam's regime after the First Gulf War, only to be slaughtered by the Iraqi army in return.⁷⁹²

⁷⁸⁹ Ronald C. Keith, "Divining the Prospect of Sino-Iraqi Relations," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies*. 1(3), October 2007, 331-348. Nicholas D. Kristof, "Crackdown In Beijing; Troops Attack and Crush Beijing Protest; Thousands Fight Back, Scores are Killed," *NYT*, 4 June 1989, <https://nyti.ms/2tEA05v>

⁷⁹⁰ CRRC SH-MISC-D-001-593, Minutes of a Meeting Held between President Saddam Hussein and Dr. Hasan Al-Turabi, the Secretary General of National Islamic Movement in Sudan, July 1991.

⁷⁹¹ For UNSCR 688, see <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/688>

⁷⁹² Elaine Sciolino, "After the War; Iraq's Shiite Majority: A Painful History of Revolt and Schism," *NYT*, March 30, 1991, <https://nyti.ms/2MXdJF2>. Michael Gordon, "U.S. Shoots Down an Iraqi Warplane in No-Flight Zone," *NYT*, December 28, 1992, <https://nyti.ms/2EGmFMV>. For more on the uprisings (or "intifada"), see Eric Goldstein and Andrew Whitley, "Endless Torment: The 1991 Uprising in Iraq and Its Aftermath", *Human Rights Watch Report*, June 1992. Available online at <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1992/Iraq926.htm> Lauren Merkel, PhD Candidate, currently at U.S. Military Academy-West Point, is working on the George H.W. Bush's administration policy and responses to Shi'a uprising—the Bush administration held off humanitarian support for the Shi'a while responding to the Kurdish rebellions with much more clarity and speed. Kurdish lobbying and perceived Iranian influence have been pointed to for differences in policy, among many others.

Yeltsin wrote to the Americans, expressing his sympathy for the Kurds, but he also expressed fears of American encroachment, arguing that "...it cannot be denied that the fact of the introduction of foreign troop contingents into the territory of another state without that state's request or consent, even with such a humane goal, can be perceived as a threat to its territorial integrity." Yeltsin indicated that he had discussed this with Saddam, trying to convince him that the West was only interested in time-limited humanitarian operations, and he asked Bush to pass along "strict instructions" of restraint and caution to foreign troops assisting Kurdish refugees.⁷⁹³

Again, however, the Russians could not save the day for Iraq. In late December 1992, an Iraqi F-16 plane was shot down by the Americans for crossing the 32nd parallel.⁷⁹⁴ Although the U.S. government thought Baghdad was deliberately trying to provoke the Americans, the Iraqis believed the F-16 shootdown was part of President George H.W. Bush's plan to coordinate with "the United Kingdom, France, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to escalate the situation with Iraq, in order to create a new confrontation because they failed to accomplish their intentions during the previous period."⁷⁹⁵ Yeltsin refused to intervene, despite having two warships and anti-

⁷⁹³ Gorbachev letter to GHW Bush, Desert Shield/Desert Storm (April-June 1991) [2], OA/ID 91147-007, Desert Shield/Desert Storm Files, Chronological Files, OA/ID 91147, Box 40, Brent Scowcroft Files, GHWBL.

⁷⁹⁴ Michael Gordon, "U.S. Shoots Down an Iraqi Warplane in No-Flight Zone," *NYT*, December 28, 1992, <https://nyti.ms/2EGmFMV>

⁷⁹⁵ The Iraqis also thought this was a political ploy by the Republicans to hurt the incoming Clinton administration, "Moreover, the administration of President Bush wants to communicate with the new American administration about the current Iraqi crisis to eliminate any possibility that the new American administration would reconsider the Bush administration attitude against Iraq." CRRC SH-GMID-D-000-513, "General Military Intelligence Directorate (GMID) Reports and Analysis about U.S. Attacks Against Iraq in 1993, GMID Role in Iraqi Battles, Um Al-Ma'arik, Qadissiyah Saddam," July 1991-September 2001.

submarine ship in the Persian Gulf. Iraq was irate that Russia did not do more.⁷⁹⁶ Yeltsin's decision to avoid confrontation with the U.S would enrage Russian nationalists, some arguing later on that he and his Foreign Minister, Andrey Kozyrev, "caused a noticeable decrease in Russia's prestige and political influence..." in the Middle East.⁷⁹⁷ Other Russian nationalists, including Sergei Vasilyvich, would later tell the Ba'athists that Yeltsin "handed over Russia to the Americans."⁷⁹⁸

Organizations of Iraqis

The strain in the Iraqi-Russian relationship did not stall other Iraqi diplomatic operations. In fact, the fall of the Soviet Union did not alter the embassy organizations' missions. If anything, the embassy organizations (EO) became even more important in an era of American hegemony.⁷⁹⁹ The Iraqis continued to run EO operations in 69 countries, and these activities were abundant.⁸⁰⁰ For example, there were EO activities in Mexico—where the EO was

⁷⁹⁶ CRRC SH-GMID-D-000-513, "General Military Intelligence Directorate (GMID) Reports and Analysis about U.S. Attacks Against Iraq in 1993, GMID Role in Iraqi Battles, Um Al-Ma'arik, Qadissiyah Saddam," July 1991-September 2001.

⁷⁹⁷ Ismael and Kreutz, "Russian-Iraqi Relations: A Historical and Political Analysis," 97.

⁷⁹⁸ CRRC SH-IISX-D-001-320, MIC memos and chemical inventory sheets, these chemicals are used to manufacture of bombs, 02/08/1998. For the quote, see Letter, "Delegation of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia," sent from the Russia Division, Chief on 2/6/1993.

⁷⁹⁹ For the history of the Embassy Organizations, see Chapter 2: Iraqi Foreign Policy, 1968-1989.

⁸⁰⁰ These countries included: Turkey, India, U.S.S.R., Pakistan, Vietnam, Indonesia, China, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Philippines, Jordan, Bahrain, Qatar, Yemen, Oman, Australia, Lebanon, Belgium, Greece, Czech, Portugal, Holland, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Sweden, Finland, Austria, Yugoslavia, Italy, Great Britain, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Mali, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Morocco, Algeria, Senegal, Djibouti, Mauritania, Tunisia, Libya, Chad, Sudan, Egypt, Cuba, Mexico, Canada, Brazil, Venezuela, America, Argentina, Oman (Muscat), Abu Dhabi, Tanzania, Zambia, Guinea, France, and Ethiopia. There is one more country listed within the document, but it is unreadable. Iraqis organizations abroad, 1993/7/18,

working to coordinate with local news agencies, papers, and correspondents to broadcast pro-Iraqi messages.⁸⁰¹ Similar action occurred in Lebanon, Canada, Poland, and China, to name just a few.⁸⁰²

Nevertheless, there were some structural changes, including name changes, within the Ba‘thist bureaucracy. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the EOs were re-named “Organizations of Iraqis” (OIs) while the Office of Organizations Outside the Region in Baghdad (with headquarters in Baghdad) was renamed the “Branch of the Bureau of Iraqis Outside the Region.” The name changes did not significantly alter the structure of the party organization. Ba‘th hierarchy remained the same: the party was first organized by local party divisions (which controlled neighborhoods or districts), then into sections (which controlled small- to medium-sized cities), then branches (similar to governates), and finally the regional command.⁸⁰³ This name change did, however, elevate the Office of Organizations Outside the Region in Baghdad to branch level. The branch level was crucial, responsible for everything in its territory and reporting directly to the Ba‘th Party’s headquarters, the regional command. Branches carried great influence, as Samuel Helfont argues, in that “everything from investigations of Iraqis to security operations to patronage projects were carried out by the party branches.”⁸⁰⁴

0115-0016, BRCC 100-3-5, HB, HIA. The list is found on 0116. The BRCC dataset flooded with documents pertaining to these actions.

⁸⁰¹ OI Mexico, 1992/9/18, 0175-0176, BRCC 100-3-5, HB, HIA.

⁸⁰² OI Lebanon, 1993/8/1, 0151, BRCC 100-3-5, HB, HIA. OI Canada can be found on 0240-0241, OI China can be found on 0243-024, and Poland on 0249-0254. All are located within BRCC 100-3-5.

⁸⁰³ Samuel Helfont, “Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba‘th Party as a Transnational Actor,” *The Middle East Journal* 72. No 2. (2018): 229-245: 222-223, 235. For more see Chapter 2: Iraq and the Cold War, 1968-1989.

⁸⁰⁴ Helfont, “Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba‘th Party as a Transnational Actor,” 232-233.

By the end of the Cold War, the headquarters managing embassy organizations had been elevated to branch status—hence the name change to Branch of the Bureau of Iraqis Outside the Region. The branch was now given responsibility for all operations conducted outside Iraq. Separate embassy organizations, such as those in Prague, Paris, or London, reported to the Branch of the Bureau of Iraqis Outside the Region, who then reported to the Regional Command. The embassy organizations' party structure—the hierarchy of party members and employees—replicated the party hierarchy in Baghdad.⁸⁰⁵ According to Helfont, these name changes “[reflected] a process of bureaucratic standardization that aligned the party structure outside of Iraq with the party structure inside Iraq.”⁸⁰⁶

As they did in the Cold War, so after it as well, the OIs continued to track individuals—those Iraqi citizens who were abroad, those who were sympathetic to the regime, and those who were not, including dissidents and exiles. An example of the latter was Kanan Makiya, a prominent Iraqi dissident and author of the influential book *Republic of Fear* (1989). The Ba‘thists tracked Makiya in the United States, going as far as to attending lectures he gave.⁸⁰⁷ The OIs were also looking for non-Iraqis who held sympathetic views of Iraq. For example, a report written by a pro-Ba‘thist professor in Mali was relayed back to Baghdad. According to this report, the professor argued that on “the day of the death of communist Russia, and the breakup of the U.S.S.R., the world became subject to one dictatorship, dictatorship of the west, especially the hegemon U.S.... While Western capitalist countries are trying to unite to replace the Soviet Union, recognizing the danger of American hegemony, the Arabs and the teams seem

⁸⁰⁵ Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba‘th Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*, 45-52.

⁸⁰⁶ Helfont. “Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba‘th Party as a Transnational Actor,” 233.

⁸⁰⁷ Helfont. “Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba‘th Party as a Transnational Actor,” 237n44.

to be in a state of apathy.”⁸⁰⁸ The fact that this report was passed through Ba‘th party channels illustrates that the regime wanted to know who else outside Iraq agreed with Iraqi assessments of world affairs.

Intelligence and political operations were still run out of the OI as they had during the Cold War. OI China, for example, monitored the activities of the Chinese Communist Party, and it was keen to understand China’s growing and changing economy. They also were eager to learn China’s perspective, policies, and strategies in the new era without the Soviet Union.⁸⁰⁹ The OIs located within the U.S.S.R’s former sphere of influence were crucial for the Iraqis in that they served as another way to keep an eye on neighbors, allies, and enemies. Relations between Iraqis and Bulgarians continued to be tracked, in one example.⁸¹⁰ Since Iraqi students continued to study in the new republics—again, students were seen as both intelligence assets and a potential concern—and therefore the OIs were needed to monitor their activities.⁸¹¹ In some cases, students who had studied in the republics when the Soviet Union existed were sent back to the republics following their respective independence. In one case, an Iraqi student who had studied in Baku, Azerbaijan in 1988 was sent back to Baku for further “specialization” in his chemistry studies. To be sure, it is not clear whether he was recruited for this position solely to pursue more training in chemistry or because he had prior experience operating within Baku. However, it is safe to wager that it may have been a mix of both.⁸¹²

⁸⁰⁸ Lecture, “Us and the Gulf War,” 1993/2/8, 0262, BRCC 033-4-2, HB, HIA. The full report is 0249-0263.

⁸⁰⁹ The OI also believed that there would be “significant” changes within the CCP due to age and the rising generations. Conference of the Chinese Community Party, 1992/9/24, 0177, BRCC 3260-0002, HB, HIA.

⁸¹⁰ Bulgaria, 1993/4, 0147-0148, BRCC 2696-0002, HB, HIA.

⁸¹¹ For a list of student branches operating within the OIs, see Untitled, 1993, 0605, BRCC 033-4-2, HB, HIA.

⁸¹² Information, 1992/2/6, 0487, BRCC 033-4-2, HB, HIA.

Party bureaucracy continued to dominate the daily affairs of the OIs, even in those countries that were in political upheaval. Documents within the BRCC show that the distribution of party membership badges continued, as did OI party elections.⁸¹³ Elections for leadership positions were held in the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Russia and Poland in 1991. However, in almost all these instances, one can find another hallmark of Ba‘thist “elections”: election meddling. In some cases, victories of certain candidates were invalidated by the Ba‘thist elite, often by secret motion and with little to no explanation why.⁸¹⁴ The paranoid, party-driven, and bureaucratic structure of the Ba‘thist regime continued to rule supreme, even abroad.

However, as the OIs continued to operate as they did when U.S.S.R. existed, the OIs’ mission, as ordered by Saddam himself, was refocused to counter American actions against the country. Saddam ordered the OIs to “communicate and explain the Iraqi position to the rest of the world,” using whatever means to which they had access, including political parties, peace organizations, and “anyone else who has similar positions as Iraq.” Anyone who was pro-Iraq and anti-U.S. was to be courted.⁸¹⁵ The embassies and party organizations were supplied with official party rhetoric from the Foreign Affairs Ministry and ordered to contact political parties, party officials, the media, and religious committees in host countries. Other official Iraqi groups, including peace organizations and Islamic women’s groups, were all encouraged to distribute official and semi-official statements and declarations of support for Iraq at their various posts.⁸¹⁶

⁸¹³ Party badge, 1993/9, 0825 (Russia), 0837 (Egypt and Czechoslovakia), 0839-0841 (lists Yemen, Russia, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, GB, Finland, Tunisia, Jordan, Austria, Djibouti, Canada, Bulgaria, Algeria, Libya, Poland, Turkey) BRCC 3288-000, HB, HIA.

⁸¹⁴ Party Elections, 1991/9/26, 0014-0018, BRCC 2671-0001, HB, HIA. Party Elections, 1991/9/26, 0019-0020, BRCC 2671-0001, HB, HIA.

⁸¹⁵ Guidance, 1993/7/12, 0129, BRCC 100-3-5, HB, HIA.

⁸¹⁶ Guidance, 1993/8/4, 0147, BRCC 100-3-5, HB, HIA.

The OIs made political inroads into numerous political parties across the globe to protest U.S. sanctions against the Iraqi regime. Among the countries where the OIs worked in this way were Great Britain (the Workers Party, the Liberal Party), Turkey (Socialist Party, the Democratic Left Party), Japan (the Communist Party), France (Workers Party, Communist Party, Communist Association), India (Communist Party, Marxist Party), Kenya (United Muslim Citizens), Bangladesh (Workers Party, Islamic Society), Belgium (Workers Party, Anti-Imperialism Association), Hungary (Workers Party), Eritrea (Liberation Front), Sudan (Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party in Sudan), Somalia (Liberation Front), and Palestine (Liberation Front).⁸¹⁷

OI Moscow

In early September 1988, unknown perpetrators snuck past the Soviet sentry and broke into the Iraqi Embassy in Moscow. After failing to gain access to the military offices, they entered the meeting room of the OI and offices that dealt with Iraqi students and immigration matters. However, they were not able to break into the main part of the embassy, and they escaped with nothing taken or missing. When asked by the Iraqi ambassador why he had not tried to stop the break-in, the Soviet guard replied that, when the intruders entered the grounds of the embassy, he, as a Soviet citizen, could not enter the embassy without official permission from the responsible authorities. Soviet officials were not overly concerned when notified, much to the frustration of Ba'ath party officials both in Moscow and in Baghdad.⁸¹⁸ They did not

⁸¹⁷ Within Jordan, 21 different parties, including Democratic, students, socialists, Islamic, Palestinian, Youth Groups and Unity groups were courted. Other parties located with Tunisia, Mauritania, and Algeria can be found within these documents. The list provided here does not include every political party courted by the Iraqis. It will take much work to fully understand just how far these courtships went. Foreign Parties, 1993/7/19, 0101-0105, BRCC 100-3-5, HB, HIA.

⁸¹⁸ Attack, 1988/9/20, 0054-0059, BRCC 3854-0001, HB, HIA.

believe that the perpetrators were professionals, given that they left fingerprints behind. However, Iraqi intelligence believed the incident to be politically motivated, and perhaps even sanctioned by the Soviets, given Moscow's anger with the high level of Iraqi activity in the country. Moscow's apathy, and even intransigence, signaled that Iraq had brought this upon itself. From the Kremlin's perspective, this attack may have been justified given the high level of activity sustained by the OI in the Soviet Union.

The Soviets were also uneasy with the ambassador's relationship with the OI.⁸¹⁹ Therefore, the Iraqi intelligence service suggested that the ambassador be relieved of responsibility for the OI. Not only would this change allow the ambassador to focus on his primary responsibility—to maintain and advance Iraqi-Soviet relations—but it would give the Iraqi ambassador leeway and separation from the activities of the OI.⁸²⁰ Party officials in Baghdad supported this suggestion. Since the OI was connected to intelligence operations, the Council argued that the Ba'ath party should refrain from personally nominating political appointees from within the party to the OIs. The objective, it appears, was to curtail the suspicions of the host countries' intelligence services. The Iraqi government did not want host countries to assume that all members of the Ba'ath Party who were working abroad were necessarily intelligence operatives.⁸²¹

⁸¹⁹ Embassy attack on 1988/9/2, 1989/1/25, 0254-0255, BRCC 021-1-4, HB, HIA.

⁸²⁰ Iraqi Embassy in Moscow, 1989/1/17, 0033-0034, BRCC 3854-0001, HB, HIA. In the report listed between 0054-0059, for other party officials, concerns that it was a professional job were discounted *because* of the fingerprints.

⁸²¹ Party organization in Moscow, 1990/8/13, 0141-0142, BRCC 3268-0002, HB, HIA. Information, 1989/1/25, 0132-0134, BRCC 2679-0000, HB, HIA. Iraqi Embassy in Moscow break-in, 1988/10/1-18, 0143-0144, BRCC 2679-0000, HB, HIA.

The Iraqis eventually met with members of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but the Soviets said they were unable to provide any information on the perpetrators. Along with Soviet promises to provide extra security, the embassy was to add new lighting in the back area of the embassy, including spotlights, as well as to fit iron bars to the windows on the lower floors. Technicians from the Iraqi intelligence services were also dispatched to the embassy to inspect all equipment and reinforce security measures. Baghdad also reduced the number of Soviets employed by the embassy, including drivers, replacing them with Iraqis living in the Soviet Union.⁸²²

It appears that after this break-in incident Baghdad moved to separate the OI apparatus from the Embassy organization, heeding proposals to give the Ambassador cause for denial—the Iraqis wanted to continue their political operations in Moscow, but they did not want to risk jeopardizing their entire diplomatic mission. However, this did not mean an automatic resumption of Iraqi intelligence operations. The Iraqis were not free to operate without scrutiny from the Soviets. The embassy reported as much, informing Baghdad that specific Iraqis—who were likely working for Iraqi intelligence—required special approval from Soviet authorities to travel to different cities within the Soviet Union.⁸²³ Despite the tension over the 1988 embassy incident, the two countries continued their diplomatic relationship. The Iraqis received the new

⁸²² Report/Recommendation List, 1989/6/28 (1989/1/8 is listed on 033) 0030-0031, BRCC 3854-0001, HB, HIA. Replacing Soviet users with Iraqis living in the Soviet Union, 1989/4/8, 0048, BRCC 3854-0001, HB, HIA. 0030-0031 also details the Iraqi bureaucracy involved in this incident. The full report on this incident, along with other inquiries and recommendations, can be found throughout 0031-0061. Details of the break-in can be found in 0055-0059.

⁸²³ The embassy did mention the difficulty of expanding and working within the Soviet Union, given its sheer size. Migration regulations, 1989/1/28, 0230, BRCC 3751-0000, HB, HIA. Other suggestions can be found at Soviet arena/suggestion, 1989/8/3-13, 0233-0236, BRCC 3751-0000, HB, HIA.

Soviet ambassador to Iraq in July 1989; the two countries exchanged diplomatic pleasantries, including customary expressions of “friendship and cooperation.”⁸²⁴

Like other OIs, OI Moscow continued to run political and intelligence operations while simultaneously courting sympathetic Russians who were sympathetic to Iraq’s cause. In August 1990, the OI was staffed by a party administrator, ambassador, two division commanders, five team members, 22 organization members, and 300 supporters spread throughout the U.S.S.R., its cities and republics. Heeding their lessons from the 1988 break-in, Baghdad sought to limit its direct meddling in OI affairs, choosing to minimize attention to Ba’thists abroad by limiting its hand in nominating party members to certain posts. The quality of candidates was taken by the party to be more important than their number, a care that might reduce the prospect of jeopardizing missions. OI staff were posted as cultural attachés to give them diplomatic cover in Moscow; this also gave the ambassador more leeway if Soviet intelligence became suspicious.⁸²⁵ Like their fellow OIs within the Eastern bloc, OI Moscow had the difficult task of trying to navigate political turmoil within the Soviet Union. Unfortunately for Iraqis based in Moscow, their task was even more difficult given Baghdad’s decision to invade Kuwait. This invasion triggered international sanctions against the regime, which put a strain on Baghdad’s coffers. As a consequence, OI salaries were cut down and a policy of reducing expenses was implemented.⁸²⁶

⁸²⁴ Exchanges of thanks, greeting card, circa 1989/7/30, 0224-0226, (0025 is the Russian version), 0227-0028, BRCC 3685-0001, HB, HIA.

⁸²⁵ Party Organization in Moscow, 1990/8/8, 0083-0084, BRCC 2679-0000, HB, HIA. For America, see 0086-0087 in the same document batch. Placement, 1989/2/10, 0089-0090, BRCC 2679-0000, HB, HIA.

⁸²⁶ Many Iraqis complained they could not pay for their families’ needs at home. Party reports, 1992/12/24, 0798-0800, BRCC 033-4-2, HB, HIA.

The Iraqis were eager to figure out how and who was going to attain power and what exactly was to take shape in Moscow after the break-up of the Soviet Union—would communism return? Would democracy win the day? Would anarchy ensue? No matter who was to emerge in charge, the Iraqis were looking to receive, if not more, at least the same level of support from Moscow as they had gotten before the Berlin Wall fell. The OI reported back to Baghdad any Russian press interviews and other reports from Russian media concerning Russian support and sympathy for Iraq.⁸²⁷ In one example, the Iraqis were especially pleased to learn that the Liberal Democratic Party had sent letters to the U.S., French, and British governments to protest recent action against Iraq in the aftermath of the 1992 airstrikes.⁸²⁸

OI Moscow, however, remained plagued by infighting and bureaucratic messiness. In 1988 and 1989, the embassy requested more staffers and officials, including the permanent assignment of a Ba‘th Party member to the staff, even going as far as to recommend specific persons to be assigned.⁸²⁹ The OI cited its work as near the branch level as justification for this request.⁸³⁰ The request was denied, but concessions were offered. Two different staffers in Moscow would be assigned to complete OI tasks. This was not enough for the OI, which then sought out new avenues within the Regional Command to attain this permanent staffing.⁸³¹ In the aftermath of Soviet clampdown on Iraqi actions in Moscow in the aftermath of the 1988

⁸²⁷ Television tapes, interviews, January-February 1993, 0505, 0508, 0510, BRCC 033-4-2, HB, HIA.

⁸²⁸ Letters of Protests, 1993/1/24, 0657, BRCC 033-4-2, HB, HIA.

⁸²⁹ Nomination, 1988/7/12, 0256-0257, BRCC 3680-0001, HB, HIA.

⁸³⁰ According to Helfont, “It should be noted that there was one small anomaly. In Iraq, a branch would not normally report to another branch, but the branch in charge of Iraqis in Russia reported to a branch in the regional command secretariat in Baghdad.” Helfont, “Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba‘th Party as a Transnational Actor,” 235n31.

⁸³¹ Nomination, 2-5 June 1989, 0245-0246, BRCC 3680-0001, HB, HIA.

embassy break-in, the cultural office and Iraqi ambassador clashed over splitting duties, each resenting the other's authority.⁸³² In another instance, a party comrade within the leadership purchased unnecessary furniture and a car with party funds. Authorities in Baghdad chided that "there is no need for furniture at the residence and a private car."⁸³³

Bureaucratic disputes also continued between Iraqis based in Moscow and Baghdad. In one case, after completing his fellowship in Russia, an Iraqi Ba' thist sought to continue living and working in Moscow. The Ministry of Oil, his patron, wanted to bring him back to Baghdad, prompting the party member to seek assistance through various other channels within Iraqi capital. As Samuel Helfont argues, "a Ba' thist in Russia could use the party to circumvent his own bosses in the ministry...."⁸³⁴ In another instance, the Iraqi Atomic Energy Organization (IAEO) petitioned Baghdad directly after the embassy in Moscow did not reply to their requests to provide travel vouchers to travel to Russia for a member of their organization and his family. In response, the branch leadership in Baghdad asked the IAEO to work with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to compel the embassy in Moscow to issue the necessary travel documents.⁸³⁵

Personnel issues strained the missions too. Although it carried out sophisticated political operations, the OI struggled with the quality of embassy and diplomatic staff. In one instance, the Iraqi ambassador to Russia was placed under surveillance by the Iraqi state for suspicious behavior; it is ironic that those reporting on him to Iraqi security services were members of his own staff. He was then documented as meeting with Iraqi Communists in Moscow, not to gauge

⁸³² The bureaucratic infighting is thick as weeds. For more see, the following pages within BRCC 2679-000, HB, HIA: 008, 0083-084, 0085, 0086-0087, 0088-0089, 0090, 0091-0096, 0100-0106, 0111-0112, 0116, 0119, 0122, 0124, 0126, 0128-0134, 0135-137, 0137-0139, 0140, 0143-0146.

⁸³³ Cash transfer, 1989/5/14, 0211, BRCC 3854-0001, HB, HIA.

⁸³⁴ Helfont, "Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba' th Party as a Transnational Actor," 243.

⁸³⁵ Authorization, Iraqi Atomic Energy Organization, 1998/4/11, 0090-0098, BRCC 3553-0000, HB, HIA.

their interest in Iraqi affairs but to “satisfy his personal and sexual desires.” As it turns out, he was using these meetings to rendezvous with female Iraqi students in Moscow. Issues of the ambassador’s personal conduct continued, and his behavior caught the attention of the Russian authorities. One night the ambassador and his driver, after a night of heavy partying and drinking, not only crashed their car but also managed to engage themselves in a shootout with the Russian police officers who were trying to stop them. Although the ambassador managed to escape and slip back into the embassy, Russian tabloids picked up the news and ran numerous stories on the incident, much to the frustration of the Iraqis and to the glee of the Russians, judging by the tabloid-like quality of the stories.⁸³⁶ Defections and the diaspora grew as well, further complicating the OI’s mission and stature. The OI’s central headquarters in Baghdad removed from the official list of personnel one member who was based in OI Moscow because, apparently in chronological order, he failed to attend party meetings, ceased paying his party dues, skipped out on his military service, married a Russian woman, and then escaped to Sweden.⁸³⁷

Despite these difficulties, OI Moscow continued to perform its mission. Policy, personnel, and missions fluctuated among the OIs, and between the OIs and Baghdad. Examining OI Czech Republic, based in Prague, demonstrates this. For example, it had connections with OI Moscow, and military officers transferred between Baghdad and OI Czech Republic.⁸³⁸ OI Prague coordinated with Iraqis and other members of the Arab community living

⁸³⁶ Information, dated 1992/8/5, 0126, BRCC 3390-0003, HB, HIA.

⁸³⁷ Removal, 4/14/1994, 0170, BRCC 3770-0003, HB, HIA.

⁸³⁸ Recall, 1992/2/22, 0109, BRCC 2211-0000, HB, HIA, Transfer and voucher request, 1987/6/19, 0493, BRCC 2878-0002, HB, HIA. Relations with the Czechs were not always smooth. The Iraqis were embarrassed during the then Czechoslovakian Prime Minister’s visit to Iraq in 1989 when he confronted the Iraqis over their lack of commitment to paying back loans issued by Prague. This apparently triggered questions, in the orders of the

in the Czech Republic just as OI Moscow did in Russia. Reports on Iraqi government employees, party affiliates and members, and other Iraqis were compiled and relayed back to Baghdad.⁸³⁹ Just as Saddam's system operated in Baghdad, intelligence was gathered by Iraqis trained as spies as well as by ordinary Iraqis. Intelligence was also collected on other Arabs or persons deemed to be of interest to the Ba'athists.⁸⁴⁰ As the diaspora of Iraqis fleeing Iraq and Saddam grew in the 1990s, the Ba'athist regime resorted to creating and implementing more channels of control; simply leaving Iraq did not mean that an Iraqi had escaped the eyes of the regime.⁸⁴¹

To make it appear as if the Ba'athists had more global support than they really did, the Ba'athist regime used Iraqi-controlled or Iraqi-influenced civil societies, whatever their own beliefs and wishes were, to promote Ba'athist interests overseas. Groups of Iraqis such as the General Union of Farmers and the General Union of Cooperative Agricultural Societies in Moscow wrote to the Russian, U.S., and various other governments on behalf of Iraq, protesting sanctions and American hostility towards Iraq.⁸⁴² Iraqis living abroad were encouraged to find

Ba'athists, "among the diplomatic spheres and was explained as a failed visit." Although meetings with various deputies and subordinate committees smoothed out some of this tension, future meetings were insisted upon, by both sides. The Czechoslovakians wanted to be paid back, and the Iraqis did not want to lose their economic relations due to unpaid debt. Visit of Czechoslovakia Prime Minister to Iraq and the meetings of the Iraqi-Czechoslovakian Joint Committee, 1989/11/19, 0260-0261, BRCC 3809-0001, HB, HIA.

⁸³⁹ The Ba'ath party was a multi-tiered party in that there were multiple levels of membership. Starting with the lowest ranked member, the party membership hierarchy is as follows: sympathizer, supporter, advanced supporters, candidate, apprenticed member, active member, division member, section member, branch member, and then finally secretary general. Saddam Hussein held the position of Secretary General. See photo 0180 in BRCC 005-3-3, HB, HIA as cited in Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime*, 45-52.

⁸⁴⁰ General connections, 1993/4/27, 0329, BRCC 3342-0003, HB, HIA.

⁸⁴¹ For more, see Helfont, "Authoritarianism Beyond Borders: The Iraqi Ba'ath Party as a Transnational Actor."

⁸⁴² Results, 2002/7/1, 0290, BRCC 3018-000, HB, HIA.

and recruit local groups, media affiliates, religious community members, student groups, unions, and politicians to join the Iraqi cause against the sanctions. Student organizations in Greece and the United Kingdom, for example, were encouraged to write directly to the Clinton administration or to contact officials of their own local government to petition against the U.S. sanctions. These groups were encouraged to stress the suffering of the people of Iraq and to call for the immediate end to the humanitarian crisis caused directly by what the Iraqis called “American aggression.”⁸⁴³

In one example, Ba‘thist affiliates located in Jordan, upon instruction from Baghdad, wrote to the President of Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel, asking the Czechs to cry out against the “American conspiracy against Iraq” and to condemn the suffering of over “12 million Iraqis” from the sanctions. In the same letter, these Jordanians went so far as to ask the Czechs in helping to “liberate” Iraq from the so-called conspiracy.⁸⁴⁴ But over time not everything worked in Iraq’s favor. In October 1998, the Iraqis learned of a deal made between the U.S. and Czech governments to allow Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE), whose headquarters had been moved to Prague in 1995, to begin broadcasting messages into Iraq. Saddam was so incensed at this decision that OIs were ordered to begin operations to discredit the Czechs, with instructions to call for “mass organizations and Arab residents abroad to express their protest to the Czech embassies wherever they may.”⁸⁴⁵ Saddam also allegedly ordered Iraqi intelligence services to attack RFE headquarters; their plot to use RPGs was foiled by Czech intelligence services.⁸⁴⁶

⁸⁴³ Letters/telegraphs, 1992-1993, 0738-0739, 0822, BRCC 033-4-2, HB, HIA.

⁸⁴⁴ Relations with the Czech Republic, 1998/11/18, 0044-0051, BRCC 3398-0001, HB, HIA.

⁸⁴⁵ Relations with the Czech Republic, 1998/10/18, 0069, BRCC 3398-0001, HB, HIA.

⁸⁴⁶ Maysoun Abo al-Hab, “Czech Intelligence Reveals Iraqi Plot To Attack RFE/RL,” *Radio Free Europe*, November 30, 2009, https://www.rferl.org/a/Czech_Intelligence_Reveals_Iraqi_Plot_To_Attack_RFERL/1891512.html. For more on Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, see Ross A. Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: the C.I.A.*

Since the 1992 southern no-fly zone was neither sanctioned nor implemented by the United Nations, the Iraqis were interested to know how the Russians would interpret “the [cowardly] American aggression.” Although the Ba‘thist party noticed that the “official stance of the Russian leadership justified the aggression,” it also noted that some individual ministers—the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, and even the Vice President—condemned the Americans. The Russian Parliament and various political parties and their leaders all dissented from the official Russian government position, and many voiced sympathy and support for the Iraqi cause.⁸⁴⁷ The Iraqis were quick to notice divisions between the Russian Foreign Ministry and the rest of the Russian government—the former refused to condemn the Americans outright while the latter were incensed, some even calling for officials the Foreign Ministry to resign.⁸⁴⁸

The OI in Moscow was pleased to receive support from ordinary Russians of “different ages and professions,” as well as support from “Chechnya, Tatarstan, and the Ukraine.”⁸⁴⁹ More important was the reaction by Russian media. The Iraqis noted that there were two interpretations: The first was from “the newspapers of the national powers and parties condemned the aggression and dismissed the American justifications considering the attack as a violation of the international laws, while the second is [from] the newspapers and magazines

Years and Beyond. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010; Richard Cummings, “The Ether War: Hostile Intelligence Activities Directed Against Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, and the Émigré Community in Munich during the Cold War.” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*. 6, 2 (2008): 168-182.

⁸⁴⁷ This included the Russian Communist Party, the National Rescue Front, the Democratic Liberal Party, the Russian National Reunion Party, the Christian Democratic Movement, the Peace Today Movement, the National Russian Youth Front, the Working Russian Movement, and the Union of Russian Officers.

⁸⁴⁸ These groups included Russian Communist Party, National Rescue Front, the Democratic Liberal Party, the Russian National Reunion Party, The Christian Democratic Movement, Peace Today movement, the National Russian Youth front, the Working Russian Movement, and the Union of Russian Officers. Reactions, 20/8/1992, 0196-0201, BRCC 100-3-5, HB, HIA.

⁸⁴⁹ Reactions, dated 8/20/1992, BRCC 0197-201, Batch 100-3-5, HB, HIA.

speaking for the government and which generally employees journalists with antagonistic views to Arab and Iraqi issues...most of [these journalists] are Jews.”⁸⁵⁰ The Iraqis were long obsessed with the actions and rhetoric of the “Zionist entity,” that is, the State of Israel. In the 1990s, their concern turned also to the alleged “Zionist” influences both inside and outside Russia. In a 1990 report discussing Zionism and Jewish migration to Palestine, the Ba‘thists viewed “Soviet migration to the Zionist Entity [as] one of the most dangerous migration types....” The same reports cited figures from the Israeli government which estimated the arrival of over 750,000 Soviet Jews to Israel by 1996. These numbers, according to the Iraqis, revealed the “magnitude of the conspiracy that is being executed to make demographic changes in Palestine and especially the West Bank and Gaza,” as if Russian Jewish migration to Israel was an indication of a strengthening Russian-Israeli relationship.⁸⁵¹

This focus on Russian media and “Zionist” influences was part of the Iraqi state’s “political operations” abroad. According to Samuel Helfont, the goal for these operations was to influence “the internal politics of other states to help Iraq achieve its strategic goals,” and this included everything from “espionage, to planted stories in the foreign press, establishing overt and covert relations with various parties, and attempting to silence anyone who disrupted their preferred political narrative.”⁸⁵² In 1992, the Iraqi ambassador in Moscow reported that Russia is

⁸⁵⁰ Reactions, dated 8/20/1992, BRCC 0197-201, Batch 100-3-5, HB, HIA.

⁸⁵¹ Zionist, Jewish migration, 1990/6/7, 0059, BRCC 2465-0001, HB, HIA. However, in another report, the Iraqis argued that the Soviets were being pressured by the Americans to allow for immigration to the “Zionist entity.” A Study on Russia and Perestroika, the New Political Russians Environment, Russian Jews in Palestine, the goals of the Russian Jews, and international and Arab opinions on Russian Jewish immigration to Palestine, 1990/6/7, 0046-0069, BRCC 2465-0001, HB, HIA.

⁸⁵² Samuel Helfont, “Iraq’s Real Weapons Of Mass Destruction Were ‘Political Operations’,” *War On The Rocks*, 26 February 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/02/iraqs-real-weapons-mass-destruction-political-operations/>

“totally influenced by American and Zionist policy...especially in the ministries of external affairs, the economy, and official media channels.”⁸⁵³ The Iraqis were looking for support against claims that the Iraqi regime was persecuting the Shi‘a in southern Iraq when they sent an invitation to the Russian Parliament to present their evidence. However, the Russians ignored this.⁸⁵⁴

These Iraqi political operations collected information on political, economic, religious, educational, and media institutions in Russia which had pro-Iraqi sentiments, and they courted them for friendship and continuing ties. In the media, Iraqis showed interest in newspapers such as the *Russian Bulletin*, *Soviet Russia Newspaper*, *Patriot Soviet*, *Young Guard*, *Belarus’ Slavic Telescope*, and *Light of Islam*, a newspaper in Dagestan. Russian political leaders of all ideologies—nationalist parties, communist, liberal democratic, unionist, and socialist—were both studied by these Iraqi operatives. Since Baghdad was unsure how this new Russia would unfold, the Iraqis sought meetings with political leaders who favored Soviet communism as well as political leaders who supported the Russian Federation. The Iraqis hoped that Sergey Baburin, an opposition leader in the Duma who was very nationalistic, favored the Soviet Union, and opposed Yeltsin, would have a bright future.⁸⁵⁵ They also hoped that the leader of the Freedom Party at the time had a decent chance for success in the new regime. The Iraqis reached out to pro-Iraqi Russian oil and technological firms, as well as powerful Christian groups in Russia. They also connected with members of academia in Russia, including many professors specializing in diplomacy and international relations at the American University in Moscow.⁸⁵⁶

⁸⁵³ Annual Political Report, 1992, dated 1/1/1993, BRCC 0663-0665, 033-4-2, HB, HIA.

⁸⁵⁴ Annual Political Report, 1992, dated 1/1/1993, BRCC 0663-0665, 033-4-2, HB, HIA.

⁸⁵⁵ Baburin ran in the 2018 Russian Presidential election, but only garnered less than 3% of the vote.

⁸⁵⁶ Movement, dated 5/22/1993, BRCC 0278-0282, 3370-0003, HB, HIA.

The Reorientation of Russia

Russian nationalists were soon frustrated with the political and economic chaos in Russia, and they yearned to return to the perceived glory days of the old Soviet Union. These nationalists made significant political headway. In 1993, elections were held for the Duma, the Russian parliament, in the aftermath of a major constitutional crisis in 1993. The crisis had been triggered by Yeltsin's market-oriented economic program. Yeltsin's program, later described by others as "shock therapy," saw government spending severely reduced and new taxes implemented. The results were traumatic for Russian citizens—by 1999, the GDP had fallen by more than 40%, hyperinflation ran wild, mortality rates had increased, and there were decreases in the standard of living and in life expectancy. As a result of this program—Yeltsin's own Vice President called the economic program a "genocide"—the Duma moved to reel in the President's powers, thus triggering the crisis. Yeltsin ultimately survived, but the nationalists emerged as a growing and increasingly powerful force to be reckoned with.⁸⁵⁷

The year 1993 was crucial for the Russian-Iraqi relationship, and Iraq keenly watched the constitutional crisis and the 1993 elections. Although still incensed by the snubbing they endured between 1990 and 1992, the Iraqis were never quite willing to walk away from the Russians entirely, especially when they were under severe sanctions. Iraq paid close attention to all political parties, not just the nationalists. They abhorred the ideology, but the Ba'athists still paid close attention to the Communist Party, another force gaining traction due to the worsening

⁸⁵⁷ Juliet Johnson, *A Fistful of Rubles: The Rise and Fall of the Russian Banking System*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000. Celestine Bohlen, "Yeltsin Deputy Calls Reforms 'Economic Genocide'" *NYT*, February 9, 1992, <https://nyti.ms/2urZEKU>. Margaret Shapiro and Fred Hiatt, "Russian Legislature Moves Against Yeltsin," *The Washington Post*, March 22, 1993.

economic situation.⁸⁵⁸ They also hoped that Yevgeny Primakov would play a crucial role at this time, a hope that came to fruition later when Primakov was named Foreign Minister in 1996. Primakov's support for Iraq never wavered, and the Ba'athists hoped that his role in Russian politics could help to reshape the debate over sanctions.⁸⁵⁹

The nationalists emerged victorious in the 1993 parliamentary elections. Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia and Yegor Gaidar's Russia's Choice Party emerged as the front-runners.⁸⁶⁰ The Iraqis were delighted—Zhirinovsky had previously spoken out against the no-fly zones and the downing of the Iraqi pilot in December 1992. Saddam had also earlier predicted that, even if the nationalists did not win, Iraq would still see “an accelerated development of relation with Iraq...due to historical relations between Russia and Iraq, and due to geographic location of Russia and its closeness to the region, Russia will strive to be one of the superpowers whether in this era or any other era, any Russian president will always strive to forge advanced relations with Iraq...”⁸⁶¹ The OI scrambled to coordinate sending the appropriate congratulations to Zhirinovsky, and finally settled on sending him roses.⁸⁶² From then on, the

⁸⁵⁸ Communist Party in Russia, 1993/2/13-14, 0093, 0095, BRCC 033-4-2, HB, HIA.

⁸⁵⁹ CRRC SH-SHTP-D-000-797, Saddam Hussein and Iraqi Commanders Discussing Weapons Inspections and how the United States intends to continue the Sanctions on Iraq, circa 1994.

⁸⁶⁰ An ultranationalist party with authoritarian leanings, the Liberal Democratic Party has been described as neither “liberal” nor “democratic,” when rather, the party ideology was centered on creating a new Russian empire. See Stephen E Hanson, *Post-Imperial Democracies: Ideology and Party Formation in Third Republic France, Weimar Germany, and Post-Soviet Russia*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Donald J. Raleigh, *Soviet Baby Boomers: An Oral History of Russia's Cold War Generation*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁸⁶¹ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-973, Saddam Hussein presides over a meeting with the Revolutionary Command Council and Ministers Council regarding the economic situation in Iraq, circa 1992-1993.

⁸⁶² Parliamentary elections in Russia, 1994/1/12, 0657, 660-663, BRCC 3770-0003, HB, HIA.

Iraqis followed Zhirinovskiy's party even more closely, tracking employees and sending Iraqi delegations to party conferences and conventions.⁸⁶³

From 1993 onward, the nationalists in Russia could not be ignored, much to the joy of Iraq and to the dismay of Yeltsin and his liberal followers. Thanks to outrage over the 1992 airstrikes and the growing strength of the nationalists, the Russians “diplomatically apologized” for snubbing Iraq in 1993, according to the Ba‘thists. The Russians also agreed to address the concerns of Iraqi diplomats. The Iraqi ambassador in Moscow noted that “a vast majority of the Russian people [have] started to understand the fair position of Iraq. [They are] feeling that the position of Russia towards Iraq is wrong and continuing with it means inflicting damage not only to the Iraqi People but to the interests of the Russian People.” Russian citizens, according to the ambassador, were tiring of the opposition embracing Iraq—as evident in their protests within the media. They also worried that Russia was going to lose even more international prestige by rejecting Iraq.⁸⁶⁴

For the nationalists, the U.S. bombing of Iraq in June 1993—ordered by President Bill Clinton as retaliation for Iraq’s alleged attempt to assassinate George H.W. Bush during his visit to Kuwait—was an abomination and the final straw.⁸⁶⁵ Not to miss a chance to one-up Moscow and to test the mettle of the new Russia, Saddam addressed the Iraqi nation, linking Russian government to the 1993 attacks. He asked, “what do the Americans, the British, and the French,

⁸⁶³ [No subject line], 1994/3/28, 0214-0215, BRCC 2696-0002, HB, HIA. CRRC SH-IISX-D-001-320, MIC memos and chemical inventory sheets, these chemicals are used to manufacture of bombs, 02/08/1998.

⁸⁶⁴ Annual Political Report, 1992, dated 1/1/1993, BRCC 0663-0665, 033-4-2, HB, HIA.

⁸⁶⁵ Gwen Ifill, “Raid on Baghdad; U.S. Fires Missiles at Baghdad, Citing April Plot to Kill Bush,” *NYT*, June 27, 1993, <https://nyti.ms/2HMMqfq>

and the Russians, who joined in their [despicable conspiracy] have to say? What do they have to say to their peoples this time, and how can they convince the world public?"⁸⁶⁶

The Russians and Iraqis began re-orienting their alliance. To Baghdad's delight, Iraqi diplomats were received by Russian parliamentary officials, and prominent Russians began attending Iraqi events. For example, in 1994, the Russians took part in Iraqi anniversary celebrations of the "Mother of All Battles"—Saddam's name for the Gulf War 1990-1991—hosted by the Iraqi-Russian Friendship Association. As noted by OI Moscow, important parliamentary figures as well as the Iraqi community in Moscow attended.⁸⁶⁷ Following high-level meetings between the Iraqis and Russia, both in their respective countries as well as in the Czech Republic, the Russians began supporting Iraq in the United Nations, joining in the latter's efforts to have sanctions lifted and to end the global embargo against Iraqi oil. This pressure included Russian promises to challenge the defense of the sanctions put forward on the basis of international law and suggestions to lift the embargo after certain time limits.⁸⁶⁸ During the October 1994 Kuwaiti-Iraqi border crisis, the Russians dispatched Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev to Baghdad, a move which angered the Clinton administration but also gave Russia more credibility with the Ba'athists.⁸⁶⁹

The Russians saw economic benefits to renewing this relationship as well. At the same time when oil deals with Iraq were signed in 1995, Moscow began moving for the restitution of

⁸⁶⁶ Iraq: INA reports Saddam Address to Nation, 17 January 1993, Iraq Attach (1/17/93) Special Channel, OA/ID 91154-007, Special Separate Channel Files 91154/Box 47, Brent Scowcroft Files, GHWBL.

⁸⁶⁷ Solidarity Festival, 1994/2/13, 0376-0377, BRCC 3770-0003, HB, HIA.

⁸⁶⁸ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-190, Saddam Hussein meeting with Taha Mouhe, Tariq, Ali Hassan, Saady Mandy, Abd Al-Ghani and Abd AL-Ghafur, 7 July 1994.

⁸⁶⁹ Michael Gordon, "U.S. Sends Force as Iraqi Soldiers Threaten Kuwait," *NYT*, October 8, 1994, <https://nyti.ms/2pIHvDN>

the \$7 billion debt Iraq owed the Kremlin for the Iran-Iraq War.⁸⁷⁰ Given Russia's dire financial situation, the \$7 billion was desperately needed. The Iraqis also considered giving Russia as well as France first priority and other advantages for potential contracts in the agricultural and oil sectors in Iraq. In an October 1994 meeting with Saddam and other high-ranking Ba'ath Party officials, the Iraqi Minister of Oil remarked: "The Russians are now in need of \$80 billion, so they can develop their oil fields and bring them back to the previous production levels.... The Russians will not come to us, but I think we should propose to them a favorable offer and give them priority." Because most Russian companies were owned by the government, he added, giving them first priority should enable the Iraqis to see enormous political and financial gains. The Minister continued: "They are very influential on the ministry of transportation, regardless of who the [prime] minister is...and even on the president himself. Sir, if we were to sign contracts with these companies tomorrow, then they would definitely influence the political and economic decisions [in Russia]; and they would keep that influence for the next five or six years to come. It is true that the Russians lack the technology, but they will bring over Western companies to invest and these Western companies will bring that technology with them."⁸⁷¹

It is hard to say with absolute certainty why Russia decided to re-affirm its alliances with Iraq—most analysis and evidence comes from subjective sources, and Russian government documents are not easily accessible. However, the argument here is that in the Cold War the Soviets saw both economic and ideological potential in collaborating with Iraq, and, even when the ideological goals faded away, the Soviets still favored Iraq. There is little to no doubt that Iraq had immense economic and strategic value, given its vast oil reserves and location in the

⁸⁷⁰ Ismael and Kreutz, "Russian-Iraqi Relations: A Historical and Political Analysis," 95-97.

⁸⁷¹ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-533, Saddam Hussein meeting with Council of Ministers discussing the Euphrates River, agricultural development, oil field development, and foreign economic policy, 19 October 1994.

Gulf region. And although Saddam had proven difficult to work with, both during and after the fall of the U.S.S.R., it was a relationship from which the Russians, many of whom had served for or worked within the former Soviet system, could not easily walk away. For an emerging Russian Federation, with an economy barely hanging on by a thread, Iraq's economic potential represented a lifeline that it could not easily ignore.

But it was more than just economics. The Americans did emerge as the global superpower. The rise of the Russian Federation from the remains of the Soviet Union did not wipe the slate in Moscow. The Russian Federation had lost a vast sweep of land, but elites, backed by those with economic and military influence, still controlled the country's population. The system that emerged in Russia favored those with personal connections (or *wasta*, as it is termed in the Middle East), just as the system in the Soviet Union had. Russia had not even cared much about "socialism" in Iraq before the collapse of the U.S.S.R., so there was no need to care about it now that the Soviet Union had collapsed. Both the U.S.S.R. and Russian Federation sought to preserve, advance, and protect their national interests. The new ideology in Russia was nationalism, shown in a desire to return to the days of when countries, including the United States, thought twice before challenging Moscow. Most nationalists knew that they did not yet have the power to challenge the Americans directly; they were also restrained by the liberals who supported Yeltsin's government.

In October 1994, Saddam dispatched elements of his elite Republican Guard to the Kuwaiti border. Whether it was intended to be a show of force, or a "bluff intended to encourage the United Nations Security Council to lift economic sanctions," as journalist Michael Gordon articulated, Saddam's moves prompted the Americans to respond by deploying their own

forces.⁸⁷² The Russians, for their part, dispatched Foreign Minister Kozyrev to Baghdad. As a result of Kozyrev's visit, the Iraqis withdrew their forces and, for the first time, officially recognized the border between Kuwait and Iraq. The Americans were none too pleased with this cooperation. Even Saddam believed that Russia was using Iraq to challenge the United States, adding that the Americans were a "little perturbed that Russia might play a big role" regarding Iraqi affairs.⁸⁷³

Saddam Hussein sought to use Russia's desire to reclaim its glory days and to recover from economic disaster for Iraq's gain. Saddam sought to tip the scales in the global debates over how to handle Iraq by leveraging Iraqi oil. In the same sense that Russia, like China and France, was using the United Nations Security Council to undermine the U.S.'s determination to uphold the legality of the sanctions, Saddam sought to do the same. In conversation with his cabinet ministers following the 1994 Kuwaiti border crisis, he said:

We are determined to give Russia an opportunity to do what it has to do politically, and to come up with a strong push in this regard, that all of this should be managed within the international laws at hand and the laws set up by the United Nations convention, and that no one should embarrass the other.... In conclusion, the Middle East area and more precisely the oil area have a connection with this description in terms of reducing the powers of these great nations, it takes part in empowering these great nations or it can weaken it... .⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁷² Michael Gordon, "U.S. Sends Force as Iraqi Soldiers Threaten Kuwait," *NYT*, October 8, 1994, <https://nyti.ms/2pIHvDN>

⁸⁷³ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-494, Saddam Hussein Meeting with Cabinet Members to Discuss Recent United Nations Resolutions and the Relationship between Iraq and Kuwait, 13 October 1994. For Tariq Aziz's comments on the issue, see CRRC SH-SHTP-V-001-589, A conference headed by Saddam Hussein and high-ranking officials about the 1991 Gulf war, and the Iraqi-Kuwaiti war, 25 October 1994.

⁸⁷⁴ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-494, Saddam Hussein Meeting with Cabinet Members to Discuss Recent United Nations Resolutions and the Relationship between Iraq and Kuwait, 13 October 1994.

Saddam was also keenly aware of the legacy of the relationship between Moscow and Baghdad, a legacy he sought to emphasize and use to shape Russian reorientation towards Iraq. In conversations much earlier with Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev and First Secretary Alexei Kosygin, Saddam had emphasized the need for the U.S.S.R.'s friendship with Iraq and the Third World. However, he had added that "most of your friends cost you: there are some that you carry on your back, whether it's for war, financially, expertise, or something else. You need friends that you pick and place in the first row, friends to focus on in the pattern of friendship, whereby you present them to the world as a standard—a standard of success—and with that your burden will decrease.... And your influence will increase."⁸⁷⁵ In this sense, Saddam knew that all relationships cost both (or all) their members something. The Iraqis, therefore, continued to offer Russia the chance to reap the rewards for this relationship, however tumultuous it had been in the past and might be in the future. Access to more oil and a chance to reclaim their prestige would be too much for the Russians to turn down.

By advocating for Iraq on a global stage, the Russians sought to take advantage of Iraq's isolation. This might draw political and economic favors from Baghdad, but it also challenged the Americans through legitimate means—the United Nations. By using the U.N. as the means by which to contain Iraq, the Americans had set the stage for the Russians, French, and Chinese to challenge them through the same legitimate means and channels that the United States had sought to command. In this sense, while the Iraqis were using the Russians to challenge the Americans, the Russians were using the Iraqis to do the very same thing. Just as in the Cold War, so now, mistrust and convenience went hand in hand. To the extent that rising American

⁸⁷⁵ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-494, Saddam Hussein Meeting with Cabinet Members to Discuss Recent United Nations Resolutions and the Relationship between Iraq and Kuwait, 13 October 1994.

hegemony revived concerns and tensions generated in the era of the Cold War, both Moscow and Baghdad played against it, exploiting it to advance their own interests. As Saddam argued in the aftermath of the First Gulf War, Russia was once “sleeping” but was now “thinking about how to build relations with Iraq, in order to have an effect on the region.” For this purpose, Saddam reasoned Saddam that Iraq “started helping Russia on their role, to gain their role back, not for Russia, but for the Arabs, Iraq, the region, and for humanity.”⁸⁷⁶

Coalition Building Against UNSCOM

Much to Baghdad’s frustration, Russian rapprochement with Iraq did not mean that Moscow was choosing Iraq over the West or even abandoning the West entirely. Rather, the Kremlin was seeking to have it both ways— beneficial relationships with both the West and Iraq. Yeltsin was also trying to balance his liberal supporters and his nationalistic opponents at home. This balancing act would be severely challenged when a U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) investigated Iraq’s alleged development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).⁸⁷⁷ Although many in Moscow firmly believed that Saddam was corrupt, they also believed that he did not have these types of weapons.⁸⁷⁸ The debate within the Russian government was not over whether Saddam had these weapons but rather over how much leeway the Russians should allow Iraq for its weapons programs. Many Russians had keen business interests in the

⁸⁷⁶ CRRC SH-RVCC-A-001-824, Saddam Hussein Meeting with Iraqi Officials Concerning Post-Gulf War Iraq, Date Unknown (post First Gulf War).

⁸⁷⁷ For more, see David Malone, *The International Struggle over Iraq: Politics in the U.N. Security Council 1980-2005*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁸⁷⁸ Mikhail Zygar, *All the Kremlin’s Men: Inside the Court of Vladimir Putin*. (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2017), 36.

country—such as oil companies Lukoil and Zhirinovsky’s conglomerate.⁸⁷⁹ However, the question of how the Russian state should act within the U.N. and how it should deal diplomatically with Iraq divided Russians.

Primakov later claimed that “Russia did everything in its power to get Saddam to pull back from the brink” and that the Russians “[urged] him to refrain from issuing ultimatums to UNSCOM, all while working with UNSCOM to make [significant changes].”⁸⁸⁰ Thanks to Saddam’s Nixon-esque tendency to record his conversations, we now know that Primakov was more than just sympathetic to the Iraqi cause. In 1996, in the midst of the UNSCOM investigation, Saddam and Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz discussed Primakov’s “usefulness” in terms of negotiating with the French, who were in the midst of their own economic difficulties. Primakov appears to have been the middleman between this French-Russian-Iraqi scheme of trading oil for the lifting of sanctions. Richard Butler, the Chairman of UNSCOM, even alleged that Primakov accepted bribes to lobby for Iraq within Russia and abroad.⁸⁸¹

The debates surrounding the UNSCRs against Iraq, the merits of the sanctions, the corruption of the U.N. programs, American intentions, UNSCOM’s reliability and role in the crisis, and changes in policy debates within the U.N. fall way beyond the scope of this work. It is no secret that the Russians were siding with Iraq on the issue of sanctions. For example, the Russians, with French help, orchestrated the deal in which Iraq was to destroy all chemical weapons and close its biological program for the U.N. to lift the embargo. The Russians then

⁸⁷⁹ Susan B. Glasser, “In Zhirinovsky, Hussein Finds a Russian Partner,” *The Washington Post*, September 10, 2002.

⁸⁸⁰ E. M. Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs: behind the Scenes in the Middle East from the Cold War to the Present*. (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 318.

⁸⁸¹ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-143, “Saddam Hussein Meeting with the Revolutionary Council about Relations with the U.N. Security Council,” 1 January 1993. Also see Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*, 283-287.

helped Iraq craft its defense in front of the UNSC, and they also continued to form delegations and committees to stall and question American initiatives; the Russians even passed along communications, signals, and opinions from other UNSC members.⁸⁸²

However, what is clear from the Iraqi side of things is that Russia was not only an active participant in helping Iraq fight sanctions within the U.N. legal structures but also assisted Iraq in skirting sanctions. From arranging political deals to facilitating financial transactions, the Russians were very much involved in circumnavigating the sanctions.⁸⁸³ Russian and Turkish scientists who were working in Iraqi facilities were hidden from IAEA inspectors.⁸⁸⁴ Russian intelligence about U.S. intentions was also being allegedly passed to Iraqi authorities.⁸⁸⁵ Russian military officials were also in talks with the Ba‘th about developing Iraqi defense systems against American cruise missiles. According to captured Ba‘th records, Yeltsin himself approved these negotiations and he sanctioned the Russian defense ministry to pass along “information about the American plan and objectives that the American enemy is hoping to achieve from hitting during the present crisis.” The Russian Military Attaché in Baghdad offered to either “[send] Russian experts to Iraq or [send] Iraqi experts to Russia to benefit from the parts of the missiles that have

⁸⁸² CRRC SH-SHTP-A-000-990, Meeting between the former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his members of command, 1995. CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-481, Meeting between Saddam Hussein and High-Ranking Technical Officers Regarding Iraqi Army Weapons Development, circa 1995. CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-479, Saddam Hussein Discussing U.N. Weapon Inspections and Iraq's Relationship with the West and Russia, undated.

⁸⁸³ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-567, Conversation with Saddam and his cabinet regarding Russian economic, political, and intelligence connections, date unknown. CRRC SH-IMFA-D-000-112, Money transfer regarding United Nations Oil for Food Program, 29 April 2002.

⁸⁸⁴ CRRC SH-MICN-D-001-466, Iraqi Report on a U.N. Weapon Inspection, 2002-12-15.

⁸⁸⁵ CRRC SH-IISX-D-000-679, External Espionage Activities of the Iraqi Intelligence Service (IIS), Recruitment of Foreigners and Building Relations with Prominent Political Figures, May 1998.

been downed by the Iraqi units.”⁸⁸⁶ As the meeting concluded, the Ba‘th asked the Russian Military Attaché to pass a message back to Moscow: “[we] desire to continue to cooperate and [wish] for the return of the Iraqi Russian relations to better than what they were before the immortal Mother of [all] Battles.”⁸⁸⁷

In the October 1994 speech discussed above, Saddam remarked “that no one should embarrass the other.”⁸⁸⁸ This statement is highly emblematic of Iraqi-Russian relationship, then and during the Cold War. As it was during the Cold War, Iraq occasionally betrayed Russia. For example, without any advance warning, the Iraqis divulged to UNSCOM in November 1995 that they were importing gyroscopes from the Russians. Humiliated by the disclosure, Russian officials told the Iraqis that “[this] cooperation...and sincerity with the UNSCOM...has damaged Russia’s position.”⁸⁸⁹ In another instance, the Russians were frustrated by Iraq’s intransigence when Rolf Ekeus, the Director of UNSCOM-Iraq, filed his May 1995 report on Iraqi chemical and biological weapons. UNSCOM had been able to determine that the Iraqis were lying about the status of their weapons program after they had turned in reports with missing information. Iraq’s attempt to deceive the UNSCOM investigators was so glaring that the Russians and the French were able neither to back Iraq nor to challenge the accusations after Ekeus released his

⁸⁸⁶ CRRC SH-MODX-D-000-478, Russian Offer to Assist Iraq with Developing Cruise Missiles; and a Plot to Assassinate Saddam Hussein, April 1994-February 1998. This conversation took place on 6 February 1998.

⁸⁸⁷ CRRC SH-MODX-D-000-478, Russian Offer to Assist Iraq with Developing Cruise Missiles; and a Plot to Assassinate Saddam Hussein, April 1994-February 1998. For the “Mother of All Battles” narrative, see Gordon and Trainor. *The Generals War: the Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf*, 267-288.

⁸⁸⁸ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-494, Saddam Hussein Meeting with Cabinet Members to Discuss Recent United Nations Resolutions and the Relationship between Iraq and Kuwait, 13 October 1994.

⁸⁸⁹ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-256, “Meeting between Saddam Hussein and Top Political Advisors to discuss a Visit by Prime Minister Tariq Aziz to the United Nations Delegates,” undated (circa November 1995). Also see Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*, 279-283.

May 1995 report. The Iraqis had also not informed the Russians of their attempts to bypass the weapons inspectors beforehand. As Oil Minister Amir Rashid argued that the U.N. “now has a solid ground against us, actually...I regret to say that we are responsible for what happened on this issue. We wanted to succeed. We succeeded in some sections when we went to Russia and convinced the Russians on certain creative calculations.”⁸⁹⁰

In yet another incident, one that was entirely outside the control of the Ba‘thists, the defection of Saddam’s son-in-law Hussein Kamil to Jordan in August 1995 brought even more unwanted attention to Russia’s role in supporting Iraq.⁸⁹¹ In charge of Iraq’s weapons program, Kamil had attempted to obtain nuclear materials from Russia and Romania. His defection forced Iraq and Russia to acknowledge this fact to UNSCOM; the Russians were none too pleased with this forced revelation.⁸⁹²

The Russians, despite their anger, supported Iraq arguably because they were trapped by their economic and diplomatic interests in the country. However, the Iraqis did not see Moscow as their only ally, and they embarked on creating a powerful alliance network which could help

⁸⁹⁰ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-011, “Saddam Hussein and High-Ranking Officials discussing Iraqi Biological and Nuclear Weapons Programs,” 2 May 1995. Also see Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*, 277-279.

⁸⁹¹ Youssef M. Ibrahim, “Senior Army Aides to Iraq President Defect to Jordan,” *NYT*, 11 August 1995, <https://nyti.ms/2LV3CmC>

⁸⁹² CRRC SH-INMD-D-000-657, Report from Husam Mohammad Amin, Director of the National Monitoring Directorate about Hussein Kamel, August 1995. CRRC SH-IISX-D-001-000, Intelligence reports from Iraqi Intelligence Services regarding escapee Hussein Kamil, undated after 19 September 1995. The Iraqis were also incensed at their own intelligence reports that suggested Kamil had met with Russian officials, including the Deputy Foreign Minister, in July 1995, a month prior to his defection. The intelligence report suggested that Russia may have been aware or involved in his escape. The same report also details his meetings with prominent Kuwaitis, tipping them off to Kuwaiti POWs still being held by the Iraqi regime. See CRRC SH-IISX-D-000-768, Iraqi Intelligence Service (IIS) reports concerning Husayn Kamil's defection and a Reference to a Uranium Enrichment Program, June 1995-July 1997.

them in the fight against sanctions. Russia, China, and France all sought economic gains in dealings with Iraq, and the membership of all three countries on the U.N. Security Council gave them all the power to cultivate better relationships with the country. The Iraqis were not afraid to broadcast this. Tariq Aziz even informed the U.N. that Iraq had powerful “friends in the Council.”⁸⁹³ The Iraqis were also delighted to find that the Chinese, in the words of Tariq Aziz, were “more forward than what they used to be.”⁸⁹⁴ After moving to secure these alliances with these countries between 1993 and 1995, the Iraqis turned to courting the rotating members of the UNSC as well. When Tariq Aziz informed Saddam that the Chinese remained supportive of the Iraqi cause and that Iraq was now concentrating on courting new members of the U.N. Security Council, Saddam simply, and gleefully, replied, “one after another.”⁸⁹⁵

But the Iraqis did not always get what they wanted in this matter. They were often impatient, criticizing both France and Russia for playing both sides of the fence.⁸⁹⁶ Iraqi officials complained that “neither Russia nor France is considered a friendly country because of their current situations. They are exchanging their roles. Every time there is a French or a Russian official declaring that he is supporting us. Other times they disappear. These things are not right.” In recalling the past paranoia of some Iraqi leaders, in some cases, when the French and

⁸⁹³ CRRC SH-MISC-D-000-772, Meeting minutes from meeting between Tariq Aziz and Rolf Ekeus regarding Iraqi chemical and nuclear programs, September 1995.

⁸⁹⁴ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-482, Saddam Hussein Meeting with His Council of Ministers to Discuss a Variety of Issues Including Economics, Education, and Foreign Oil Deals, Undated circa 1996.

⁸⁹⁵ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-256, Meeting between Saddam Hussein and Top Political Advisors to discuss a Visit by Prime Minister Tariq Aziz to the United Nations Delegates, circa November 1995. Also see Woods, Palkki, and Stout, *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978-2001*, 279-283.

⁸⁹⁶ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-481, Meeting between Saddam Hussein and High-Ranking Technical Officers Regarding Iraqi Army Weapons Development, circa 1995.

Russians were not able to produce desired results or when they met unexpected resistance, the Iraqis believed that this must be the work of the “Zionists.”⁸⁹⁷

Iraq was not afraid to stoke the fire, using their agency, no matter how limited it truly was, to their advantage. It pressed new allies when they sought fit, and they criticized them as well. In 1993, after UNSCR 687 was renewed, the Iraqis demanded to know what French oil and infrastructure companies were going to do. When informed that the French government would permit only negotiations but not the signing of contracts, the Iraqis pressed them to go further.⁸⁹⁸ The Iraqis also boldly attempted to promote competition among their allies. With the Russians interested in oil fields in western Iraq, Saddam encouraged his diplomats to tease out the Chinese, who had also expressed interest for the same oil fields. As Saddam remarked, “Let them come and take and market the Iraqi oil,” further suggesting that this deal would somehow make China and Iraq even. Competition would force the Russians, according to Saddam, to act sooner rather than later. This would only benefit Iraq. Saddam argued that “the presence of Russian companies in Iraq is very important because that’s how you would establish a powerful Russian [lobbying network working] for the interests of Iraq!”⁸⁹⁹

⁸⁹⁷ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-010, Saddam and Senior Ba’th Party Officials Discussing U.N. Sanctions on Iraq, 15 April 1995.

⁸⁹⁸ In response, the French reminded Iraq of debts owed to France. According to this taped conversation, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, then the U.N. Secretary General, suggested to Tariq Aziz that he should “observe some U.N. members from other countries and then try to bribe them.” CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-143, Saddam Hussein Meeting with the Revolutionary Council about Relations with the U.N. Security Council, 1 January 1993.

⁸⁹⁹ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-482, Saddam Hussein Meeting with His Council of Ministers to Discuss a Variety of Issues Including Economics, Education, and Foreign Oil Deals, Undated circa 1996.

Operation DESERT STRIKE (1996) to Operation DESERT FOX (1998)

The Iraqis were generally pleased with Russian assistance in their fight against sanctions. In discussions with other high-ranking Ba‘thist officials in 1995, Tariq Aziz noted that “the discussion atmosphere with the Russian side represented by the Foreign Ministry, and other officials was very, very good, I mean it was very good, they listened and sympathized with the Iraqi point of view... President Yeltsin and [Foreign Minister Andrey] Kozyrev highly appreciate the wise policy of Mr. President Saddam Hussein in taking these steps, and he personally highly appreciates his meeting with Mr. President.”⁹⁰⁰ After U.S. airstrikes against Iraq—under code name Operation DESERT STRIKE in 1996—in retaliation for Iraqi troops attacking the Kurdish city of Irbil, the Iraqis noted that the Russians were gaining confidence in challenging the U.S. and the UNSC.⁹⁰¹ The Russians were especially incensed because they believed that the Americans had launched strikes despite Iraq’s alleged intentions to withdraw from Kurdish territory by 3-4 September. (The strikes were launched on 2 September).⁹⁰² According to Iraqi diplomats, for the first time Russia was “clearly [expressing] its opinions and threatens” to “execute” the resolution at the UNSC. Primakov also announced that he would undertake “specific action” with Ba‘thist leaders; Russia was “prepared to perform continuous work in that context.”⁹⁰³

Still, doubt remained among Iraqi leadership about the usefulness of the Russians—after all, the strikes were still happening. Some Ba‘th Party members argued that “we will be

⁹⁰⁰ CRRC SH-RVCC-A-001-774, Saddam Hussein meeting with the Revolutionary Council Command and State Command, circa 1995.

⁹⁰¹ Alison Mitchell, “U.S. Launches Further Strike Against Iraq After Clinton Vows He Will Extract ‘Price,’” *NYT*, September 4, 1996, <https://nyti.ms/2A9Q7Jv>

⁹⁰² Ismael and Kreutz, “Russian-Iraqi Relations: A Historical and Political Analysis,” 98.

⁹⁰³ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-997, Saddam meeting with both RCC and State Command talking about UNSCOM, 1996-09-13.

perceived as compliant with a country's opinion, a country which is still the second superpower—the Russian Federation.” Saddam brushed aside these doubts, arguing instead that they will “stick” with the Russians and noting that the “the Russians do not feel good about Clinton.” Saddam did acknowledge his comrades fears that they were being perceived as Russian stooges on the global stage, so he urged Tariq Aziz to call upon the Russian ambassador and remind him of Iraqi sovereignty and rights that should be respected according to international law.⁹⁰⁴

This doubt and frustration also prevailed in Moscow, especially with the Iraqi government's intransigence and refusal to cooperate in instances when the Russians believed cooperation was easier than deceit. Although Russia had much more power in this regard, Iraq was still not afraid to push Russian boundaries—agency that would severely test Moscow's patience. In October 1997, the Iraqis ordered all American members of the UNSCOM inspection team to leave Iraq, a move which angered the Americans immensely. Russia and France condemned Iraq for these actions, and they called for Iraq to readmit the inspectors as a signal of their intent to cooperate, a contingency required if any sanctions were to be lifted. Although the Russians were able to mediate an agreement between UNSCOM, the Americans, and the Iraqis, Baghdad would play the same hand again in January 1998, and then in August 1998, when they expelled all UNSCOM inspectors.⁹⁰⁵ Although both incidents were mediated and resolved, thanks to Moscow's efforts, the Russians were especially frustrated with Iraq. In spite of this

⁹⁰⁴ Saddam and Aziz then share an awkward joke about Yeltsin surprising Saddam with a pocket-knife as a gift. CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-997, Saddam meeting with both RCC and State Command talking about UNSCOM, 1996-09-13.

⁹⁰⁵ Press Release/ SC/6571, “Security Council Condemns Iraq's Decision To Suspend Cooperation With UNSCOM, IAEA,” United Nations, 9 September 1998, <https://www.un.org/press/en/1998/19980909.sc6571.html>

frustration, the Russians told the U.S. that Iraq's actions in these matters "represented a threat to vital Russian national interests and it could not be approached only in the context of American-Iraqi relations."⁹⁰⁶ In other words, Russia was signaling that it was not going to tolerate American unilateral action and would remain very much involved in these affairs.

Russia remained the middleman, still focused on Iraq's economic potential and too deeply involved to merely walk away without jeopardizing their credibility in Baghdad and in the Middle East. In response to Iraq's intransigence and refusal to permit UNSCOM and IAEA inspectors into Iraq again, under OPERATION DESERT FOX, the United States and United Kingdom carried out bombing operations against Iraqi military and security targets between 16 and 19 December 1998.⁹⁰⁷ Russian nationalists were incensed and the divide within the Duma became even more apparent. Western states often had to navigate between Yeltsin's and Primakov's distinctive idiosyncrasies. After the first airstrikes, French President Jacques Chirac told President Bill Clinton: "Yeltsin is much calmer in this respect than Primakov. And I tried to calm him down, but he remained very bothered by this affair..."⁹⁰⁸ U.S. officials also noted that Primakov had reacted "very emotionally" to the strikes and felt that he had been blindsided.⁹⁰⁹

The Clinton administration did not inform the Russians or the Chinese prior to Operation DESERT FOX, fearing, as Clinton told British Prime Minister Tony Blair in December 1998,

⁹⁰⁶ Ismael and Kreutz, "Russian-Iraqi Relations: A Historical and Political Analysis," 99-100.

⁹⁰⁷ Francis X. Clines and Steven Lee Myers, "Attack On Iraq: The Overview; Impeachment Vote In House Delayed As Clinton Launches Iraq Air Strike, Citing Military Need To Move Swiftly," *NYT*, December 17, 1988, <https://nyti.ms/2jUjRU>

⁹⁰⁸ Chirac also added that, because Primakov and the Duma were lobbying against the Americans, Yeltsin was likely to join their chorus. Memorandum on Telephone Conversation between the President and President Jacques Chirac of France, 17 December 1998, NSC, "Declassified Documents Concerning Iraq," WJCL, accessed online.

⁹⁰⁹ Memorandum for Samuel Berger from Andrew Weiss, "Letter to President Yeltsin on Iraq," 17 December 1998, NSC, "Declassified Documents Concerning Iraq," WJCL, accessed online.

that “if we had [told them] they would have told the Iraqis.”⁹¹⁰ Clinton also remarked to Blair: “The Russians and Chinese are hot and really angry at me right now—and the burden is on us to work hard to manage the [U.N. Security] Council. I think they are lot madder at me than you.” However, he did not express remorse over his decision, noting that it would have been necessary to change operations dramatically, especially considering Russian and Chinese interests in Iraq, if Moscow and Beijing had been informed of the operations before they began.⁹¹¹

The Clinton administration viewed actions taken by the Iraqi regime as detrimental to the U.S.-Russia relationship. President Bill Clinton specifically warned Russian President Boris Yeltsin that Saddam Hussein “seeks also to divide the U.S. and Russia...[we] can’t let Saddam [do so], we have too much work to do.” The Americans feared that this relationship between Russia and Iraq would threaten Russian economic stability with Clinton telling Yeltsin that Moscow and Washington “share [the] unique responsibility for ensuring that the United States and Russia enter next century as partners. [We] need to stay in close touch to sustain the relationship.”⁹¹² However, the Americans continued to act unilaterally, much to the frustration of the Russians.

As for the French, President Chirac wanted to know how long the Americans planned to continue bombing Iraq. Clinton told the French, “what’s done is done.” But he asked Chirac not to side with Moscow, arguing that the “Russians are going to try and do something to express their opposition to what I have done and to [UNSCOM Chair Richard] Butler in particular. I

⁹¹⁰ Memorandum on Telephone Conversation between the President and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, 18 December 1998, NSC “Declassified Documents concerning Iraq,” WJCL, accessed online.

⁹¹¹ Memorandum on Telephone Conversation between the President and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, 19 December 1998, NSC, “Declassified Documents concerning Iraq,” WJCL, accessed online.

⁹¹² Points to be Made for Telephone Conversation with President Boris Yeltsin, 30 December 1998, NSC, “Declassified Documents concerning Iraq,” WJCL, accessed online.

hope France will not join this and will perhaps work to become a mediating force.... I think you are in a unique position to reach out to the Russians and Chinese to get us on a responsible course and figure out where we all go from here.”⁹¹³

The decision to bomb Iraq was controversial not only abroad but also at home in Washington—the Republican Party accused Clinton of using the attack as a political ploy and a distraction. Many countries expressed outrage over the attacks.⁹¹⁴ In the end, France, China, and Russia quickly condemned the bombings and went even farther, calling for the lifting of sanctions against Iraq. Yeltsin called the bombing a “gross violation of the U.N. Charter” while Primakov blamed the Americans and Butler, characterizing the latter’s behavior as “scandalous.”⁹¹⁵ Even the British began to waver, eventually shifting to France’s position that sanctions should be lifted before Iraq was expected to disarm. (The U.S. had always maintained that Iraq should disarm prior to any sanctions relief). Iraqi coalition-building continued, and their efforts even appeared to be working. As Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair acknowledged, the world appeared to be “suffering from sanctions fatigue.”⁹¹⁶

Iraqi Observations of Kosovo

The Ba‘thists observed the U.S.-Russian relationship with caution. They wanted to see just how far Moscow was willing to either cooperate or challenge Washington D.C. Iraqi

⁹¹³ Memorandum on Telephone Conversation between President Jacques Chirac of France and President Clinton, 17 December 1998, NSC, “Declassified Documents Concerning Iraq,” WJCL, accessed online.

⁹¹⁴ Daniel Williams, “Protests, Violence Flare in Arab World,” *The Washington Post*, December 20, 1998. Helen Dewar and Eric Pianin, “This Time, Politics Beyond the Water’s Edge,” *The Washington Post*, December 17,

⁹¹⁵ Ismael and Kreutz, “Russian-Iraqi Relations: A Historical and Political Analysis,” 101.

⁹¹⁶ Memorandum on Telephone Conversation between Clinton and PM Tony Blair, 13 October 1999, NSC, “Declassified documents concerning Tony Blair,” WJCL, accessed online.

observations of the wars in the former Yugoslav territories in the Balkans highlight these concerns. Yugoslavia crumbled and fell into civil war after the fall of communism, with Bosnians, Croats, Serbs, and other ethnic groups vying for their own independent states and control over region. As genocidal acts spread—Serbs massacred 8,000 Bosniaks at Srebrenica in 1995—the Europeans and Americans rushed to end the fighting and find a peaceful solution. After the 1998 Dayton Accords, in which Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Serbia agreed to end the war and re-establish territorial boundaries, fighting again broke out in the Kosovo region of Serbia, with ethnic Albanians rebelling against Serbian control.

The massacre of 45 Albanians by Serbian paramilitary forces in Račak on 15 January 1999 triggered NATO forces to intervene in the conflict by military means.⁹¹⁷ Just as they had during the 1992-1996 Balkan wars, the Americans assumed the leading role in resolving this conflict. When Serbian forces refused to allow war crimes investigators into Račak, the Clinton administration pushed for Russia to issue a condemnation of the massacre, to support calls for a United Nations Criminal Tribunal in Yugoslavia (UNCTY), and ultimately to support the ultimatum threatening NATO airstrikes against Belgrade if the Serbs did not adhere to the October 1998 ceasefire.⁹¹⁸ Between January and mid-March, the Americans tried to facilitate a peace agreement between the warring factions. They had also considered Russian trepidation over the strikes—Primakov was due to visit Washington, D.C. to discuss the matter. However,

⁹¹⁷ Misha Glenny, “Motives for Massacre,” *NYT*, January 20, 1999, <https://nyti.ms/2h2g57H>

⁹¹⁸ NSC Summary of Conclusions of Deputies Committee Meeting on Kosovo, 17 January 1999 and NSC Summary of Conclusions on Principals Committee Meeting on Kosovo, 22 January 1999, both located in “Declassified Documents concerning the NSC,” WJCL, accessed online.

when Serbian forces began moving into Kosovo, the Americans could no longer wait. NATO began bombing Belgrade on March 24, 1999.⁹¹⁹

The Russians were incensed. Primakov, who was flying over the Atlantic Ocean at the time, had his plane diverted mid-air back to Europe—the mid-air change of plans was later called the “Primakov Loop.”⁹²⁰ The Kremlin expelled NATO’s representative from Russia, and Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov broke contact with his counterparts among NATO members. To ease tensions, Clinton wrote to Yeltsin, acknowledging that NATO strikes against Kosovo were a “burden on Russian-American relations,” but he also stressed the “vitality” of their relationship and celebrated successes such as the 1992 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces on Europe (CFE). Clinton called for Yeltsin to stand with the Americans and against [Serbian President] Milosevic.⁹²¹ Although they did send troops to Kosovo and participated in peacekeeping missions, in the end, the Russians did not seriously challenge NATO. The Serbs formally withdrew from Kosovo in late June 1999, and NATO’s bombing mission ceased.⁹²²

NATO’s role in the crisis especially alarmed Russia.⁹²³ It not only enraged the nationalists in Moscow but alarmed Yeltsin, who desperately wanted to work with the Americans. President Bill Clinton remarked to British Prime Minister Tony Blair that “the

⁹¹⁹ NSC Summary of Conclusions on Principals Committee Meeting on Kosovo, 15 March 1999, “Declassified Documents concerning the NSC,” WJCL, accessed online.

⁹²⁰ Thomas Lippman, “Russian Leader Cancels Trip in Protest,” *The Washington Post*, March 24, 1999.

⁹²¹ Letter to Boris Yeltsin from President Clinton, 30 April 1999, NSC, “Declassified Documents concerning Russia,” WJCL, accessed online.

⁹²² For more see Erik Yesson, “NATO and Russia in Kosovo.” *Perspectives*, no. 13 (1999): 11-19, and John R. Lampe’s *Yugoslavia a History: Twice There Was a Country*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Barbara Jelavich, *The History of the Balkans*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Books by Misha Glenny and Tim Judah, both journalists, should be consulted as well.

⁹²³ For a recent examination of the expansion of NATO following the fall of the U.S.S.R., see M.E. Sarotte, “The Convincing Call From Central Europe: Let Us Into NATO” *Foreign Affairs*, 12 March 2019.

Russians are allergic to NATO.”⁹²⁴ When Clinton asked Yeltsin if he truly believed that the Americans “got a foothold in Poland we would bomb western Russia,” Yeltsin replied: “No, I don't, but there are a lot of old ladies out in the country who do.” Clinton, in conversation with Blair again, acknowledged that the Kremlin’s mentality was driven by the past, that they were “still affected by Napoleon, Hitler, and the way the Cold War came to end, and [by] . . . the way the Soviet Empire collapsed.” Yeltsin abhorred communism, but even he and his liberal proponents could not escape the past, since they were, as Clinton observed, still proponents of “Mother Russia.”⁹²⁵

Baghdad watched the events in Kosovo with great unease. For one thing, the Iraqis were also running intelligence operations out of their OI in Belgrade, using the information collected from various sources to keep track of their own Iraqi citizens, foreign nationals, and its party apparatus within the region.⁹²⁶ In one instance, OI Belgrade was instructed to refuse assistance to a certain Syrian student within the country and even to impede his activities if need be.⁹²⁷ The OI Belgrade had also been courting favor with Serbian politicians and media in hopes of gaining another European ally in the fight against sanctions. In one example, the Yugoslav-Arab Friendship Society, a civil group essentially controlled by the Iraqi state, worked to promote pro-Iraqi messages within Serbian media outlets.⁹²⁸ In January 1998, the group published an open

⁹²⁴ Memorandum on Telephone Conversation between the President and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, 10 April 2000, NSC, “Declassified Documents concerning Tony Blair,” WJCL, accessed online.

⁹²⁵ Memorandum on Telephone Conversation between the President and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, 19 April 2000, NSC, “Declassified Documents concerning Tony Blair,” WJCL, accessed online.

⁹²⁶ Opening/Inquiry, 1994/11/16, 0064, 0069, 0070, 0074, BRCC 3453-0001, HB, HIA.

⁹²⁷ Mission Facilitation, 1990/12/30, 0001, 0003-4, 0008, BRCC 2977-0001, HB, HIA.

⁹²⁸ The Iraqis had other “Friendship Society” groups elsewhere, including China and the U.S.S.R., to name a few. Iraqi-Soviet Friendship Society, 1977/6/12, 0183, BRCC 024-4-4, HB, HIA. Decision, 1977/8/15, 0179-0181, BRCC 024-4-4, HB, HIA.

letter in the Serbian media, highlighting the suffering of the Iraqi people, especially “the Iraqi children.” The letter criticized the U.S. attempts to garner further support from the U.N. Security Council for a “new armed attack on Iraq” and warned that, if they fail to win over the Security Council, the Americans would not be afraid to act unilaterally, given that their forces already gathered within the Gulf region. The letter then takes the opportunity to remind the United States of the words of Benjamin Franklin: “There was never good war, nor bad peace.”⁹²⁹

According to a special report, the Iraqis believed that the U.S.’s involvement in the Kosovo conflict was driven by the desire to “[impose American hegemony] on the world through its leading role in Europe.” Washington also wanted to weaken “Russia politically and economically by destroying its last fortress in Yugoslavia.” The study argued that the U.S. feared European unity in this matter and therefore wanted to keep European leaders —especially, France—from resolving this issue in a way that fell outside U.S. parameters. Therefore, to maintain Washington’s advantage, NATO was being used as a “practical alternative” to the U.N. This push to maintain hegemony was part of the U.S.’s “desire” to expand its economic markets on the European continent. According to the Iraqis, the United States expected the Europeans to understand that U.S. actions in Europe meant that the Europeans needed to align their positions with Washington D.C.⁹³⁰

⁹²⁹ Activities of Yugoslav-Iraqi Friendship, 1998/3/19, 0457-0460, and Open Letter, 1998/1/30, 0462-0465, both located within BRCC 3553-0000, HB, HIA.

⁹³⁰ All of this can be found under “American Position” subheading. According to the study, “other international issues” entailed the Arab-Israel peace process, and Iran and Iraq. The sixth point of the assessment states that “America with this conflict is working on destroying the Muslims and does not encourage their independence or privacy within a country frame as a vehicle to curtail the Islamic presence in this region... (meaning countries extending from Turkey, north of Greece, Cyprus, Macedonia, and Kosovo region) that threatens its vital interests in the Balkan region in the future.” This has been seriously challenged by new and upcoming scholars, including Mary Elizabeth Walters (PhD, UNC-Chapel Hill) who examines American military humanitarian operations in Kosovo

At the same time, the Iraqis believed that Moscow was “unable to participate in the war due to its collapsed economic situation.” According to this Iraqi report on the Kosovo crisis, Russia’s role had been limited to mediating between Serbia and NATO. In effect Russia was marginalized by the U.S.’s financial influence on Russia’s future. A special Iraqi report on the Kosovo crisis argued that the “Americans bargain on their [International Monetary Fund (IMF)] loans for this year” as means to support the Kremlin during Russia’s worsening economic crisis.⁹³¹ Here, the Iraqis wagered that the IMF was an American agency and thus Washington could manipulate the loans given to Russia from the IMF. Given Russia’s economic disarray, the Americans did have considerable say in Russia’s economic future. As Clinton put it to British Prime Minister Tony Blair, “we have more leverage with Russia because of IMF programs and denuclearization funding.”⁹³² According to the Iraqis, the U.S. was holding Russia as an economic hostage, and this limited Russia’s ability to influence events and counter NATO.⁹³³

during this crisis; she is currently an assistant professor at Kansas State University. CRRC SH-MISC-D-000-932, Studies on Kosovo Crisis regarding the American attack that happened on Yugoslavia, 1999.

⁹³¹ See Philip Hanson, “The Russian Economic Crisis and the Future of Russian Economic Reform.” *Europe-Asia Studies* 51, no. 7 (1999): 1141-166; Andrew E. Kramer, “The Euro in 2010 Feels like the Ruble in 1998,” *NYT*, May 12, 2010, <https://nyti.ms/2vz5bQn>; Sharon LaFraniere, “Russia Resists Devaluing the Ruble,” *The Washington Post*, August 14, 1998.

⁹³² Unfortunately, other parts of this conversation, including important context, still remain classified as of May 2019. Memorandum on Telephone Conversation between the President and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, 29 May 1997, NSC, “Declassified Documents concerning Tony Blair,” WJCL, accessed online. For more on Russia’s economic situation, Celestine Bohlen, “Mountains of Bad Debt Stifle Russian Economy,” *NYT*, August 7, 1998, <https://nyti.ms/2WdMn6n>, Daniel Williams, “Yeltsin Moves To Regulate Reform Drive,” *The Washington Post*, September 25, 1997, Michael Gordon, “Russia and IMF Agree on a Loan for \$10.2 Billion,” *NYT*, February 23, 1996, <https://nyti.ms/2u2jqHI>

⁹³³ See “Russian Position,” CRRC SH-MISC-D-000-932, Studies on Kosovo Crisis regarding the American attack that happened on Yugoslavia, 1999.

But American hegemony was being contested. The Iraqis did note that, although the Europeans were working within NATO, there were divisions among allies. The Iraqis observed German and French displeasure with the current events, and that both Berlin and Paris were willing to work with Russia to find a diplomatic solution. The Chinese government sided with Russia, and, as the Iraqis noted, Beijing “called for the necessity of establishing an international force parallel” to the U.S. force on which its hegemony was based. The Iraqis believed that the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade was an American way “to test Chinese reactions” and to demonstrate force to any state who “depended” on China. The Americans claimed that the bombing was an accident, but the Iraqis did not interpret it this way.⁹³⁴ The Iraqis had wondered if the Chinese were supplying Serbs with information that could be used against NATO operations and thus became a legitimate target in the eyes of NATO. However, from Baghdad’s point of view, the crucial message was that, if the U.S. acted without regard for China as well as for Russia, other countries had better cooperate. As the Iraqis remarked, China is “no different from Russia.”⁹³⁵

The Iraqis concluded that relying solely on the Russians and the Chinese to counter the Americans might need to be reconsidered, given that the Americans had been successful in

⁹³⁴ Steven Lee Myers, “C.I.A. Fires Officer Blamed in Bombing of China Embassy,” *NYT*, April 9, 2000, <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/04/09/world/cia-fires-officer-blamed-in-bombing-of-china-embassy.html>

⁹³⁵ The United Kingdom is largely described as a warmonger this report. See “European Position” and “Chinese Position,” CRRC SH-MISC-D-000-932, Studies on Kosovo Crisis regarding the American attack that happened on Yugoslavia, 1999. Clinton told Tony Blair that “the daily papers today are filled with China being pissed off and Russia threatening war....” Memorandum on Telephone Conversation between the President and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, 10 April 2000, NSC, “Declassified Documents concerning Tony Blair,” WJCL, accessed online. For the bombing, and the surrounding controversy, see Kevin Ponniah & Lazara Marinkovic, “The night the U.S. bombed a Chinese embassy,” *BBC Belgrade*, May 7, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-48134881>.

marginalizing them both in the Kosovo conflict so far. Europe bending the knee to the Americans, according to the Ba'athists, "clearly showed the world that the authority of the international decision in the first decade of the 21st century will be at the hands of America." The Iraqis, therefore, believed they needed to "establish a specialized and developed center devoted to American affairs" to research any ways to challenge American hegemony. The deep involvement of the United States and NATO in the situation in Kosovo gave the Iraqis an opportunity. They could bring up this issue with other states, including current temporary members of the U.N. Security Council. The Ba'athists sought to "create an axis against the American and British positions when they take any decision of aggression on our country in the future." Essentially, Iraq wanted to maneuver in the shadows and influence those states that also resented U.S. hegemony.⁹³⁶ The need for the coalition remained.

Old Enemies

Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Iraq's obsession with Syria continued. While they grappled with the consequences of their patron's fall, the Iraqis were especially concerned that Syria might gain an advantage over them. Local issues continued to affect the two countries, but both also wanted to have the affections of whatever new regime emerged in Moscow. For example, Iraqi intelligence tracked an Iraqi of Syrian origin in Czechoslovakia. They tried to recruit him, deeming him likely to become an "intelligence benefit"; but the Iraqis also found that he was wanted by the Syrian authorities, possibly for the same reason.⁹³⁷ Fear

⁹³⁶ See "Lessons Learned," CRRS SH-MISC-D-000-932, Studies on Kosovo crisis regarding the American attack that happened on Yugoslavia, 1999.

⁹³⁷ Message, 1989/10/4, 0140-0141, BRCC 3807-0001, HB, HIA.

that Syria would succeed in infiltrating into Iraqi political and intelligence operations continued as well. One Iraqi working within OI Belgrade was deemed suspect because his mother was from Syria and he was therefore entitled to Syrian citizenship. Intelligence reports were thus ordered and generated on his activities, background, and contacts.⁹³⁸ The Iraqis were dismayed to learn that the Soviets were paying more attention to Rifat Assad, the younger brother of Syrian President Hafez al-Assad. Despite lacking evidence to suggest that either Syria or the U.S.S.R. pushed for this visit, Iraqi officials took this as a sign of Moscow's pursuit to renew and promote new relations with Damascus. The Iraqis detected Moscow's pleasure after Rifat's visit to the Soviet Union in late 1989, which arguably only reinforced Iraq's anger and jealousy of their enemy.⁹³⁹

Saddam had predicted that Russia would emerge as a challenger to America prior to the 1993 Russian parliamentary elections, and he also predicted that "Russia will not improve its relations with Iran to a large extent.... Russia will remember that Iran has played a [nefarious] role and Iran's intentions were clear in weakening Russia and weakening all states that belonged to the former Soviet Union...."⁹⁴⁰ Unfortunately for Saddam, this did not ring true. Following Damascus' lead, the Iranians also began making inroads with the Russians.

Iraqi intelligence estimated that Iranian debts between 1990 and 1995 totaled around \$30 billion dollars, thanks to elaborate economic and military spending from Russia, China, North Korea and other countries. In particular, the Russians and Iranians were working together on the "establishment of [the] Bushar reactor" and on "two nuclear power stations; one near Tehran and

⁹³⁸ Information, 1994/1/15, 0653, BRCC 3770-0003, HB, HIA.

⁹³⁹ Information, 1989/10/15, 0196-0206, BRCC 3807-0001, HB, HIA. See 0201 for the Soviets-Assad analysis.

⁹⁴⁰ CRRC SH-SHTP-A-001-973, Saddam Hussein presides over a meeting with the Revolutionary Command Council and Ministers Council regarding the economic situation in Iraq, circa 1992-1993.

the other near Caspian, with 440 megawatt each.” Iraqi intelligence suggested that Iran was attempting to gather nuclear material from the Soviet Union, China, Pakistan, India, Argentina, Brazil, and North Korea in exchange for hard currency. However, enriched uranium of high quality was hard to come by. But Iraqis bet that only Russia and China could reliably provide it to Iran. According to an Iraqi military study of Iran’s nuclear weapons program, Tehran was “[employing] many scientists from Russia and from former Soviet Union states to acquire expertise in the field of manufacturing nuclear weapons.”⁹⁴¹ The Iraqis believed that Russia would also help Iran build a nuclear reactor.

Although the Iraqis acknowledged that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was weakening Iranian capabilities, Iraqi intelligence reports took note of continued Iranian ambition and drive for nuclear material. Western sources, alleged the Iraqis, confirmed that the Iranians had acquired nuclear warheads that had gone missing during the breakup of the Soviet Union.⁹⁴² “Iranian military doctrine is considered the offspring of the current situational requirements,” argued one Iraqi intelligence report. The Iranians wanted nuclear weapons for purposes of deterrence. Since Iran’s conventional military was deemed to be too weak to deter its neighbors, Iraqi intelligence concluded that Tehran was seeking to achieve “weaponry superiority over neighboring countries in the nuclear field especially over Iraq.” Russian, French, and Chinese offers to help build nuclear reactors did not ease either the Iraqis’ frustration with their supposed allies or their fears of their neighbors.⁹⁴³

⁹⁴¹ CRRC SH-AFGC-D-001-168, “Study about the Military Capabilities of Iran,” 31 May 2001.

⁹⁴² No author listed, “Loose Nukes,” *Council for Foreign Relations*, 1 January 2006, <https://on.cfr.org/2GdoUWf>

⁹⁴³ Chinese help for Iran was traced back to 1985 by the Iraqis. CRRC SH-GMID-D-000-579, General Military Intelligence Directorate Assessments of Iranian Chemical and Nuclear Capabilities, Locations, Structures, and Readiness, 10 October 1999. CRRC SH-GMID-D-000-342, Intelligence Study Titled "The Possible Effects of the Strategy of Iranian Nuclear Arms Program on Iraqi National Security," February-March 1994.

A New Cold War

For Iraq, the 1990s were marked by the survival of the regime of Saddam Hussein under severe sanctions. In the new millennium, observing a sense of sanction fatigue around the world, Iraq began focusing on the potential to expand both economically and politically. Iraq was also interested in keeping tabs on China, Russia, and the United States. Of the three, China and Russia were part of the Iraqi alliance system, and they were crucial to combatting America's status as a hegemon. Yet these two were also competing with each other. Just as they had during the Cold War, the Iraqis were always looking for opportunities for exploitation, even among their own allies.

In the summer 2000, in what was then coined as the Shanghai Group, the presidents of Presidents of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, and Tajikistan gathered in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan.⁹⁴⁴ Besides regional security issues—smuggling, terrorism, illegal immigration—the participants signaled their support for Russia in its efforts against Chechnya and for China's pursuit of its “One China, One Rule” policy. What was of more interest to Iraq was a Chinese-Russian bilateral meeting in which both parties criticized American efforts to dominate the region and America's pursuit of what they cast as a new arms race. The main theme of the conference was to “[express] their concern about the presence of hegemonic tendency and use of force policy.” The Iraqi Foreign Ministry argued that, although the Russians and Chinese appeared unified in their efforts to stymie American encroachment, each was actually vying for hegemony in the region.⁹⁴⁵ This

⁹⁴⁴ Eleanor Albert, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization,” *Council for Foreign Relations*, last updated October 2015, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/shanghai-cooperation-organization>

⁹⁴⁵ The fifth meeting of Shanghai Group, CRRC SH-IISX-D-002-012, Presidential Diwan Documents Concerning Relations with Several Other Countries, 2000-12-19.

was not the first meeting of the Shanghai Group that the Iraqis tracked. In fact, the year previous, Saddam had expressed interest in inserting Iraq into the region as well. He sought to engage the Shanghai Group, especially China, Russia, and Kazakhstan, seeing the benefits of engaging with these countries on issues of trade, security, and cooperation.

In August 2000, the Iraqi Intelligence Service, through its Research and Study Center, sent Ba‘thist leaders its report titled “Possible Conflicts in the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea — Indicators for a ‘New Cold War.’” In it, Iraqi intelligence reported that the region was ripe for conflict. On one side, Russia was seeking to regain territory lost with the fall of the Soviet Union but was facing a “complicated ethnic-political situation in the Caucasus and Central Asia.” On the other hand, America was interested in expanding its influence in the region as means to secure energy sources. The report stated that the “whole situation can be an indicator for a new cold war in the region, along with [polarization] and out-of-control confrontations.”⁹⁴⁶

Weighing historical legacies, Iraqi intelligence wagered that Russia, Turkey, Iran, and China were all vying for control beyond their borders and into neighboring regions to acquire materials, influence, and prestige. Each of these countries’ governments pursued its own role as hegemon, but at the same time each aimed at denying that status to the others. Iraqi intelligence suspected, too, that American interests in the region also relied on its goals to further weaken Russia, denying it access to resources while embroiling it in further conflicts with NATO and local populations. To prevent this, the intelligence services predicted, China and Russia would

⁹⁴⁶ Possible Conflicts in the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea — Indicators for a "New Cold War" in CRRC SH-IMFA-D-000-545, Letters from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Administrative Office of the Presidency Concerning the Relationship between Iraq and Russia, August 2000.

work together to prevent American domination in the region.⁹⁴⁷ For leaders of the Ba‘th Party, this showed that coalition building was vital and should be maintained. Although they would never stop seeking to exploit opportunities, the Iraqi government continued to maintain working relationships and even alliances even though every other country had its own agenda to pursue.

The New Millennium

In 2000, President Boris Yeltsin stepped down from the presidency, turning control over to his protégé Vladimir Putin.⁹⁴⁸ Unlike Primakov, Putin had few to no links or connections in the Middle East, having spent most of his career in the intelligence services focused on Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, Putin kept Russia on the same path as his predecessor, maintaining the country’s alliance with Iraq. A major difference, however, was Putin’s emphasis on Israel, Turkey, and Iran as well, because he sought to reaffirm relationships with those countries. In June 2000, Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz visited Moscow. There, he was told by Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei V. Ivanov that “Russia continues to apply maximum pressure for the quickest end, and then the permanent lifting of international sanctions.”⁹⁴⁹

In August 2000, the *Kursk*, a Russian nuclear submarine, was conducting missile tests when its fuel tank exploded, sending the submarine to the bottom of the Barents Sea, just south of the Arctic Ocean. However, unknown to the Russian authorities at the time, as many as 23 sailors survived the initial explosion. In the end, however, after its own attempts at a rescue were

⁹⁴⁷ Possible Conflicts in the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea — Indicators for a "New Cold War" in CRRC SH-IMFA-D-000-545, Letters from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Administrative Office of the Presidency Concerning the Relationship between Iraq and Russia, August 2000.

⁹⁴⁸ Michael Wines, “Election in Russia: The Overview; Putin Wins Russia Vote in First Round, But His Majority Is Less Than Expected,” *NYT*, March 27, 2000, <https://nyti.ms/2nyuqgM>

⁹⁴⁹ Ismael and Kreutz, “Russian-Iraqi Relations: A Historical and Political Analysis,” 104-105.

delayed, the Russian government refused foreign offers of help. A general sense of apathy about the situation developed throughout the Russian government; and all 118 sailors were later found dead, triggering both a political and public relations nightmare for the Kremlin.⁹⁵⁰ The Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Muhammad Sa'id Al-Sahhaf, called on the Russian chargé d'affaires in Baghdad to pass along a condolence letter to President Putin from Saddam. The Russian diplomat thanked the Iraqis, expressing both his and Putin's gratitude for the gesture—the Iraqi Foreign Minister believed this signaled that “the Iraqi-Russian relations are headed in the right direction and improving to serve their interests.” Al-Sahhaf also added that Iraq “saw that the West and the U.S. tried to distort Putin's image in front of the Russian people using this incident.”⁹⁵¹

After a tumultuous decade that had seen the Iraqi defeat in Kuwait, the collapse of the Soviet Union, American bombing in Iraq and the Balkans, and dire economic conditions in both countries, the Iraqi-Russian relationship resumed its Cold War dynamic. Iraq and Russia did not trust each other but they were bound by their mutual interests. And although the Iraqis were no longer placing their bets solely on Russia, turning to France and China for assistance and support as well, the Iraqis and Russians were united: challenging America and its hegemonic status.

⁹⁵⁰ Sophia Kishkovsky, “In 15 Hours, Submarine Kursk is Raised from Sea Floor,” *NYT*, October 9, 2001.

<https://nyti.ms/2hRYqAf>

⁹⁵¹ The Russian chargé d'affaires echoed popular Russian sentiments that the foreign offers to assist in rescue operations were merely attempts by the West to steal Russian technology. He also voiced support for conspiracy theories surrounding the explosion in that “he had serious doubts concerning the accident; he believes that it is possible that it was a preplanned attack, such as a mine explosion or perhaps the submarine hit another unknown submarine, British most likely.” An investigation found that faulty welding allowed high-test peroxide to leak, triggering the ignition of the fuel tanks. Letter the Presidential Diwan from the Office of the Foreign Minister, 23 August 2000, Subject: “Condolences Letter,” found in CRRC SH-IMFA-D-000-545, Letters from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Administrative Office of the Presidency Concerning the Relationship between Iraq and Russia, 2000.

Some Americans— especially the neoconservatives— pressed for more action against Iraq as sanctions were slowly losing diplomatic traction and credibility within global diplomatic circles; by late 1999, even the British were slowly losing the will to continue the sanctions.⁹⁵²

Baghdad believed that the United States would continue its warmongering, however. In 2001, in the wake of American and British bombing of Iraq in February, the Duma tried to force Putin to lift sanctions against Iraq unilaterally.⁹⁵³ Although the resolution was approved with a 359-2 vote, Putin’s administration ignored it.⁹⁵⁴ This was a sign of Putin’s unwillingness to contest the U.N. and U.S. so openly. Ever frustrated, the Iraqis threatened to end Lukoil’s contract, which in turn prompted the Russians to create new bilateral delegations and commissions to appease Iraq. Even with its back in a corner, Iraq was never afraid to test and punish Russia’s mettle.

Despite tensions between the two countries, there was nonetheless a continuing development of cultural, business, and religious connections between Iraq and Russia. Iraqi governmental and cultural delegations visited Russia; their Russian counterparts later visited Baghdad in return. In summer 2000, an Iraqi delegation traveled to Russia and its southern (and predominantly Muslim) regions to expand Iraq’s influence within Russia’s Islamic community. Negotiations for commercial and civilian air travel between Moscow and Baghdad continued as well.⁹⁵⁵ In the summer of 2001, the Russians sent the Iraqi ambassador in Moscow a “message of

⁹⁵² Memorandum on Telephone Conversation between the President and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, 13 October 1999, NSC “Declassified Documents concerning Tony Blair,” WJCL, accessed online.

⁹⁵³ James Dao and Steven Lee Myers “Attack on Iraq: The Overview; U.S. and British Jets Strike Air-Defense Centers in Iraq,” *NYT*, February 17, 2001, <https://nyti.ms/2FIMzix>

⁹⁵⁴ Ismael and Kreutz, “Russian-Iraqi Relations: A Historical and Political Analysis,” 106.

⁹⁵⁵ The Iraqis also visited Belarus. CRRC SH-MISC-D-001-446, Information on Doctor 'Abd-al-Razzaq 'Abd-al'Rahman Al-Sa'di, 2000-04-10.

congratulations” to commemorate the “glorious anniversary” of the July 1968 revolution, when the Ba‘thists cemented their complete takeover of Iraq.⁹⁵⁶ From the Russian and Iraqi standpoints, their joint diplomatic efforts were working. They maintained a shared hope that the Americans, facing increasing isolationism, would eventually give up their efforts and back off. Unfortunately, however, events in September 2001 would change everything.

Chapter 6 - The End of the Ba‘thist Regime

The United States invaded Iraq on 19 March 2003 as part of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) campaign in response to the attacks on New York City and Washington D.C. on 11 September 2001. The U.S. government justified the invasion by citing Saddam Hussein’s pursuit and alleged acquisition of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) along with claims that Iraq was complicit in the 9/11 attacks. Before the invasion began, the evidence provided by George W. Bush’s administration had come under repeated and severe criticism from both domestic and foreign sources. The global backlash against these claims resulted in the United States’ ultimate failure to secure a United Nations resolution to endorse the invasion or to form a coalition similar to the one posed against Iraq in the First Gulf War.⁹⁵⁷ In less than a month, the Iraqi state crumbled, ending nearly 35 years of the Ba‘thist regime. In July 2003, Saddam’s two sons, Uday

⁹⁵⁶ Letter of thanks, 2001/8/16, 0486, BRCC 2178-0002, HB, HIA.

⁹⁵⁷ For more on these debates surrounding the WMDs, and other justifications for invasions, see Brigham, Robert Kendall Brigham, *The United States and Iraq since 1990 a Brief History with Documents*. (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014); Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor. *The Endgame: the Hidden History of Americas Struggle to Build Democracy in Iraq*. (New York: Pantheon, 2012); COL Joel D. Rayburn and COL Frank K. Sobchak, eds. *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War – Volume 1: Invasion—Insurgency—Civil War, 2003-2006*. (Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2019).

and Qusay, were killed by American forces, and Saddam himself was captured in December that year. He would be executed for his crimes against humanity in 2006.

How did it all come to this for Saddam and Iraq? After his humiliating defeat at the hands of the U.S.-led coalition in 1991, Saddam embarked on a decade-long campaign to shore up allies in an effort to prevent another invasion. A man who had come up through violence and intimidation, Saddam always feared that these means would be used to remove him from power. Russia was Iraq's most powerful ally in the 1990s, and Iraq used Russia's economic needs and desire to project strength abroad to its advantage. But as the Americans made it more and more clear that they were seeking to remove Saddam and his regime, Russia was not able to alter this course. Iraq's fitful efforts at friendship with Russia did not pay off.

America Rattles the Saber

Even in the new millennium the Iraqis continued to fear the communists. For example, an intelligence report told of an Iraqi bookseller selling a book containing the "Political Report to the 27th Conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union by Mikhail Gorbachev." In 2001, too, a study was issued by the Institute of Preparing and Training, which discussed the history and legacy of communism in Iraq, emphasizing its secrecy, malicious intentions, and its foreign connections. Overall, the Iraqis continued to monitor any and all communist movements, whether active or not. The 2001 report most interestingly places blame on a Russian Red Army officer, Peter Fasili, for bringing communism into Iraq; he allegedly smuggled himself through Iran and then posed as a tailor in Nasiriyah.⁹⁵⁸

⁹⁵⁸ Information, 2002/9/4, 0351, BRCC 2345-0002, HB, HIA. CRRC SH-IISX-D-000-360, A Study on How to Defeat the Iraqi Opposition Inside and Outside Iraq, 2001.

Although the 1990s saw the Russians and Iraqis return to the understandings that had been common between them in the time of the Cold War, the Iraqis remained suspicious of their supposed ally. In 1999, for example, a Russian national from Armenia was arrested in Kurdistan after smuggling himself into the country.⁹⁵⁹ The security of this northern region of Iraq was of particular concern to Baghdad. Iraqi intelligence agents were convinced that U.S. and British intelligence services were using Jalal Talabani, then the leader of the faction called the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), to conceal any action against Baghdad's espionage centers in the north of the country.⁹⁶⁰

In the region, the Iraqis were extremely concerned about activities to the north, especially in areas where Russia was operating. The Iraqis kept track of the movements of the Black Sea Economic Group, an organization first organized by Turkey in 1992. Its members included Azerbaijan, Albania, Armenia, Bulgaria, Greece, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Romania, Turkey, and Ukraine. Poland, Egypt, Israel, Slovakia, and Tunisia were officially "observing" states.⁹⁶¹ Although the Iraqis remained ever aware of perceived Russian encroachment into the region, Baghdad still considered Russia a "friend of the Arabs." This relationship was supposedly "not based on sanctions or Iraqi interests alone"; instead, as the Ba'athist state argued, the relationship was founded "on the interests of the entire Arab Nation."⁹⁶²

⁹⁵⁹ Arrest of foreigners, 1999/11/6, 0016-0017, BRCC 3487-0002, HB, HIA.

⁹⁶⁰ Information, 1999/8/20, 0525, BRCC 3487-0002, HB, HIA. For more on Talabani, see Mark McDonald, "Jalal Talabani, Kurdish Leader and Iraq's First Postwar President, Is Dead at 83," *NYT*, October 3, 2017, <https://nyti.ms/2xSvCyc>

⁹⁶¹ Organization of Economic Cooperation for Black Sea countries, 21/11/1998, 0133-0134, BRCC 3474-0000, HB, HIA.

⁹⁶² CRRC SH-PDWN-D-000-812, Speech given on 26 September 2001, Speeches of Saddam Husayn and a copy of *Al-Hadhud Semiannual Magazine*.

It is clear that Saddam had little sympathy for the United States. For Saddam, the anguish of Americans during 9/11 paled in comparison with the suffering of Iraqis, pain caused by the Americans. Saddam argued:

We are telling the American people that they should compare what happened on 9/11/2001 to what happens to people in the world caused by their government, the American government, and their armies. For example, [international] organizations stated that more than 1.5 million Iraqis died as a result of the blockade imposed on Iraq by America and some Western countries; not to mention the tens of thousands who were martyred or injured during the military operations that America is executing along with its allies against Iraq. There are hundreds of bridges, churches, mosques, colleges, schools, factories, palaces, hotels, and thousands of homes that were destroyed due to American air strikes.⁹⁶³

Saddam also chastised the United States for wondering why it was America that was attacked and not Europe. Saddam argued that it was “because Europe is much older than America, thus Europeans are wiser than Americans, but American officials didn't learn from Europe.” Saddam believed that Iraq needed to “convince America that all the colonizers who attempted to be kings of all four corners were destroyed.”⁹⁶⁴

The Bush administration immediately pinpointed al-Qaeda, then based in Afghanistan and led by Osama bin Laden, as the mastermind behind the attacks. American operations, under Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, began on 7 October 2001.⁹⁶⁵ However, the Bush

⁹⁶³ These remarks are recorded during a weekly cabinet meeting circa 2002/01/07. CRRC, SH-SPPC-D-000-878, Saddam Hussein's Remarks on September 11th Attacks and the War on Terrorism and other notes relating to events in September-October 2001.

⁹⁶⁴ CRRC, SH-PDWN-D-000-409, Saddam Hussein's speech during his meeting with the Freedom Party Chairman [Rim Haider] of the ruling party of Austria's Corinthia region on 2/12/2002, Transcripts of speeches by Saddam Hussein from 2001-2002.

⁹⁶⁵ For further reading, see Seth Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan*, (New York: Norton, 2009); Donald Wright et al. *A Different Kind of War: The United States Army in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) October 2001-September 2005*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009); Doug Stanton, *Horse Soldiers: The Extraordinary Story of a Band of U.S. Soldiers Who Rode to Victory in*

administration also started laying the groundwork to link Iraq and al-Qaeda. The debates, policies, and even conspiracies surrounding this linkage are beyond the scope of this work, but it should be stated that the tapes and documents involving Saddam captured later do not show an “operational relationship” between Iraq and al-Qaeda. The tapes do show that Saddam supported Palestinian terrorism, but even his sympathies with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat fluctuated.⁹⁶⁶ From Saddam’s view, U.S. accusations against Iraq were evidence of the United States’ own terrorist activities and intentions. He went on with anti-Israeli rhetoric and talk of conspiracies linking the United States with “Zionism,” and he argued that the U.S. was “a terrorism center.” September 11th, according to Saddam, was being used by the United States as justification to “continue their evil destruction against the Arab nation.”⁹⁶⁷

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, with the United States increasing its saber-rattling, the Iraqis began preparing both their military and political defenses.⁹⁶⁸ In a late December 2002 meeting of the upper echelon of the Ba’thist regime, discussion revolved around mobilizing and preparing the Iraqi population to be attacked. The regime also blamed the United States and “Zionism” for aggressive intentions and their “false allegations and lies.”⁹⁶⁹ However, the persistent paranoia of key Iraqis also played a role. Intelligence reports about the northern part of

Afghanistan, (New York: First Scribner Hardcover, 2009); Daniel Victor, “Need a Refresher on the War in Afghanistan? Here Are the Basics,” *NYT*, December 21, 2018, <https://nyti.ms/2GB9GQ6>

⁹⁶⁶ Kevin M. Woods, David D. Palkki, and Mark E. Stout. *The Saddam Tapes: the Inner Workings of a Tyrant’s Regime, 1978-2001*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 89. See also Kevin M. Woods, and Michael R. Pease. *The Iraqi Perspectives Report: Saddam’s Senior Leadership on Operation Iraqi Freedom from the Official U.S. Joint Forces Command Report*. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006), especially vol. I, ES-1.

⁹⁶⁷ CRRC Number SH-PDWN-D-000-409, Saddam broadcasted speech, “a friendly call of the leader,” 12/18/2001, Transcripts of speeches by Saddam Hussein from 2001-2002.

⁹⁶⁸ Saddam even wanted copies of Senator Ron Paul’s speeches about Iraq, and other foreign affairs issues, delivered in Congress. English news publication, 2002/10/9-27, 0222-0223, BRCC 2345-0002, HB, HIA.

⁹⁶⁹ Minutes of Meeting, 2002/12/18, 0043-0046, BRCC 2345-0002, HB, HIA.

Iraq suggested that “agents and saboteurs” were operating in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah on behalf of U.S. intelligence agencies.⁹⁷⁰

The year 2001 was unique in Russian-American relations. Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia “re-oriented” its foreign and defense policies to expand its cooperation with the United States. According to an April 2003 Congressional Research Service (CRS) report, this reorientation was seen as vital for “economic reconstruction and revitalization proceeding from its integration in the global economic system dominated by the advanced industrial democracies.”⁹⁷¹ Then came the 9/11 attacks. Russian journalist and dissident Mikhail Zygar argues that “9/11 offered a rare moment of unity between Russia and the United States. Vladimir Putin was the first world leader to call President Bush to offer his support.”⁹⁷² Despite Russian perception of American ambivalence toward Islamic extremists in Central Asia, most notably in Chechnya, the Russians were eager to work with the United States. The Russian government supported the United States in its quest to root out the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. The Russians were especially eager to strike blows against the Taliban, the descendants of the mujahedeen (freedom fighters) whom the Soviets had fought a brutal ten-year war in Afghanistan. Thanks to the backing of the Russian government, the United States secured the use of an airbase near Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, which became the Manas

⁹⁷⁰ Information, and U.S. intelligence headquarters, 2002/11/20, 0081-0085, BRCC 2345-0002, HB, HIA.

⁹⁷¹ Congressional Research Service Report for Congress (CRS), “Russia and the War in Iraq, 14 April 2003,” RS21462.

⁹⁷² Mikhail Zygar, *All the Kremlin’s Men: Inside the Court of Vladimir Putin*. (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2017), 34-35.

Transit Center.⁹⁷³ For once, the Russians and Americans seemed united. However, when the Russians asked when the United States would leave the base, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice allegedly replied, “we need it permanently.”⁹⁷⁴ Putin was irate, and a new rift opened between the Russia and the United States.

When the United States turned its attention to removing Saddam from power in 2002, Russia was neither swayed by U.S. efforts to convince them that Saddam was developing weapons of mass destruction (WMD), nor was Russia blind to the events in Iraq. Many Russians had business interests in Iraq such as Lukoil, the Russian multinational oil conglomerate.⁹⁷⁵ Russian dignitaries including former prime minister Yevgeny Primakov, the communist opposition leader Gennady Zyuganov, and populist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy were frequently hosted by Saddam’s entourage.⁹⁷⁶ Even Russian airlines and managers of certain nocturnal activities were making money off Saddam’s eldest son, Uday—allegedly, the weekly Monday-morning flight from Moscow to Baghdad was full of Russian prostitutes. Other powerful groups, including the Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations and the Russian Orthodox Church, received Iraqi kickbacks, either through the U.N. Oil-for-Food Programme or through lobbying

⁹⁷³ The Obama administration vacated the airbase in 2014. Olga Dzyubenko, “U.S. vacates base in Central Asia as Russia’s clout rises,” *Reuters*, 3 June 2014. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kyrgyzstan-usa-manas/u-s-vacates-base-in-central-asia-as-russias-clout-rises-idUSKBN0EE1LH20140603>

⁹⁷⁴ Zygar, *All the Kremlin’s Men: Inside the Court of Vladimir Putin.*, 35-36.

⁹⁷⁵ In 1999, another Russian oil company, Zarubezhneft, claimed that it was drilling several oil wells near Kirkuk, in northern Iraq. The company stated that this did not violate U.N. sanctions because it was located in the north, a relatively autonomous region from Saddam’s regime, and thus Saddam could not be benefitting from any oil sales from this drilling. However, Russian government officials denied that this work was being carried out. Anthony H. Cordesman, “Iraqi Military Forces Ten Years After the Gulf War,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, (August 3, 2000): 37-38.

⁹⁷⁶ Susan B. Glasser, “In Zhirinovskiy, Hussein Finds a Russian Partner,” *The Washington Post*, September 10, 2002.

efforts within the Russian state and society.⁹⁷⁷ The Russians preferred that Saddam remain in power because he was “predictable and controllable.” Moreover, according to Mikhail Zygar, the Russians believed that Saddam was surrounded by “corruption, but not weapons of mass destruction.”⁹⁷⁸ When Russia voiced concern about the possibility that the United States would invade Iraq again, Rice allegedly informed the Russians that the United States had the right to act unilaterally.⁹⁷⁹ The United States’ desire for unilateral action in the Middle East only increased Russian entrenchment against U.S. hegemony.

Iraq’s “Friends”

Predictably, as they had done in the 1990s, the Russians and the French defended Iraq from the Bush administration’s allegations, fiercely protesting any American intervention in Iraq. Iraq continued to be important for the French economy, so much so that the French allowed Iraq to open a new trade section within the Iraqi embassy in Paris to improve the relationship. Total Fina Elf, a large French oil conglomerate, also secured assurances from the Iraqi regime for drilling rights and contracts in Majnoon and Nahr Umar oil fields by signing preliminary agreements to invest over \$7.4 billion USD.⁹⁸⁰ Saddam and Russian officials were meeting as late as 26 February 2003, according to captured records.⁹⁸¹

⁹⁷⁷ Zygar, *All the Kremlin’s Men: Inside the Court of Vladimir Putin*, 35-36.

⁹⁷⁸ Zygar, *All the Kremlin’s Men: Inside the Court of Vladimir Putin*, 36.

⁹⁷⁹ Zygar, *All the Kremlin’s Men: Inside the Court of Vladimir Putin*, 35-36.

⁹⁸⁰ CRS, “Iraq: Oil-For-Food Program, Illicit Trade, and Investigations, 9 January 2006,” RL30472. CRS, “Iraq’s Trade with the World: Data and Analysis, 23 SEPT 2004,” RL32025. Cordesman, “Iraqi Military Forces Ten Years After the Gulf War,” 38. See also Marcel, Valerie. “The Future of Oil in Iraq: Scenarios and Implications,” *The Royal Institute of International Affairs*, Briefing Paper No. 5, (October 2002): 7.

⁹⁸¹ CRRC SH-BATH-D-001-094, “Makarim Al-Qa’id Section Command Meeting Minutes,” October 2002-2003.

In early February 2003 in Berlin, the Russian, French, and German governments issued a joint declaration calling for an alternative to war and advocating a peaceful disarmament of Iraq.⁹⁸² However, just as before, the Iraqis found their friends had more bark than bite when it came to confronting the Americans directly. Despite European uproar over the invasion led by the United States, many European states were eager to return to status quo ante with the United States. German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin both called for the establishment of a democratic regime in Iraq.⁹⁸³ On 15 April, six days after the Ba'athist regime collapsed, President Chirac called President Bush to express his satisfaction with Saddam's removal and to propose postwar agreements.⁹⁸⁴ An 22 April 2003 CRS report claimed that the Chinese, Russians, and Europeans feared minimal interaction or even outright exclusion from contracts and other economic opportunities tied to oil reserves after the removal of the Ba'ath regime. Other press reports suggested that the Bush administration was using countries' fear of losing economic opportunities as a means of winning support or at least limiting protest against U.S. intervention in Iraq.⁹⁸⁵

Russia stood to lose a great deal economically in a post-Saddam Iraq. On one hand were all the past debts—the Iraqis still owed \$10-12 billion USD to Moscow for arms and weapons delivered during the 1980s.⁹⁸⁶ Russia's fight to defend Iraq against U.N. sanctions in the 1990s was largely driven by their concern to recover this debt. The Russians did not defend Iraq for altruistic reasons; rather, the Russians needed Iraq to pay its considerable debt in order to support

⁹⁸² CRS, "Russia and the War in Iraq, 14 April 2003," RS21462.

⁹⁸³ CRS, "Iraq War: Background and Issues Overview, 22 April 2003," RL31715.

⁹⁸⁴ CRS, "Iraq War: Background and Issues Overview, 22 April 2003," RL31715.

⁹⁸⁵ CRS, "Iraq War: Background and Issues Overview, 22 April 2003," RL31715.

⁹⁸⁶ CRS, "Russia and the War in Iraq, 14 April 2003," RS21462.

their own economy, helping it to recover from the economic shocks and failures of the 1990s. There were also legitimate fears that a post-Saddam Iraq would dump oil into the market, thus driving down the price per barrel. Estimates suggested that a \$6 per barrel drop in price could have cut Russia's projected economic growth by nearly half in 2003.⁹⁸⁷

Trade had also steadily increased between the two. Russian imports from Iraq had gone from a net of zero in 1996 (due to sanctions), to \$47.4 million USD in 1998, to \$98.9 million USD in 2000, to \$403.2 million USD in 2002, and to \$240.2 million USD even in 2003 (before Iraq was invaded).⁹⁸⁸ According to a September 2004 CRS report, "Russia's cumulative trade turnover" with Iraq was worth around \$7.7 billion USD between 1997 and March 2003. Russia supplied Iraq with equipment in brands that was not typically competitive on global markets—this included, for example, Volga cars, grain harvesters, and power-generation equipment.⁹⁸⁹ Saddam's paranoia likely spiked when he received news that in mid-2002 the Americans had allegedly offered to "respect" Russian economic interests in post-Saddam Iraq. In response, in August 2002, the Iraqis signed a \$40 billion USD five-year agreement for economic cooperation and trade with Russian oil firms and other industries in order to "ensure Russian political support."⁹⁹⁰

But even trade could not guarantee Russian support for Iraq. Despite rejecting the notion that regime change was a "legitimate goal" and while opposing unilateral American action,

⁹⁸⁷ CRS, "Russia and the War in Iraq, 14 April 2003," RS21462.

⁹⁸⁸ In 2003, top Iraq imports, in order, were from Jordan, Vietnam, U.S., Germany, Russia, UK, France, Italy, Australia, and Japan. Russia totaled \$240.2 million USD, USA totaled \$347.2 million USD, Jordan was \$693.1 million USD. CRS, "Iraq's Trade with the World: Data and Analysis, 23 SEPT 2004," RL32025.

⁹⁸⁹ CRS, "Iraq's Trade with the World: Data and Analysis, 23 SEPT 2004," RL32025.

⁹⁹⁰ CRS, "Iraq's Trade with the World: Data and Analysis, 23 SEPT 2004," RL32025. CRS, "Russia and the War in Iraq, 14 April 2003," RS21462.

Russian President Putin steered Russia in the path of least resistance against the United States throughout the U.S. build-up towards the invasion—the Russians did not want this new Iraqi dispute to spill over into a new Russian-American conflict. Putin’s decisions showed some ambivalence—he did not want to be seen as an “American vassal,” nor did he want to allow the Bush administration to operate at his expense or Russia’s.⁹⁹¹ By working with China, France, and Germany within the United Nations, the Russians sought to soften any blowback they anticipated facing in confronting the Americans. For example, the French assumed the leadership role in pushing UNSCR 1441 (8 November 2002) whereas Russia played a moderate role at the sideline.⁹⁹² But even China proved to be of little help as March 2003 neared. According to Ronald C. Keith, the Bush administration moved to mollify the Chinese who remained uncertain about the invasion by easing Washington’s complaints over “human rights in Xinjiang and the listing of the East Turkestan Independence Movement as a terrorist group rather than a freedom-fighter agency.”⁹⁹³

This passivity, however, should not be simply interpreted as Russia with its tail between its legs. It was a strategic retreat. By sidelining themselves, the Russians could maneuver for favors, trading vetoes and abstentions with the Americans for promises of economic opportunities for Russians in Iraq. The Russian press reported that, at a meeting in Washington DC late in February 2003, high-ranking Russian and American officials, including Putin’s Chief of Staff Aleksandr Voloshin “[attempted] to seal concrete economic deals in return for Russia’s

⁹⁹¹ CRS, “Russia and the War in Iraq, 14 April 2003,” RS21462.

⁹⁹² This resolution offered Iraq “a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations under relevant resolutions of the Council.” <https://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/documents/1441.pdf>

⁹⁹³ The alliance was not a total wash, for participations other than Iraq—the Russians and Chinese did join together and call for a restoration of Iraq’s sovereignty in October 2003. Ronald C. Keith, “Divining the Prospect of Sino-Iraqi Relations,” *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies*. 1(3), October 2007, 331-348.

support or abstention on the Security Council.”⁹⁹⁴ According to the *Washington Post* on 22 November 2002, this was a follow-up to an alleged “gentlemen’s agreement” that had been reached earlier in November 2002 between Russia and the United States.⁹⁹⁵

This “gentlemen’s agreement,” however, did not materialize the way the Russians had hoped it would. Although the Russians sought guarantees of their special interests chiseled in stone, the U.S. government demurred. Instead, Washington argued that Russia’s interests did not trump the interests of other states, that debts owed to Russia were not the only ones yet to be settled, and that the American companies, which had long been shut out of Iraq, were now due their time. There were some carrots—Congress granted Russia exemptions from the Jackson-Vanik amendment on 10 March 2003.⁹⁹⁶ However, there were more sticks. One week before the invasion, the U.S. Ambassador to Russia publicly told Russian reporters on 12 March 2003 that any Russian veto concerning Iraq would damage Russian-American relations.⁹⁹⁷

1991 Redux?

Iraqi actions against Russia certainly did not help the Iraqi cause. In August 2002, under the pretense of capturing weapons illegally stockpiled by “Iranian elements,” a section of the Iraqi intelligence service stormed a house in Najaf in southern Iraq rented by Russians. There

⁹⁹⁴ CRS, “Russia and the War in Iraq, 14 April 2003,” RS21462.

⁹⁹⁵ CRS, “Russia and the War in Iraq, 14 April 2003,” RS21462.

⁹⁹⁶ A product of the Cold War, and designed to place pressure on the Soviet Union, this amendment, part of the 1974 U.S Trade Act, forced countries seeking to benefit from normal trade relations with the United States to comply with “free emigration policies.” The amendment remained after the fall of the Soviet Union, and it was repealed and replaced by the Magnitsky Act in 2012. See Julie Ginsberg, “Reassessing the Jackson-Vanik Amendment” in *Council for Foreign Relations*, 2 July 2009, <https://www.cfr.org/background/reassessing-jackson-vanik-amendment>

⁹⁹⁷ CRS, “Russia and the War in Iraq, 14 April 2003,” RS21462.

the Iraqis discovered only two guns but also “a group of female individuals, half naked with foreign appearances”— prostitutes, if one reads between the lines. According to the after-action report, this forced entry was an accident—either the intelligence or the address had been incorrect, and the Russian house was supposedly not the intended target. Two Iraqis were sent to apologize for the “misunderstanding,” and they claimed that “their mission had no connection to our Russian friends.”⁹⁹⁸

This, however, did not stop two Russian intelligence officers and their translator from barging into the local Ba’th Party office the next day. They demanded a thorough explanation of the raid. The Iraqis pleaded with the Russians, speaking to them about “the relationship of Iraq and all the Arab Ummah (community) with the Soviet Union and its great positions during [the premiership of] President Nikita Khrushchev....” They cited yet again “the current friendly relations between Iraq and Russia,” continuing with more praise, even while reminding the Russians that they were “guests of the great leader Saddam Hussein and [were] the dearest friends contributing to the construction of Iraq while evil America tries to destroy it.” After this explanation, the Russians allegedly applauded the Iraqis, which followed with everyone shaking hands and then sharing pastries and cakes with one another. The Russian “friends,” according to the report, were very satisfied with the explanation.⁹⁹⁹ Why the raid was ordered remains unclear and whether this was a spook tactic ordered by the Iraqi intelligence service, one cannot say with 100% certainty. However, this incident is yet another symbol of the Iraqi-Russian relationship: Despite their shared goal, even with the United States increasingly engaged in saber-rattling and

⁹⁹⁸ Information, dated 10/18/2002, BRCC 0041-0044, 3811-0001, HB, HIA.

⁹⁹⁹ Information, dated 10/18/2002, BRCC 0041-0044, 3811-0001, HB, HIA.

in acting with something close to unilateral authority within the Middle East, these two states never fully trusted each other.

Iraq remained antagonistic towards Russia, targeting the commodity most valued by Moscow—oil. In January 2003, the Iraqi government unilaterally terminated a \$3.7 billion USD oil contract for the Russian oil firm Lukoil to develop the West Qurna oil field, located west of Basra near the Rumaila field. Outraged, Lukoil vowed to fight what it called “blackmail” in court. The Iraqi decision stemmed equally from their frustration and the need they felt to retaliate. Since 1997, the Russians had signed numerous oil and gas agreements with Iraq—many of them with U.N. approval—including another deal with Lukoil to install equipment with a “capacity to produce 100,000 barrels per day from West Qurna's Mishrif formation” by March 2000. However, not much work had been completed on this project by 2003, or even started for that matter, since in October 1999 the Russians had asked Iraq for a delay in fulfilling the terms of the contract. Lukoil cited the lingering threat of U.N. sanctions and disputes with UNSCOM inspectors. Iraq granted this delay but warned Lukoil that it could lose its contract if work did not begin soon.¹⁰⁰⁰ Although they did not cancel the contract in 1999, by January 2003, the Iraqi government was ready to make good on that threat.

Iraq’s sense of betrayal was not entirely unfounded. On 11 February 2003, *The Financial Times* reported that Lukoil CEO Vagit Alekperov had held earlier discussions with U.S. Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham and with Iraqi opposition leaders about Lukoil’s opportunities in Iraq after Saddam.¹⁰⁰¹ Fears of economic loss drove Russian foreign policy during this crisis—the Russians ultimately feared that they could lose \$5.2 billion USD in

¹⁰⁰⁰ Cordesman, “Iraqi Military Forces Ten Years After the Gulf War,” 38.

¹⁰⁰¹ CRS, “Iraq’s Trade with the World: Data and Analysis, 23 SEPT 2004,” RL32025.

contracts if Saddam Hussein's regime collapsed and they were left on the outside looking in.¹⁰⁰²

If Saddam expected the Russians to save his regime, he must have been bitterly disappointed and angry when the Russians evacuated their citizens in February 2003 in anticipation of U.S. action.¹⁰⁰³ On 12 March, Deputy Foreign Minister Georgi Mamedov said that the Russians wanted to "cooperate with the United States for an early resolution" of the conflict.¹⁰⁰⁴

For Saddam, it was First Gulf War all over again. Three weeks before the invasion commenced, Putin dispatched former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov to Baghdad to consult with Saddam. According to Primakov, Putin directed him to go straight to Saddam, bypassing Tariq Aziz, and to suggest to Saddam that he "step down voluntarily from the post of the president and for the Iraqi parliament to call democratic elections." Putin had hoped that, by doing so, Saddam would prevent U.S. action, bypass the U.N., and appear to offer a peaceful solution on his own terms. Saddam reacted poorly to Putin's proposal, accusing Russia of attempting to "deceive him once again." According to Primakov, when Saddam left the room, Aziz shouted to Primakov so that Saddam, who was still within earshot, could hear: "[T]en years from now, we'll see who was right—our beloved president or Primakov." It was the last meeting Primakov had with Saddam Hussein.¹⁰⁰⁵ According to captured Ba'ath documents, rumors

¹⁰⁰² CRS, "Iraq's Trade with the World: Data and Analysis, 23 SEPT 2004," RL32025.

¹⁰⁰³ CRS, "Russia and the War in Iraq, 14 April 2003," RS21462.

¹⁰⁰⁴ CRS, "Russia and the War in Iraq, 14 April 2003," RS21462.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Readers of Yevgeny Primakov should take care when consulting his writings. Overtly pro-Arab, and a personal friend of Saddam, Primakov was known to make boisterous statements throughout the George H.W. Bush, Clinton, and George W. Bush administrations. His book *Russia and the Arabs* is filled with many eyebrow-raising and dubious claims. In his section on the Iraq war in 2003, Primakov suggests that the U.S., using the C.I.A., was sending "encouraging signals" to Saddam before the invasion—hence Saddam thought he could survive this round of American intervention as he did the last. E. M. Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs: behind the Scenes in the Middle East from the Cold War to the Present*. (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 320-322.

suggested that children of high-ranking ministers and powerful financiers fled Iraq by way of Russia in the days leading up to the invasion.¹⁰⁰⁶ The U.S. invasion began on 19 March and the Ba‘thist regime would fall by 9 April.¹⁰⁰⁷

Iraq After Saddam

Upon receiving news of the invasion, Russian President Vladimir Putin called the U.S. intervention a “big mistake” and “unjustified.” As the Russian media cried out against the invasion and anti-American mass rallies spilled onto the streets of Moscow and St. Petersburg, Putin called for a quick end to military action.¹⁰⁰⁸ These public denunciations were made to appease Putin’s domestic supporters—over 90% of Russians opposed the war—yet the Russian government continued to err on the side of caution to preserve their relations with the United States.¹⁰⁰⁹ In a 5 April telephone call, President Bush and Putin reaffirmed their support for one another and promised to continue “dialogue with respect to Iraq.”¹⁰¹⁰ The Americans also pressed the Russians to cease any foreign support for the Iraqi war effort—including the sales of electronic jamming equipment and night-vision goggles—and formally protested to the Russian

¹⁰⁰⁶ CRRRC SH-GMID-D-001-080, Information Letter from the Iraq Military Intelligence Directorate about ANTHRAX; leaflets; American forces impersonation, and oil barrel trenches, 11 March 2003

¹⁰⁰⁷ Pesach Malovany argues that the Russians passed along information suggesting that the invasion would be “carried out through Jordan.” Saddam and the Ba‘th leadership believed this so much so that they “viewed the attack in southern Iraq as a minor effort, which was to lure them into transferring troops to that area, thus weakening the sector where the Coalition’s major effort would take place.” Pesach Malovany. *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2017), 690.

¹⁰⁰⁸ CRS, “Russia and the War in Iraq, 14 April 2003,” RS21462.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Interfax, Moscow, 5 March 2003 as cited in CRS, “Russia and the War in Iraq, 14 April 2003,” RS21462.

¹⁰¹⁰ CRS, “Iraq War: Background and Issues Overview, 22 April 2003,” RL31715.

government for “failing to prevent Russian firms from selling military equipment to Iraq in violation of United Nations sanction.”¹⁰¹¹

Once again, the Russian-Iraqi relationship could not surmount the pressure from the United States. The resolve of the U.S. government was unsurmountable, and the Russians certainly feared exclusion from a post-Saddam Iraq and other economic consequences if they seriously challenged Washington. During Saddam Hussein’s rule, Russia and Russian-controlled firms held more oil contracts with the Iraqi government than other any other state or company. A September 2004 CRS report argued that this was a “strategic advantage Russia fears it might lose if Iraq’s government is replaced by a regime with greater allegiance to the United States.”¹⁰¹² At the same time that Russia was important to Saddam and the Iraqis, Iraq was more important to Russia than Saddam was. The Russian oil company Lukoil was reportedly “interested in participating in the country’s rebuilding” and was ready to maintain existing arrangements and to open new ones. Even Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari, appointed in September 2003, acknowledged that “Russia has legitimate interests in Iraq.”¹⁰¹³

It is not yet clear why Russia hesitated and eventually refused to assist Iraq against the American invasion. An April 2003 Congressional Service Report argued that Putin was trying to balance three competing interests: “protecting Russian economic interests in Iraq, restraining U.S. global dominance, and maintaining friendly relations with the United States.” With the military gap rapidly widening between the Americans and Russians, as evidenced by Russia’s humiliating stumble in Chechnya, and with the refusal of the United States to commit to economic agreements in post-Saddam Iraq that would be beneficial to Russia, there was not

¹⁰¹¹ CRS, “Iraq War: Background and Issues Overview, 22 April 2003,” RL31715.

¹⁰¹² CRS, “Iraq’s Trade with the World: Data and Analysis, 23 SEPT 2004,” RL32025.

¹⁰¹³ CRS, “Iraq’s Trade with the World: Data and Analysis, 23 SEPT 2004,” RL32025.

much Russia could do.¹⁰¹⁴ The Russians wanted to continue challenging American hegemony, but it appears that, although they may have had the resolve to do so, they severely lacked the means.

Even after these events, Russia still maintained a vital presence in the Middle East. The removal of Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, thanks in part to NATO intervention and bombing campaigns, convinced the Russians that the West could not be trusted. According to Dmitri V. Trenin, the Russians believed that, "once [the Americans] pocket your concession, they ignore you; the United States and its allies have no compunctions about going beyond the limits set by U.N. Resolutions; Americans and Europeans are guided by grand but faulty ideologies and petty interests, as they lack strategic vision and fail to foresee even the immediate consequences of their actions."¹⁰¹⁵ After the Arab Spring in 2011, the Russians came to view Syria as their most important partner and, arguably, as their key protectorate in the region.¹⁰¹⁶ Moscow's "comeback" was a product of Russia's growing economic strength and its autocratic tendencies. Just as they were during the Cold War, Washington and Moscow entered into a new standoff. The United States was backing Saudi Arabia while Russia was backing Iran, and both were seeking to control Iraq. At the same time, both wanted the civil war in Syria to end—but on their own terms.

¹⁰¹⁴ CRS, "Russia and the War in Iraq, 14 April 2003," RS21462.

¹⁰¹⁵ Dmitri V. Trenin, *What is Russia up to in the Middle East?* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA, USA: Polity, 2018), 48. See also Alan J. Kuperman, "Obama's Libya Debacle: How a Well-Meaning Intervention Ended in Failure," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2015.

¹⁰¹⁶ Although, as if an illustration of yet another legacy, the Syrians and Russians still struggle over their goals and policies for the region. Baghdad has become the "center for Russo-Iranian-Syrian-Iraqi relationship." Trenin, *What Is Russia up to in the Middle East?* 63, 71-74.

Legacies

Even before Saddam Hussein and his family fled Baghdad, al-Qaeda operatives and their affiliates circulated instructions and calls for Iraqis to fight the “crusaders” as early as the beginning of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003. In one particular set of instructions, the author called for guerilla war, providing instructions on how to smuggle fighters into Iraq and urging readers to follow Osama bin Laden’s calls to resist the Americans, whom he called “invaders.” If Saddam and his regime failed to fight against the Americans themselves, the author argued, jihad must still be carried out:

The enemy is careful to broadcast many explanations to confuse and weaken us. Whether Saddam and his forces disappeared and resurfaced to start guerilla warfare after a period of slackness by the American forces, or whether he fled and his forces were defeated; or that Saddam's power was just a big lie by the Iraqi Intelligence; or there was a conspiracy between him, the United States and Russia, all these had one result, that Iraq was invaded by the Crusaders, and we must apply Jihad to expel them.¹⁰¹⁷

This passage argues that the strength of the regime was a myth perpetuated by the Iraqi intelligence service.¹⁰¹⁸ It also alleged that an American-Russian-Iraqi conspiracy helped to maintain the survival of the Ba‘thist regime for as long as it did. It is ironic that Russia would be linked to this “conspiracy”

¹⁰¹⁷ CRRC, SH-MISC-D-000-479, Al' Qaeda Military Instructions to the Fighters and Insurgents in Iraq urging them to Fight the Crusaders, date unknown (prior to April 2003). Translated directly, jihad (جهاد) means “struggle.” Because the term has been co-opted by extremists and terrorist groups, it is often mistranslated into “holy war.” For more on this phenomenon and the concept of “jihad” as holy war see Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones (Ma'alim fi al-Tariq)*, originally published in 1964. William Faizi McCants, *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*. (New York: Picador, 2016); Shadi Hamid, *Islamic Exceptionalism: How the Struggle over Islam Is Reshaping the World*. (New York: Saint Martin’s Griffin, 2017).

¹⁰¹⁸ Some aspects of this have been supported by recent scholarship. See Malovany, *Wars of Modern Babylon: a History of the Iraqi Army from 1921 to 2003*; Samuel Helfont, *Compulsion in Religion: The Authoritarian Roots of Saddam Hussein’s Islam*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Hashim, Ahmed. "Saddam Husayn and Civil-Military Relations in Iraq: The Quest for Legitimacy and Power." *Middle East Journal* 57, no. 1 (2003): 9-41.

given that the relationship between Baghdad and Moscow was severely strained at times, both in the Cold War and in the 1990s. It is also interesting that al Qaeda singled out Russia as part of this “conspiracy,” forsaking the likes of France and China, each of which played a vital and arguably equal role in Iraq’s diplomatic ambitions in the 1990s. It appears that even authors and operatives in al-Qaeda were well aware of the Iraqi-Russian relationship.

Iraq’s foreign policy and diplomatic relationships during the Cold War and in the 1990s were complicated. Its relationship with Moscow was often in flux, each manipulating the other for its own benefit. It was a relationship built on convenience but steeped in mistrust and betrayal, but one from which neither party could walk away entirely, no matter the level of frustration and the sense of treachery. The fall of the Soviet Union did not wipe away these sentiments, as they only continued through the rise of the Russian Federation. Even then, however, Iraqi interests did not rely on the Soviets, and Baghdad pushed its own agenda. Maneuvers into Lebanon and the Horn of Africa were predicated on the wish to expand Iraq’s regional influence and to prove its ability to project power beyond its own borders. The Iraqi intervention in Lebanon and its diplomatic meddling in the Horn of Africa illustrate the scope of Iraqi foreign interests and its willingness to demonstrate the strength of its own autonomy. They went well beyond Iraq’s dealings with Iran, the Kurds, and the Americans, upon which most Western literature has been focused. At the same time, even as Iraqi activities in Lebanon and the Horn of Africa indicate just how far Baghdad’s interests extended beyond their own borders, they also reveal how ineffective Iraqi efforts were.

Much more work is needed to grasp fully how Iraq acted within the Cold War and beyond. Too often, Iraq’s history has been told from a Western point of view, slighting the

perspectives of the Iraqis themselves. This study is meant as a step toward giving Iraq a platform from which to speak in its own voice, a voice which is just now beginning to be acknowledged.

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Appendix A - Abbreviations

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BRCC | Ba‘th Arab Socialist Party Regional Command Collection, Hoover Institution and Archives, Stanford University |
| CIA | Central Intelligence Agency, USA |
| CRRC | Conflict Records Research Center, formerly held at National Defense University at Fort McNair, Washington, D.C. |
| EO | Embassy Organizations (Iraq) |
| FCO | Foreign Commonwealth Office records, the National Archives at Kew Gardens, London, United Kingdom |
| FOIA | Freedom of Information Act |
| FRUSA | Foreign Relations of the United States of America |
| GFL | Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, MI |
| GHWBL | George H.W. Bush Presidential Library, College Station, TX |
| HB | Hizb al-Ba‘th al-'Arabī al-Ishtirākī Records, (Ba‘th Arab Socialist Party of Iraq) Hoover Institution and Archives, Stanford University |
| HIA | Hoover Institution and Archives, Stanford University |
| ICP | Iraqi Communist Party |
| IPC | Iraqi Petroleum Company |
| JCL | Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, Atlanta, GA |
| KIDS | Kuwaiti Dataset, Hoover Institution and Archives, Stanford University |
| NSC | National Security Council (USA) |
| NIDS | North Iraqi Dataset, Hoover Institution and Archives, Stanford University |
| NYT | <i>New York Times</i> |
| OI | Organizations of Iraqis |
| RMNL | Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library, Yorba Linda, CA |
| RRPL | Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, CA |
| TNA | The National Archives at Kew Gardens, London, United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNSC | United Nations Security Council |
| UNSCR | United Nations Security Council Resolution |
| USD | United States dollar (\$) |
| WJCL | William J. Clinton Presidential Library, Little Rock, AR |

Appendix B - Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the U.S.S.R. and Iraq

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ANNEX C:

TEXT OF SOVIET-IRAQ TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP AND
COOPERATION

The Iraqi Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, being firmly convinced that the further development of friendship and comprehensive cooperation between them accords with the national interests of both states and serves the cause of peace in the whole world and in the region of the Arab countries, and in the interests of the freedom of peoples and their security and respect for their sovereignty; considering that the strengthening of the cohesion of all the forces of peace and progress, including the consolidation of the unity of Arab states on an anti-imperialist basis, is an important means of struggle for stronger world peace and security; being inspired by the ideals of struggle against imperialism, colonialism, Zionism and reaction, and for the freedom, independence and social progress of peoples; being convinced that international problems in the contemporary world must be solved through cooperation and by seeking solutions acceptable to the parties concerned; affirming their peace-loving foreign policy and their allegiance to the aims and principles of the UN Charter; being moved by a desire to develop and consolidate the existing relations of friendship, cooperation and mutual trust between them and by a desire to raise them to a new still higher level, decided to conclude this treaty and agreed on the following:

Article 1: The High Contracting Parties declare that unbreakable friendship will exist between the two countries and their peoples and all-round cooperation will develop in the political, economic, trade, technical, scientific, cultural and other fields on the basis of respect for state sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

Article 2: The Iraqi Republic and the USSR declare that they will cooperate closely and comprehensively in ensuring conditions for preserving and further developing the social and economic gains of their peoples and respect for the sovereignty of each of them over all their natural resources.

Article 3: The High Contracting Parties, consistently pursuing a policy of peaceful coexistence among states with different social systems in accordance with their peace-loving foreign policy, will continue to stand for world peace, relaxation of international tension, and for the achievement of general and complete disarmament encompassing both nuclear and conventional weapons, under effective international control.

Article 4: Guided by the ideals of freedom and equality of all peoples, the High Contracting Parties condemn imperialism and colonialism in all forms and manifestations. They will continue to wage an unrelenting struggle against imperialism and Zionism and for the full, final and unconditional elimination of colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism and apartheid. They call for the earliest and complete implementation of the UN declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples. The two parties will cooperate with each other

21

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and with other peace-loving states in supporting peoples' just struggle for their sovereignty, freedom, independence and social progress.

Article 5: In view of the great importance they attach to economic, scientific and technical cooperation between them, the High Contracting Parties will further expand and deepen this cooperation and exchange of experience in the fields of industry, agriculture, irrigation and water conservation, exploitation of oil and other natural resources, communications, transport, other branches of the economy, and the training of national cadres. The two sides will expand trade and shipping between their two countries on the basis of the principles of mutual benefit, equality, and most favoured nation treatment.

Article 6: The High Contracting Parties will promote the further development of links and contacts between them in the fields of science, art, literature, education, health services, the press, radio, television, the cinema, tourism, sport and other fields. The two sides will promote the expansion of cooperation and direct contacts between government institutions, social organisations, and scientific, cultural and economic establishments in the two countries for a deeper mutual acquaintance with the life and achievements of the peoples of the two countries in various fields.

Article 7: Attaching much importance to concerted action in the international field in the interests of ensuring peace and security and to developing political cooperation between Iraq and the USSR, the two High Contracting Parties will hold regular consultations with each other at various levels on all important international issues affecting the interests of the two countries and on questions concerning the further development of relations between them.

Article 8: The two High Contracting Parties will, in the event of situations developing which endangers the peace of either of them or constitute a threat to peace or a violation of peace, hold immediate contacts to coordinate their positions in the interests of eliminating the threat which has arisen or re-establishing peace.

Article 9: In the interests of the security of both countries, the two High Contracting Parties will continue to develop cooperation in the strengthening of the defence capabilities of each.

Article 10: Each of the two High Contracting Parties declares that it will not enter into any alliance or groupings of states or take part in any actions or undertakings directed against the other High Contracting Party. Each of the two High Contracting Parties also undertakes not to allow its territory to be used for any action that might cause military harm to the other party.

Article 11: The two High Contracting Parties declare that their commitments under the international agreements now in force do not conflict with provisions of this treaty and they undertake not to conclude any international agreements incompatible with it.

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Article 12: The present treaty is concluded for a period of 15 years and will be automatically renewed for each subsequent five-year period unless one of the two High Contracting Parties express its desire to terminate it by giving notice of this to the other High Contracting Party 12 months before the expiry of the treaty.

Article 13: Any differences that may arise between the two High Contracting Parties over the interpretation of any of the provisions of this treaty will be settled bilaterally between them in a spirit of friendship, understanding and mutual respect.

Article 14: This treaty is subject to ratification and will come into force on the day of the exchange of the instruments of ratification, which will take place in Moscow at the earliest possible time. The present treaty is concluded in two versions, in Russian and Arabic, both texts having equal force. Done in Baghdad on 9 April 1972, which is equivalent to 25 Safar 1392.

For the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics:

A Kosygin

For the Iraqi Republic:

A H al-Bakr.