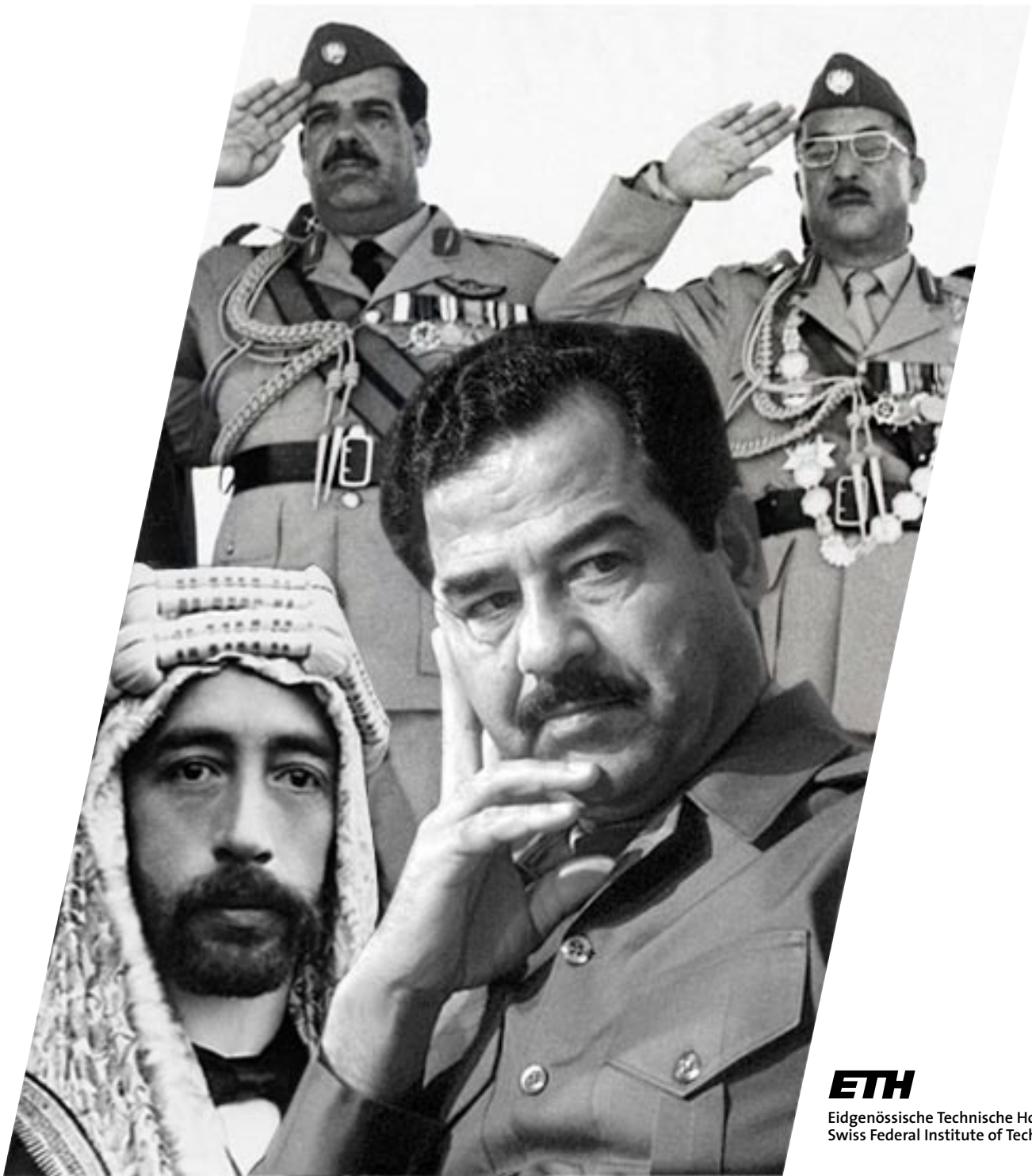


INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND SECURITY NETWORK
IRAQ BETWEEN TWO OCCUPATIONS
OBSERVATIONS ON IRAQ AND THE
GREAT POWERS (1933–2003)



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M.K. Abdullah Saeed and Christopher O'Sullivan

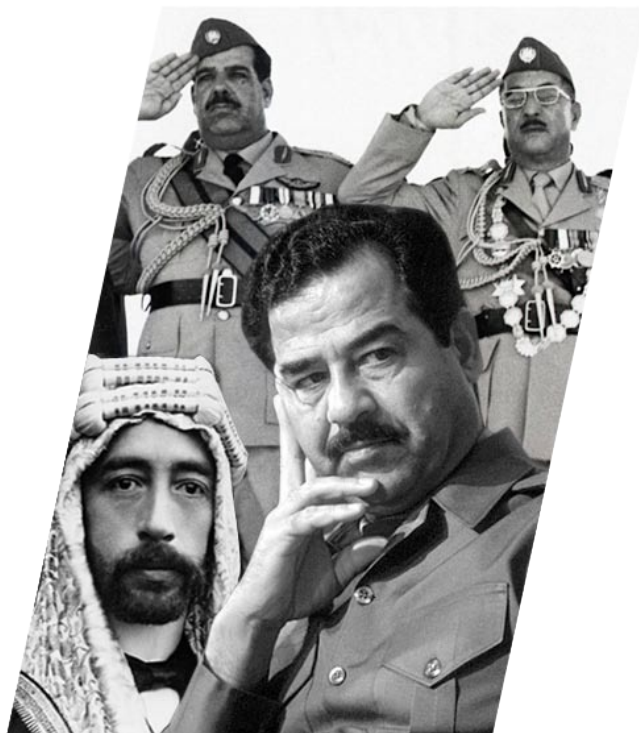


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INTRODUCTION

The current war in Iraq has brought Americans and Iraqis together in innumerable and unanticipated ways. This paper represents a collaboration between a US diplomatic historian and a former Iraqi diplomat. It is the first in what is projected to be a series of joint projects examining various aspects of Iraqi foreign and domestic politics and history. Both scholars, working collaboratively with Iraqi, US, and British source materials from archives in the Middle East, Britain, and the United States, have sought to synthesize different perspectives on Iraq's place in the world. What they offer here are observations on some of the factors shaping the evolution of Iraq's relations with the outside world. While a growing body of scholarship is beginning to examine Iraq's history and culture, little has thus far been written about Iraq's relations with other nations. Iraq's development as a state has not occurred in isolation. It has instead been part of a larger narrative involving various outside powers, including the Ottoman Empire, Germany, Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union.

IRAQ IN THE WIDER WORLD: THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Iraq fell under Ottoman occupation in 1638, but from the beginning of the seventeenth century, the European powers were already interested in Mesopotamia's geostrategic locale and resources. In 1622, Britain, through its East India Trading Company, was able to wrest from the Portuguese the strategic Strait of Hormuz, the entrance to the Persian Gulf, and British trading ships started to call at Iraq's only port city of Basra as early as 1635. British traders were thus interested in Iraq at an early stage and Anglo-Iraqi trade relations began a long era of contact and exchange. Throughout the following decades, British survey teams explored Iraq to study its potential as a link to India via its two great rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. France also became interested when Napoleon, after conquering Egypt in 1798, expanded his imperial designs through the Levant toward Asia. Germany, too, was interested and convinced the Ottoman Sultan to grant permission to build a Berlin-Baghdad railway line that could ultimately be stretched to the shores of the Gulf. Iraq's relations with the Ottoman Empire and Germany would provoke various crises in Iraqi relations with Great Britain throughout the 20th century.

In Iraq's relations with the outside world, oil has been both a blessing and a curse, although mostly a curse. The discovery of oil in Persia during the later years of the 19th century accelerated European interest in Iraq's oil potential. The Ottoman Empire's involvement in the First World War, and its eventual defeat, paved the way for the European victors to divide the Arab states among themselves in accordance with the Sykes-Picot agreement. The Paris Peace Conference of 1919 accepted the proposal to place the nations that had seceded from the Ottoman state under the mandate of other states until such nations could function independently. Britain long had designs on Iraq for its strategic location and ultimately obtained control over Iraq, Transjordan, and Palestine under a League of Nations mandate, while France obtained Syria, Lebanon, and a percentage of Iraqi oil concessions. The United States was not yet interested; other than scattered philanthropic, missionary, and educational endeavors, it remained outside the region in any official capacity short of its consular representation. Iraq, under British mandate, was designated "class A" owing to its comparatively developed status.

Doubt engulfed the process from the beginning because of the failed British promises to Sharif Hussein to grant the Arab states independence after the end of the war in return for rebelling against the Turks. Iraqi interests and feelings were always something of an afterthought to the British. The opposition to the mandate led to the outbreak of a national uprising on June 30, 1920 that developed into a full-scale revolution engulfing the entire country. The British had never attempted to be particularly subtle about their interest in Iraq. During the 1920s, Iraq was subjected to extensive imperial violence. The British in Iraq, much like the French in neighboring Syria, used Iraq as a laboratory for the use of new military technologies, particularly airpower, to subdue a resisting population. The British Army suffered more than 2,000 casualties and the British government incurred substantial expenses to crush the revolution. British public opinion began to call for withdrawal from Iraq. Even as early as the 1920 revolt, the British could not accept that the Iraqis had the wherewithal to genuinely resist their domination. Thus, if the revolt was not a spontaneous outpouring on the part of the Iraqi people, it must have been inspired from elsewhere. Some in the Foreign Office concluded that the Bolsheviks were behind the 1920 rising.

The British tightened their grip on Iraq. Sir Percy Cox, the British High Commissioner, subsequently created an interim national government in October 1920 headed by Abdul Rahman al-Naqeeb. In spite of the establishment of an Iraqi government, real power rested in British hands. British officials had the final say in all important state matters. But the massive amounts of funds needed to maintain the British military presence in the country drove the British government to consider the installation of a king to rule the country and the creation of a national army for the maintenance of law and order. The British sought to maintain the supervisory role through a bilateral treaty between the two countries. Such a treaty would, nominally, replace the mandate.

The British soon came to realize that in Iraq they had more than they had bargained. A conference was held in Cairo in March 1921 where one of the chief topics of discussion was the reduction of financial expenditures on Iraq. During the 1918-

1921 period these expenditures had exceeded 150 million pounds sterling, nearly totaling the amount spent on all social spending in Britain itself. The other important decision was the nomination of Prince Faisal, Sharif Hussein's son, as Iraq's king. Faisal had played a major role in the Arab revolution and became Syria's king when he liberated it from Ottoman rule. He was driven from Syria after France claimed its "rights" there following imposition of the mandate. The very weakness of Faisal's position in Iraq was seen as an asset for the British, for a weak monarch might prove more beholden to British influence.

King Faisal understood the perilousness of his situation. On one side was a British government that wanted the mandate to continue under the guise of a bilateral treaty. On the other stood the Iraqi people who opposed British dominance over their country and demanded immediate independence. Furthermore, Faisal was compelled to accept the advice of the High Commissioner who was, practically speaking, the power behind his throne. At the same time he had to outwardly project the image of an independent ruler who was interested in the aspirations of his people. At heart he wanted to strike a balance between the British and the Iraqis while working gradually to achieve complete independence. But he was convinced that he was surrounded by adversaries from all directions: the British, the French in Syria, the Turks, the Kurds, the Persians, and the Saudis.

ANGLO-IRAQI RELATIONS AND THE 1922 TREATY

The British desired to enhance their position in Iraq while reducing their responsibilities and liabilities. Britain wanted to conclude a bilateral treaty with Iraq that would replace the mandate, organize the internal and external affairs of Iraq, and lessen their financial obligations while maintaining, at the same time, direct rule of the country. Faisal was hoping to have a treaty between the two countries where Iraq would be afforded equality with no reference to the mandate. This position led to a confrontation during negotiations between the British officials and Iraqi politicians. The king chose to use brinkmanship but was threatened by British Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill – his choices were severely limited. After strenuous negotiations, a treaty was signed in October 1922. An attached protocol was signed and ratified in April 1923 stipulating that the treaty would terminate upon Iraq's entry into the League of Nations with an option to then conclude a new treaty.

Iraq embarked upon its own scheme of nation-building. It went ahead in the establishment of its basic political and administrative infrastructure with the founding of a national parliament upon a royal decree signed in October 1922. Its first session was held in March 1924. The constitution was enacted by the parliament and signed by King Faisal in March 1925. Perhaps most importantly, the oil concession was signed that same month and heralded the beginning of the most substantial source of revenue for Iraq, but also marked the beginning of one of the major sources of contention between Iraq and outside powers. Iraq was thus on the path of semi-autonomous development. This of course displeased many British colonial officials who tried to rigidly frame Anglo-Iraqi relations through the 1922 treaty and, later on, the 1930 treaty. However, these treaties did not release Iraq from its obligation to “consult” with the British, particularly with regard to the conduct of foreign relations. Each successive post-independence cabinet was required to seek “advice” from the British Embassy when certain matters of grave importance, domestic or foreign, arose. Moreover, the Iraqis would be charged with many of the responsibilities now. They would themselves have to devote a portion of their meager tax base to subsidizing the British military presence in Iraq, a military presence that was used to keep them firmly within the “informal” British empire. In essence, the British expected the Iraqis to help pay for their own subjugation.

IRAQ'S FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE MONARCHICAL PERIOD, 1932–1958

Iraq's primary leaders came to understand that their freedom of action was limited. After the declaration of the mandate and the establishment of monarchy, Iraq was under the domination of Britain. The 1922 bilateral treaty did not recognize Iraq as a sovereign and equal state but as one under direct supervision. Foreign policy was among the aspects of government that were subjected to prior consultation with the mandatory power. This was a cause for deep popular discontent.

Iraq's relations with the outside world were also in a state of transformation. At that time Iraq was taking its first steps in the world and it did not even have a trained diplomatic corps to undertake its foreign affairs. This was slowly built under British direction. Many of the "founding fathers" of the young state had military educations and training in Turkey and spoke Turkish along with Arabic. Some high-ranking officers spoke French and German owing to their training under foreign supervision at the Turkish Staff College. They began to learn English, which was necessary to manage their communications with foreign diplomats. Iraq started to have diplomatic legations in other Arab countries and Europe. It embarked on building good relations with Arab countries at a time when these countries, like Iraq, were under mandate, with the exception of Saudi Arabia.

The late 1920s and early 1930s witnessed the early stirrings of the pan-Arab nationalist movement. Many of the young Arabs who were studying at institutions of higher learning throughout the Arab world such as Iraq, Lebanon, and Egypt were staunch nationalists. The foreign mandates that were imposed on their countries played a major role in fanning antagonisms toward the British and French. Nationalism and opposition to the British thus became one avenue to political power in Iraq. The so-called "golden square" officers who grew increasingly powerful in Iraq in the late 1930s were strongly nationalistic and the new monarch, young Ghazi, was deeply influenced by them and their views. He grew up with a strong antagonism toward the British who had betrayed his grandfather Sharif Hussein and occupied his country. He had served as his father's *aide-de-camp* upon his graduation from military school and was deputized as Crown Prince when his father paid state visits outside Iraq. The

British were initially taken aback by the surprising popularity of Ghazi, who became King in 1933 upon his father's death and soon discovered innovative ways to reach the Iraqi masses through the use of radio to broadcast anti-British speeches.

Perhaps the British never intended to grant *de facto* independence to Iraq. Perhaps they feared a truly independent Iraq would set a dangerous precedent for their other possessions in the region. In any event, the Treaty of 1930 seemed to many Iraqis another betrayal. Ultimately, Iraqis did not much care how they were governed, just as long as it was not by foreigners. One of the legacies of these years was a growing suspicion of treaties. Iraqi politics soon degenerated into a pro-treaty or pro-British faction led by Nuri al-Saeed and an anti-treaty or anti-British faction led initially by King Ghazi himself but, after his untimely and mysterious death in 1939, by Rasheed A'ali and the Golden Square thereafter.

The British archival records from the time reveal that they were greatly relieved by the death of Ghazi, in part owing to the fact that Ghazi had not demonstrated sufficient fear of the British. The British announced that Ghazi had perished in a car accident on the night of April 3, 1939, an explanation that was widely suspected by most Iraqis to be a cover for his assassination. This suspicion was further reinforced when Ghazi was succeeded by a palace faction sympathetic to the treaty. Anti-British rioting in reaction to Ghazi's death resulted in the killing of the British Consul in Mosul by an angry crowd. Subsequent events only reinforced the conspiracy theories. Because Ghazi's son, Faisal II, was only three, he was replaced by a regency led by the unpopular Abd al-Ilah, a virtual British puppet who had been staunchly pro-treaty and favored by the mercurial politician Nuri al-Saeed. In retrospect, Ghazi's death was also a severe blow to the monarchy in Iraq, which thereafter, in part owing to the unpopularity of Abd al-Ilah, never regained the legitimacy it had possessed in the 1930s.

Such antagonisms between Iraq and the British intensified when the Second World War broke out and Britain openly demanded the severance of diplomatic relations between Iraq and the Axis powers. The British embassy even went so far as to demand the arrest of citizens and diplomats of these

countries who were living in Iraq, an unprecedented move that was not complied with. Two veteran Iraqi politicians took opposing sides in this bitter diplomatic crisis. Nuri al-Saeed sided with Britain and wanted to carry out its demands. Rasheed A'ali strongly opposed this request and wanted to assert Iraq's neutral position in the global war, much like neighboring Turkey. A'ali won the first round in the Spring of 1941. But Nuri was ultimately restored to power by British arms, whereupon he severed relations with the Axis states and sided unconditionally with the Allies.

ARAB NATIONALISM AND COLD WAR

The tumult of the post-war years confronted Iraq with new crises and saw the emergence of numerous challenges to traditional Iraqi politics and the old ruling elite. The Arab-Israeli war that followed the establishment of the state of Israel in May 1948 had a deep impact on Iraq and its people. It proved to be a contributory factor in the political instability in Iraq following the unpopular Anglo-Iraqi Portsmouth treaty upheaval of early 1948. Perhaps more importantly, for the long-term history of the region, the war was the starting point for the establishment of the Free Officers movements in both Egypt and Iraq. The Egyptian officers were able to carry out their coup in July 1952. The Iraqi officers did so six years later in July 1958.

The conservative ruling elite was bewildered by the changes occurring in the Arab world. At the same time, Iraq was struggling with the transition towards becoming a modern state. After many years of wrangling, in February 1952 Iraq at last reached an accord with the British oil companies to share the royalties on a 50-50 basis. This gave Iraq substantial funds to finance its development programs. A Development Board was established to plan for and supervise development projects. The regime contracted the services of Western experts who prepared ambitious plans promising to thrust Iraq into the ranks of the developed countries in only two decades. Gigantic dams were planned to ensure the systematic irrigation of arid but fertile lands that were to be densely cultivated with much-needed staple crops and also to check the threat of annual floods that have threatened Iraq since the time of Sumer. Modern industries were to be established as sources of economic activity other than the oil industry. Modern urban planning and healthcare would be introduced in order to compensate for centuries of neglect and exploitation. More than 70 per cent of oil revenues were earmarked to finance such development projects.

Iraqi officials sought to adapt to the new order emerging in the Middle East. The post-World War II period witnessed the first meetings of the Arab League and the United Nations. The United States emerged as a power to be reckoned with in Iraq and the Arab world and closer relations were established with US offers of assistance in the fields of education, scholarship, science, and medicine. The first Arab-Israeli conflict in 1947-1948 had not deterred close relations between Iraq and the West

and the young King of Iraq visited the United States during the 1950s. Relations with Britain remained intact but under the surface the Iraqi population seethed with anti-British rage. Events in the broader Arab world had repercussions in Iraq. In 1952, popular discontent led to the declaration of martial law and the establishment of a cabinet that was headed by a military general. An emerging class of intellectuals started to demand freedoms and elections without interference from the royal court and traditional politicians. They sympathized with the pan-Arab nationalists in Cairo and desired similar changes in Iraq. The young Iraqi army officers constituted their own clandestine movement aiming to topple the regime which was pro-Western and blamed for the loss of Palestine. King Faisal II was crowned king of Iraq upon his coming of age in 1953, but his pro-Western uncle, the despised Abd al-Ilah, continued playing an influential role as the power behind the throne. He adamantly refused to relinquish power to the young king and to a rising generation of discontented Iraqis.

IRAQ AS PART OF THE COLD WAR REGIONAL DEFENSE SYSTEM

In the mid-1950s Iraq began to move more assertively into the pro-Western camp. In February 1955, Iraq concluded a mutual-security pact with Turkey. It aimed to transform the military alliance created by this treaty into a regional defense system that would complement the US-backed "Northern Tier" strategy to contain the Soviet Union through encircling military alliances. Pakistan and Iran joined the alliance which was named the Baghdad Pact (1955). Both Britain and the US entered as observers. Relations with other Arab countries, such as Egypt and Syria, were complicated by the Baghdad Pact. Relations with the socialist nations were virtually nonexistent, owing partly to the animosity towards communism by the conservative monarchical regime.

The Pact provoked deep divisions in the Middle East. The Arab world during this time (the 1950s) was inspired by pan-Arab nationalist thought, promoted by Egypt, which sought a leading role in the affairs of the region. The Baghdad Pact gave Cairo a pretext to seek to isolate Iraq for entering into a foreign military alliance. Mistrust arose throughout the Arab countries between those invited to join the alliance and those that declined to do so. The latter, led by Nasser, claimed that the pact represented a revival of Western imperialism in the region. Furthermore, due to the historic rivalry between the two countries, Egypt did not welcome Iraq's bid to play a more prominent and leading role in the region. This prompted a campaign against the Baghdad Pact members in general and Iraq in particular. It was aimed at galvanizing the national feelings of pan-Arabists in Iraq who admired and followed the ideologies of Nasser. Iraq was thus becoming of greater importance to the United States in the years after the signing of the pact.

Beyond diplomacy and geopolitics, the Baghdad Pact also had profound domestic consequences for Iraq and added yet another pretext for discontented Iraqis who were sensitive to foreign intervention in their country's affairs. Iraq and Jordan formed a Hashemite Union on February 14, 1958 as a countermove to Egypt's union with Syria. While an army brigade was in transit to Jordan on July 14, 1958 it entered Baghdad, assassinated the royal family and Nuri al-Saeed, and declared the founding of the republic. Thus ended almost four decades of monarchy in Iraq.

IRAQ'S FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE DECADE OF COUPS: 1958–1968

The end of the monarchy not only changed the course of Iraqi history and society, it altered the course of Iraq's relations with the outside world. The coup of July 1958 provoked a complete turn in the state's foreign policy. Relations with Britain and the US were downgraded while those with the countries of the Eastern bloc, headed by the Soviet Union, flourished. Arms sales and economic and technical cooperation became the cornerstone of new relationships. Technical assistance was regarded as a sign of good will as long as it did not come from former imperial states. Also, the diplomatic backing by the socialist states in international forums played a major role in bolstering their foreign relations with Iraq, and of moving Iraq in an increasingly nonaligned direction.

Ironically, in light of later events, the Ba'athist coup of February 1963 began the process of moving relations back to the Western camp, although not to the extent of the era of monarchy. Cooperation in the technical, educational, and economic fields once again focused on Western sources. Such relations were abruptly severed after the 1967 war with Israel, owing to the US position during and after that war. Diplomatic relations were not restored until the Reagan administration in 1984, but economic and technical cooperation continued, especially in the area of high-technology. Relations with Britain and Europe were normal and productive while France, demonstrating more sympathy with the Arab cause, enjoyed a very special relationship. Iraq also began gravitating toward the Soviet Union, a trend that resulted in the 1972 signing of a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Moscow.

Iraq had withdrawn from the Baghdad Pact and thus had to take its requests for weapons to different countries. This began a problematic course owing to the conviction that if the ruling regime was to survive it had to have ever larger supplies of armaments and increasing numbers of army conscripts. This led to the diversion of much of Iraq's oil revenues from much-needed development projects towards military spending.

IRAQI FOREIGN RELATIONS UNDER THE SECOND REPUBLIC: 1968–2003

Ba'athism also provoked changes in Iraqi foreign policy. The Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party was established during the late 1940s in Syria. Branches had appeared in neighboring Arab countries starting with Iraq. It became politically active during the fifties and participated in the opposition movement against the monarchy. It did not have the influence and magnitude the other Iraqi parties enjoyed but it was well-organized and active. The Ba'athist ideology is secular and draws from the Arab and Islamic heritage with an emphasis on "Arabism" that does not discriminate between Muslim and Christian Arabs. Its central organizing slogan is "unity (of the Arab states), freedom (from the imperial powers), and socialism (state control over economic affairs)." This second Ba'athist republic sought to follow a neutralist strategy during the late 1960s and early 1970s, but its main aim was obtaining arms. The states that provided them with the fewest restrictions, such as France and the Soviet Union, enjoyed preferential relations with Baghdad.

But Ba'athism did not necessarily bring harmony in Iraq's relations with other Arab states. Ba'athist ideology was subject to different interpretations and rifts emerged between the Syrian and Iraqi branches. After the 1968 coup in Iraq, the party's high command was composed of a mixture of military and civilian members. The president of the republic was General Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr and his cabinet included military officers, civilian party members, and civilian nonparty members. The latter were soon replaced with party members and this became the criterion for appointment in the cabinet posts and other sensitive places like the army, the security forces, the education ministry, and the foreign affairs department. Efficiency and political independence were downgraded because most civil servants had either to be Ba'athist or, at least, pro-Ba'athist. This compelled much of the Iraqi intelligentsia to depart Iraq for nearby Arab states or to western countries. This trend began with the emigration of many thousands of Iraqi physicians (reputed to be among the finest in the Middle East), and, later during the decades that followed, engineers, scientists, craftsmen, and even semiskilled workers who searched for a safe haven. As the Party consolidated its grip on the country and its people by creating an effective, if merciless,

security apparatus, it spread its tentacles to include those who were active outside the country, as well.

Moreover, oil increasingly played a major role in Iraqi foreign relations. It bestowed the force that could not be attained through military power. Revenues from oil exports ensured the successful annihilation of the regime's enemies. Much of Iraq's oil wealth was squandered on regime-sponsored vanity projects and on the acquisition of modern weaponry that was used to fight the war with neighboring Iran, which had undergone a radical change with the Islamic revolution of the late 1970s. Its foreign relations with Iraq started to deteriorate. In September 1980, Iraq launched a bloody war against Iran – which had become an international pariah due to the taking of US hostages the year before – that lasted eight years and cost tens of billions of dollars in weapons and hundreds of thousands of lives, as well as lost opportunities for development. Estimates of Iraqi casualties are in the area of 420,000 (120,000 dead and 300,000 wounded) with Iranian casualties estimated at 750,000 (300,000 dead and 450,000 wounded). This also led Iraq, despite its oil wealth, to incur a foreign debt estimated at between US\$60 billion to US\$120 billion. Iraq had been unable to export oil through the Gulf and the Shatt al-Arab waterway remained closed. The economy also suffered at the hands of the ruling regime, which wanted to keep everything under its control. Food and basic necessities were scarce in the oil-rich country because of mismanagement of the distribution process. The oil industry was nationalized in 1972 and was the only sector that was run efficiently by the government because of its paramount importance as the major source of income for the country.

The socialist era had many good results such as the provision of free education, medical care, and affordable state services like electricity and drinking water. But few Iraqis could aspire to the coveted high places in the government without joining the party ranks. Military conscription became a nightmare that drove many of the young to flee Iraq. Nonetheless, the 1970s seemed to many the most promising decade in the Second Republic's history. Oil prices quadrupled in less than a decade and filled the state coffers with hard currency. By

the end of the seventies 3,000 foreign companies were working on development projects. Ironically, if this trend had continued throughout the 1980s Iraq might have made great strides. But the war with Iran had put many of the development projects on hold and placed Iraq on a permanent war footing. On the diplomatic front, Iraq took the lead in late 1978 in expelling Egypt from the Arab League in retaliation for the Camp David accords with Israel. These events seemed to portend an earth-shattering change in geopolitical relationships in the Middle East, as Iraq and Syria subsequently announced plans for a union of states. Saddam Hussein had by now worked his way to the first spot in the country by using methods that included party purges and assassinations of fellow Ba'athist comrades. The proposed union with Syria became a victim of the regime's paranoia, collapsing in recriminations and accusations by Baghdad that Syria had plotted the overthrow of the Iraqi regime. Corruption was rampant. The government chose to turn a blind eye because of the worsening economic situation, but it did not neglect purchasing more arms. More intellectuals left their homeland and the expatriate Iraqis were estimated to be in the excess of three million.

During that period, Iraqi relations with Europe and the US underwent an unprecedented renaissance resembling that of the mid-1950s. Large loans poured into Iraq to help it resist its adversary, the Iranians. Bilateral relations between the West and Iraq started to warm and improve after the attack on Iran. The Western states were in full sympathy with Iraq, which was seen as confronting the Islamic revolution and its exportation. Diplomatic relations with Washington were restored in 1984 and several trade deals and loans were extended to Iraq throughout the years of war. Some of them were economic credits for the intended purchase of American wheat and other civilian commodities that were ultimately converted to military use. Saddam was grateful for US military protection, which extended to the reflagging of oil tankers in the Gulf region and the shooting down of a civilian Iranian plane by the US fleet in the Gulf. The Reagan, and later Bush, administrations gave Saddam every reason to believe that relations could only get better.

When the war ended in 1988 there was a brief repose of two years that was broken when Saddam invaded and occupied neighboring Kuwait on the pretext of the latter's role in lowering oil prices in the international markets. Iraq had historic claims

on Kuwait that dated back to the days of King Ghazi, including subsequent claims by Nuri al-Saeed and Abdul Kareem Qassim who had declared Kuwait as an Iraqi province. Kuwait was under direct Ottoman rule until 1899 when its emir asked for and received British protection. The historic limits of the emir's initial legal jurisdiction did not exceed the outer walls of Kuwait city and the rest was under Ottoman rule until the British occupation of Iraq in the First World War. One of the historic follies in the subsequent delimitation of Iraq's borders was leaving the country in a semi-landlocked state. Iraq was left with only the port city of Basra as an inadequate outlet to the Gulf and the outside world.

Saddam's invasion of Kuwait was his second major strategic mistake after the war on Iran. Iraq became a pariah among most states including its brethren Arab countries. Thirty five nations, led by the United States, defeated the Iraqi army and devastated the already ravaged infrastructure when war was launched on Iraq in January 1991 to liberate Kuwait. But the real damage was from the UN-imposed economic sanctions that were carried out with an efficiency that ensured that the country remained under an airtight embargo of literally everything from the outside world. This caused innocent civilians to suffer many thousands of casualties because of the lack of food and medicines. Reputable US, international, and UN humanitarian relief and human rights organizations documented the human toll of the sanctions. UNICEF warned that child mortality rates were 160 percent higher in 2000 than in 1990. It also brought about psychological and social change and damage. The UN-imposed sanctions regime exacerbated the diplomatic scene when certain states flouted the sanctions and chose to be on Iraq's side either openly or discreetly while others boycotted Iraq completely.

The now infamous oil-for-food program was the inspiration of UN Resolution 986 (April 15, 1996) and began during the next year. Iraq's oil exports were restricted by the agreement's terms. The exact amount of revenue that was obtained through the years (1997-2003) is not exactly known due to the recent disclosures of bribes and controversial deals in which some UN officials and international corporations had played a part. The oil prices fluctuated through the program's period. But for most Iraqis, an estimated 16 million of whom became reliant on food rationing, the oil-for-food program became their only outlet to avoid

malnourishment or worse. UN agencies estimated that as many as 50,000 Iraqi children died each year from malnutrition and otherwise preventable disease. Government accounts were highly-guarded secrets that were never disclosed. Oil-for-food was suspended just two days before the 19 March 2003 US invasion of Iraq. Iraq was increasingly isolated, and matters of diplomacy drifted aimlessly until the US invasion when Iraq entered a new phase in its history of relations with the outside world. The long and painful years of sanctions had wrecked havoc upon the country and its people and played a major role in hastening the regime's abrupt collapse in April 2003.

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ENDNOTES

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