

self-sufficiency in scientific and technical personnel. As a result, almost all industrial contracts that Iraq signs with a foreign concern include provisions for training local personnel to run and maintain the factory after it is completed.

Inter-Arab obstacles to development

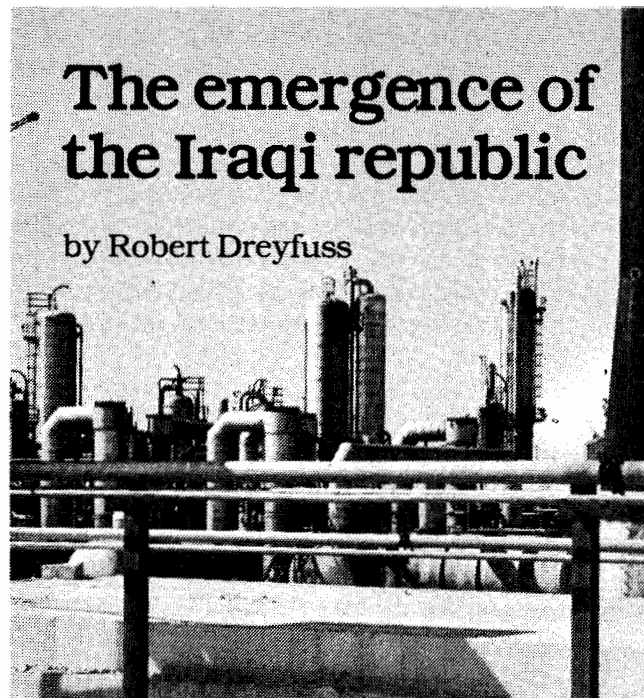
One of the most serious impediments to Iraq's development, and the economic growth of the entire Arab world, is the longstanding feud with Syria. Just before the outbreak of the Iranian revolution in 1978, Iraq and Syria were on the road to resolving their ideological differences. But it was pro-Khomeini elements inside the Syrian leadership who halted the Iraq-Syria dialogue.

A manifestation of that dispute has been uncertainty over the availability of water flowing from the Euphrates River from Syria into Iraq. Syria has withheld water by constructing a dam, which has sparked heated differences between Baghdad and Damascus. Furthermore, Iraq needs transit access to Syrian ports to relieve the bottlenecks which have jammed up Iraq's tiny port facilities on the Persian Gulf. During that brief effort on the part of Damascus and Baghdad to overcome their differences, a wide array of economic cooperation agreements were worked out; had they come to fruition, they would have made the Syrian-Iraqi alliance the most economically and militarily powerful in the Arab world.

Since the collapse of the Iraq-Syria dialogue, Iraq has increasingly turned towards Jordan. Since the 1978 Arab summit Iraq has begun to provide Jordan with a substantial yearly grant of \$1.1 billion. Not only are Iraq and Jordan talking about major water-sharing projects, but Iraq has made a sizable investment in the expansion of Jordan's port facilities on the Gulf of Aqaba, and has begun a series of projects to build transportation lines between the Jordanian port and Iraq.

Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq are at the same time intensifying their cooperation to provide regional security. This cooperation has won the full support of France. It is expected that a new Arab Organization for Industrial Development, which will produce arms for the Gulf states, will be centered in Iraq. The French firm Thomson-CSF run by Philippe Giscard d'Estaing, the cousin of the French president, is expected to help create the AOI, with funds from the wealthy oil-producing Gulf states.

The decision to escalate regional security, which has yielded France close to \$8 billion in defense contracts with the Arab world, was the result of the perceived threat to Arab security by the regime of Iran's Khomeini, on the one hand, and the aggression against the Arabs in Lebanon and the West Bank by the Begin government on the other.



For many years, it has been a constant theme in the works of American, British, and Israeli political scientists that, as a nation-state, Iraq ought not to exist at all. Because of the long-established tribal and ethnic differences in Iraq, it has been commonplace in certain circles to declare that under the slightest pressure Iraq would disintegrate into a number of squabbling mini-states. "There is no 'Iraqi nation,' nor is there a tradition of cooperation to cement the various communities," wrote Uriel Dann, an Israeli intelligence officer, in 1968.

It was in that year that a political-military combination led by a relatively unknown civilian leader of the Iraqi branch of the Arab Baath Socialist Party, Saddam Hussein, established the government that still rules Iraq today. Since that time, despite great adversity and difficulties, President Saddam Hussein has confounded every prediction and forecast about the inherent instability and essential ungovernability of Iraq.

Against all odds, under Saddam Hussein, Iraq has emerged as a solidly founded, developing Arab republic which, in an area of constant turmoil and terrorist insurrections, is battling to secure its future against the threat of spreading Muslim fundamentalism and ultraleftist politics. The accomplishment of Saddam Hussein is that he has managed, with few resources, to do what was alleged to have been impossible: to hammer Iraq into shape as a nation, unifying its diverse communities and ethnic blocs in support of Iraq's national effort.

What makes the effort all the more remarkable is that Iraq has achieved what it has so far despite the lack of a qualified leadership cadre. The Iraqi leadership, most of

Photo courtesy of the Oil Ministry of Iraq

whom are young and relatively unsophisticated in international politics, is severely lacking in the maturity and resources of more established nations, even in the Arab world. Egypt, for instance, with a highly educated elite, or Syria, which has a smaller, but still skilled and sophisticated kernel of technocrats and intellectuals, far surpass Iraq in terms of personnel pools on which to draw. But Iraq, because of its long history as a virtual colony of Great Britain, which kept Iraq backward and undeveloped, did not develop much of a national elite until the most recent times.

The key to success: 'Baath' means renaissance

Nevertheless, it is a testimony to the leadership of the inner circle around Saddam Hussein that Iraq has managed to survive as a nation despite a dozen political shocks, from assassinations and attempted coups d'état to a virtual civil war sparked by CIA-financed Kurdish tribesmen in 1973-75.

That accomplishment derives from a single, overriding reality, namely, that Iraq's leadership has managed to instill in the country's population a deep loyalty to the concept of economic development and social progress. In nearby Iran, it was the failure of the shah to transform his commitment to economic development into a political institution among the backward peasant population that made the shah's regime an easy mark for the Islamic revolution of Ayatollah Khomeini and his mob. But, according to all accounts, the Iraqi population is convinced that its future in terms of economic progress is inextricably linked to the continuation of the regime of the Baathists and President Hussein.

The Kurdish rebellion

A case in point is the Kurdish revolt. After the defeat of the Kurdish insurrection at great cost in 1975 and the signing of the Iraq-Iran agreement of that year, the military power of the feudalist Barzani tribes was broken. But the potential still existed for another revolt among the extremely backward and uneducated mountain-dwelling Kurds, long suspicious of the central government in Baghdad. In the wake of the war, Iraq's policy toward the Kurdish area was simple and straightforward: development. Withdrawing its tanks, Iraq sent bulldozers and construction equipment. Schools, hospitals, roads, factories, and modern agricultural institutions were established all over Kurdistan, which, until then, had been the most undeveloped area of the entire Middle East.

The nation was mobilized for the Kurdish development effort. Iraqi newspapers proclaimed the effort to develop the Kurdish region as an essential task of national security. Major Kurdish projects were de-

scribed at length in the Iraqi media, and the area rapidly became a showcase for visitors. Anxious to combat hostile propaganda from exiled Kurdish feudalists in London, who resented the breakup of their fiefdoms and the transformation of Kurdistan into a modernizing area, the Iraqis took foreign visitors on guided tours of Kurdistan to show them the massive construction projects in an area where many people had never seen electricity.

For many Iraqis, the economic development battle to secure Kurdistan symbolized the most urgent requirement of the Iraqi state. As we shall see, Iraq has had a long and bitter history of division and destabilization.

The emergence of a nation-state

In the spring of 1980, for the first time in Iraqi history, national elections were held for an Iraqi constituent assembly, or parliament. Despite continuous border tensions with Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran and attempted political assassinations by Khomeini partisans in Iraq, the parliamentary elections went smoothly and, in every district, including formerly troubled Kurdistan, delegates to the assembly contested for seats.

The election of Iraq's parliament was little noticed in the United States, receiving no more than a footnote in the major American daily newspapers. But it was an important milestone for Iraq. For the first time the diverse ethnic, tribal, and religious sectarian communities of Iraq, and its varied economic regions, its towns and its cities, were unified in a single representative institution symbolic of the nation-state of Iraq.

But it was not always that way.

The Fertile Crescent: flourish and decline

The territory that is now Iraq was once merely a shapeless, undefined province of the rotting Ottoman Empire in the period before World War I. Of course, since time immemorial, the rich river valley lying between the twin Tigris and Euphrates rivers had been a flourishing civilization and a coherent and well-organized political entity. According to some accounts, the Tigris-Euphrates region was the very cradle of civilization itself, the legendary location of the biblical Garden of Eden. Throughout the centuries, Iraq existed as a more or less secure and developing region, culminating in the Golden Age of the renaissance that followed the founding of the city of Baghdad in 754 A.D. by the partisans of the Muslim Abbasid Revolution. The civilization that took root in Baghdad under the caliphs then led to a vast expansion of Iraqi and Arab commerce and agricultural development, so that in the ninth century Iraq is said to have supported a population

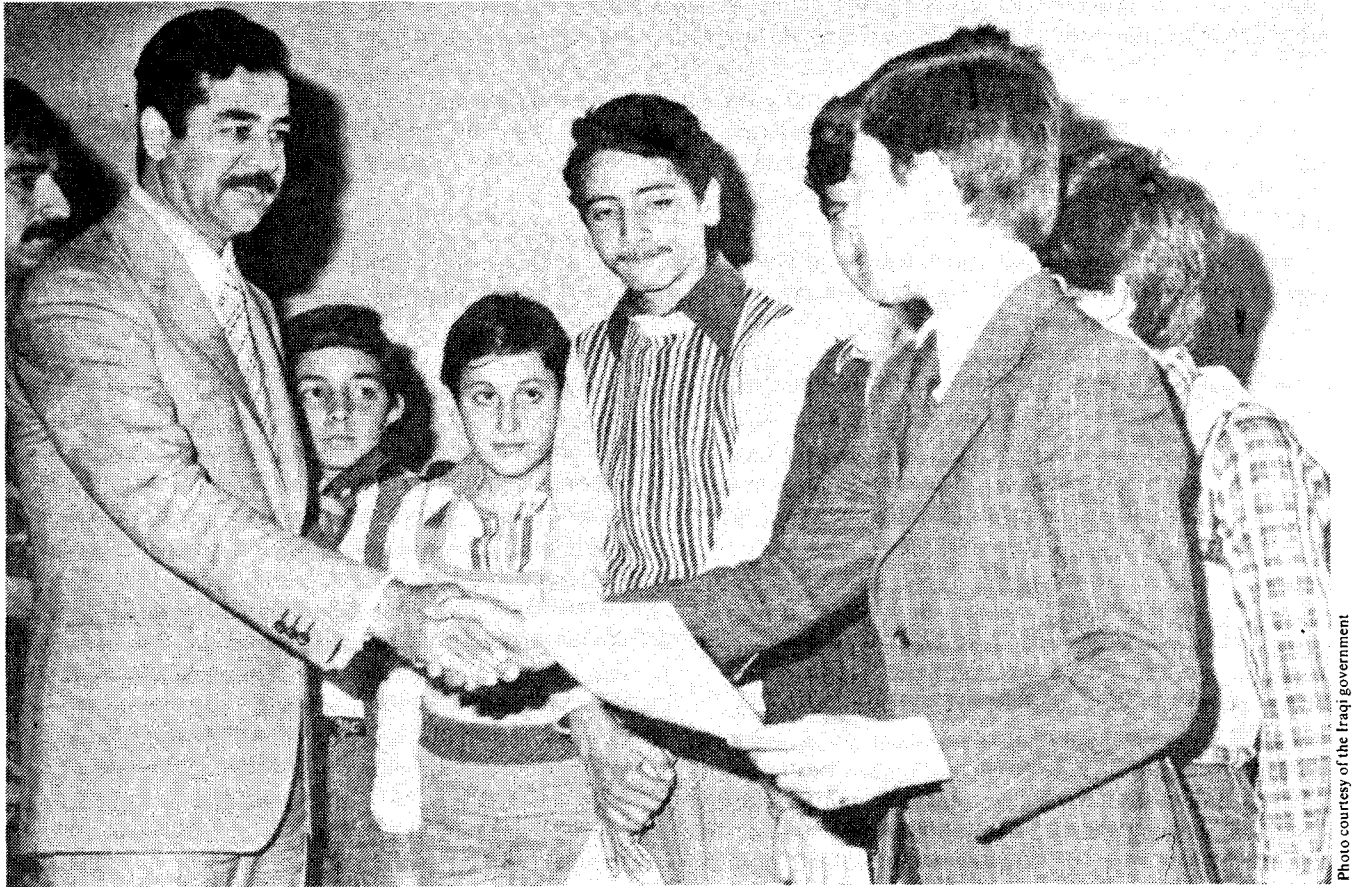


Photo courtesy of the Iraqi government

Saddam Hussein at the Presidential palace with students.

twice or even three times its present 11 million people!

But with the collapse of Baghdad, Iraq went into a long period of decline. With the growth of British colonial and imperial influence in India and the Persian Gulf, a weakened and economically devastated Iraq, then a province of the Ottoman Empire, fell gradually into the British sphere of influence.

Before the revolution: economic, social, religious divisions

At the start of the 20th century, Iraq was politically fragmented, economically divided, and virtually devoid of anything even resembling an Iraqi national elite.

In the north of Iraq, for instance, the cities of Mosul and Kirkuk were closely linked to Turkey and Syria, and their leading feudal and semifeudal families maintained close relations with the authorities of the Ottoman Empire and the Levantine trading elite of the Mediterranean coast. At the same time, the city of Baghdad and most of central Iraq, including the Muslim Shi'ite holy cities, were essentially no more than an appendage of Persia, and the leading families of Baghdad gained their livelihood from commerce with caravans into Persia and central Asia, in isolation from the

much closer towns of northern Iraq.

Meanwhile, yet a third Iraqi pole formed around the southern port of Basra, whose merchants and seagoing traders looked mainly to the Indian Ocean states, and India itself, as their lifeline.

In effect, Iraq—even before it emerged as a state—was divided into three distinct entities in political-economic terms: Mosul-Kirkuk, Baghdad, and Basra.

Two other major cleavages existed to prevent or retard the formation of a positive Iraqi national awareness.

The first was religious. Three broad divisions existed. In the south, Arab Shi'ites predominated; in the north, Sunni Arabs; and in the northeast, Kurdish Sufi mystical brotherhoods and secret societies were the rule. Added to these divisions, sharp divisions existed between townsmen and countrymen.

The British enforce backwardness

With the establishment of the British-sponsored monarchy in Iraq in the 1920s, the British deftly encouraged the perpetuation of all these divisions. The British-authored official Iraqi Constitution of 1925, for instance, provided for the recognition of backward tribal

customs of cult practices as official under Iraqi law outside the towns, while asserting an entirely different code of laws within the borders of arbitrarily defined urban areas! At the same time, the British encouraged the development of sectarian "identities," by such measures as providing by law for the teaching of the Kurdish language and Kurdish "history" in the Kurdish areas of Iraq.

But the most devastating legacy of the British administration in Iraq, and then the long period of the pro-London monarchy which was finally overthrown in 1958, was the almost universal suppression by London of all tendencies for the formation of a national elite. Until 1958, education in Iraq was almost nonexistent, and illiteracy was nearly universal. The extent of Iraqi social and economic deprivation before 1958, when it became widely known, shocked the outside world after the revolution.

Decade of instability

Between 1958 and 1968, Iraq was ruled by several governments that tilted back and forth between highly conservative, landlord-dominated regimes and leftist-radical regimes like that of Gen. Abdel Karim Kassem. What marked the 1958-1968 period in Iraq was a growing nationalist tendency, particularly in matters linked to the oil industry. But their naive efforts to stabilize Iraq fell victim to repeated leftist and rightist attempts to keep the country off balance. For the most part, the left and the right in Iraq during this period were led by elements associated with the British secret services and the old British colonial administration.

For instance, on the left the British and the Bertrand Russell circles in London were largely the initiating force behind the creation and growth of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). The ICP drew its strength from the Shi'ite oil workers in the south of Iraq and from the wild Kurdish tribesmen in the north. Even to this day, the combination of Communists, Kurds, and Shi'ites is the base of British and CIA operations against the Iraqi leadership.

At the same time, remnants of the old Iraqi landed families who survived the 1958 Jacobin-style terror continued to serve as right-wing conduits for British influence in Iraq.

Power struggle after the revolution

After 1968, with the emergence of the Baath Party government, the process of developing a nationalist Iraqi consciousness that would supersede the existing old tribal and religious divisions began to take shape. Within the Baath Party itself, two broad factions contended for power:

First, the radical and often extremist circles linked to the ultraleftists, to the Assad-Jadid clique in Syria, to

the pro-Chinese currents in the Arab world, to the Palestinian terrorist groups like George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and finally to the mystical pan-Arabism of Michel Aflaq; and *second*, the legitimate Iraqi "nationalists" led by Saddam Hussein and his closest aides, such as Tariq Aziz, Taha Yasin Ramadan, Adnan Khairallah, and several members of Hussein's own family.

The issue that separated Saddam Hussein's faction from the others was the question of whether or not Iraq would proceed from the basic necessity to develop itself as a nation-state. The radicals and pan-Arab ideologues were prepared to sacrifice vital Iraqi national interests for the pursuit of confrontation with Israel. Instead, Saddam Hussein argued that Iraq—and the Arabs—must put a premium on basic economic development, in the belief that Israel's edge derived from superior education and economic development in comparison to Arab backwardness.

In recent years, the emergence of Saddam Hussein into prominence as the real leader of Iraq has taken place at the expense of the more extremist and often unstable factions mentioned above. The eclipse of Michel Aflaq, the rigid ideologue of the Baath Party, who is now merely a figurehead in Iraq, helped to erase Iraq's image internationally as an ideologically rigid, almost fanatical nation. The gradual break by Iraq with the leftist Palestinian groups like the PFLP, and finally the public ouster of Habash's and Nayef Hawatmeh's gangsters from Baghdad in 1979 also improved the Iraqi standing throughout the Arab world and internationally.

An important turning point occurred with the determined purge of a host of agents of British intelligence, Israel's Mossad, and the KGB of the Soviet Union in 1979, just before and then after Saddam Hussein assumed Iraq's presidency. This eliminated a dangerous group of Shi'ite followers of Ayatollah Khomeini, a group of Kurdish dissidents, some Iraqi Communists, and a few outright British agents, in a move generally viewed as decisive in consolidating Saddam Hussein's power.

Future tests for Iraq

Because of Saddam Hussein's uncompromising action last year, Iraq is now more free than at any time in its recent past of serious internal challenge. For this reason, it is able to pursue its war to crush Ayatollah Khomeini's mullahs in Iran with little risk of instability on the home front. Given the history of Iraq, that is a remarkable achievement. Now, the crucial test is yet to come: will Iraq's leadership have the skills and the intelligence to successfully complete the transformation of a backward, peasant nation into an emerging industrial republic?