CHAPTER - VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Iraq became a modern State in 1920. It was created by the League of Nations after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, and was composed of the three former Ottoman provinces, namely Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul. The majority of the population is Muslim which comprises of three major ethnic groups/sects — Sunni, Shia, and Kurd. In 1921, Faisal became the king of Iraq and a national government formed. The king was the Head of State and also the Commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He had the power to select the Prime Minister, to issue orders regarding holding of general elections, and to convene, adjourn and dissolve parliament. Iraq finally achieved independence in 1932 and in the following year king Faisal died. Faisal's death brought his young and inexperienced son, Ghazi, to power. Later King Ghazi after his death in an car accident was succeeded by Faisal II, who was a minor at that time. Therefore Prince Abdul Illah (a cousin of Ghazi and maternal uncle of Faisal II) ruled Iraq as regent from
1939 to 1953. On May 24 1953, after reaching of his majority Faisal II became the King and headed the government until his destruction at the hands of the revolutionaries in 1958. However, from the mid-1940s to 1958 the regime became increasingly identified with Nuri al-Said, an ex-army officer, who held the position of Prime Minister for most of this period.

Under the monarchy rule, political power had vested mainly in a small group of Sunni officials who surrounded the rulers. Even after Iraq's independence in 1932, Britain's involvement in Iraq continued. It still had a say in the affairs of the State. In the post-independence period tribal leaders also assumed significance. They were considered pillars of support for the monarchical regime. On the contrary, the vast majority of the population remained excluded from any meaningful participation in the government affairs. Significantly, the unity of the State was well maintained, despite the fact that the governments, during this period remained generally instable. The fact which provided stability to the State was that the economically powerful and socially influential people in all the three provinces remained loyal to the central government. However, in 1936, the military intervened in politics of the country,
and since, has remained a potent political force in Iraq.

The Revolution of 1958 brought an end to monarchy system in Iraq. A group known as the "Free officers" (a secret organization within the military) led by General Abdul Karim Qasim spearheaded this revolution. Reasons for resort to revolution were slow rate of material progress and also the absence of civil liberties. However, the Revolution, and the subsequent regime too failed to fulfil the aspirations of the masses. The decade that followed can well be characterized as the period of political instability, as Iraq witnessed frequent change of regimes during this period. However, in 1968 the Ba'th Party's grabbed the power and succeeded in providing political stability to the State.

Having learnt some important lessons from their failures in 1963 when it assumed power for a brief period, the Ba'th Party gave top priority to the suppresion of internal opposition and to consolidate the power of the party. The Ba'th Party had since been able to establish its supremacy over other groups but in the process it had silenced its opposition by means which are far from being democratic. Nevertheless, the Iraqi State had committed itself to the task of overall development. Nationalization
of Iraqi oil company brought in huge amounts of oil-revenue which ultimately enabled the State to carry out several development projects.

It is important to discuss here today that many Third World countries are plagued with serious problems such as, poverty, population explosion, malnutrition, high rate of unemployment, low per-capita income, inadequate and insufficient health facilities, inequality, and illiteracy, etc. In addition to these, racial/ethnic and environmental problems have also emerged as serious problems in the Third World countries. Even though the Middle East countries fall in the category of developing countries yet in certain respect they are different from rest of the developing countries. For example, the Middle East countries have to face the challenges of proper utilisation of their expandable resources, restructuring of their economies, diversifying of their resources, tackling their clogged social mobility, and altering their social structure, etc. Besides these economic and social problems, most of the Middle East countries have also been facing several political problems.

This study is an attempt to study and assess the amount of success Iraq has achieved on various fronts, e.g., in its
programme of social, political and economic development after the Ba'th Party's assumption of power in 1968. This study also tries to measure the Party's failure in solving many social, political and economic problems which the State faces today. As has been discussed in this work, Iraq cannot be distinguished from other Middle East countries in respect of political, economic and social problems.

As far as political development, were concerned, Iraq had faced with a number of problems, like state-building, political nature of army, faltering democracy, and totalitarianism, etc. Although, the Revolution of 1958 had brought and end to monarchy and made Iraq a republic, it failed to grant political stability to the State. For a full decade, from 1958 to 1968, there was a frequent change of regimes, each characterized by disunity, bloodsheds, chaos and intense power struggle. This phase of uncertainty, however, came to end after the siezure of power by the Ba'th Party.

After the takeover the most formidable task the Ba'th party faced was that of state-building in the face of ethnic diversity and religious heterogeneity. The present study also assesses the Kurdish problem and Shi'a-Sunni dichotomy in Iraq. Iraq, indeed, has inherited these problems due to
division in a population consisting of around 55 per cent Shi'a Arabs, 20 per cent Sunni Arabs, and 18 to 20 per cent Kurds.

The Kurds' demand for a separate area Kurdistan had been a chronic one, and has posed an obstacle in the process of the nation-building in Iraqi state. Different regimes in Iraq had failed to assimilate the Kurds into Iraqi society and State. The Kurds have constantly expressed their indifference because of their geographic concentration and their different cultural and linguistic identity. In this context Jacob M. Landau has noted that the Kurds provided an example of "irredentism" which aims at retrieval of "the homeland territories inhabited by an ethnically or culturally related group." It should be noted that the Kurds who form a large population in Iran, Iraq and Turkey have always aspired to unite in one nation state.

Significantly, the Kurds joined the Progressive National Front alongwith the Ba'th Party and Iraqi Communist Party. However, differences propped up after the Algiers Agreement of 1975 which resulted in withdrawal of Kurdish representatives from the Government. Relations between the regime and the Kurds kept on deteriorating to the point when the Government ordered military action there in order to
quell their agitation. It is alleged that the Government forces used chemical weapons to destroy the Kurds. Iraq, no doubt, remained intact as a State despite several powerful Kurdish uprisings and revolts, but it is clear that none of the regimes got success in integrating the Kurds into Iraqi State and society. It is also clear that Iraq would face the Kurdish revolts in the future, unless attempts are made to seek Kurdish co-operation by means of giving them full representation in the Government.

Shi'as as mentioned above, form a majority in Iraq. However, the Shia's have never challenged the territorial integrity of the State. Their main demands had been an adequate representation in Iraq's political system. Saddam Husain has inducted some members of the Shi'a community into the Government and bureaucracy, and has also extended economic benefits to them, but these moves are far from satisfactory.

It is important to note here that geographical distribution of the Shi'a's as also of the Kurds in Iraq had helped in keeping the Iraqi State intact. The southern Iraq had been the stronghold of Shi'a community. On the other hand the majority of Iraq's Kurdish population is settled in the Northeast. This physical separation has hampered any
possible cooperation between the Kurds and the Shi'as. The
Government also enjoys complete support of the Iraqi army
which has an overwhelming majority of Sunnis. With the help
of the army the Government has been able to suppress the
Kurdish and Shi'a revolts.

As a whole, the Iraqi army has so far been
indispensable factor in the process of state-building. But,
side by side the army has also been intervening frequently
in politics of the country. According to Elizabeth Picard,
"Military intervention in politics had become commonplace in
many Arab states".1 However, the situation in Iraq, after
1968, has been different since the Iraqi army is dominated
by persons loyal to Ba'th party. Moreover, the top brass in
the Iraqi army consisted of people of Tikriti origin; they
owe special allegiance to Saddam Husain who is himself a
Tikriti. For the last several decades the Iraqi army acted
as an agency for internal suppression.

Analyzing the 'political culture', in the Arab world,
Fouad Ajami pointed out that "The State does not rule but it
reigns. The State reigns insofar as it maintains a monopoly

1. Elizabeth Picard, "Arab Military in Politics", in G.
Luciani ed., The Arab State (London: Routledge, 1990),
p.190
over the means of violence". At the same time it does not rule since it lacked political will. Iraq is a glaring example of this sort of 'Political culture' discussed by Ajami.

Undoubtedly, under the Ba'th rule Iraq lacked political will. The total membership of the Ba'th party was a mere 400-500. However, this number has increased to one million by 1976. The party organization has been substituted for a civil society, which ceased to exist. The regime found a narrow social base in the form of Ba'th party members. This was combined with a highly and brutally expressive political order, especially after Saddam Husain.

However, politically speaking, the process of State formation has failed to consolidate a secular, republican government. No doubt, under the Ba'th rule, Iraq had achieved political stability but failed to win over various sections of society and assimilate them into the mainstream. With time the State has gradually moved towards authoritarianism, on the basis of which the establishment has managed to eliminate its enemies, whether individuals or

a group, through means of terror and violence.

In the context of economic development, it would be worthwhile pointing out that prior to 1968, Iraq was not in good shape. The reason was that, the country's principal source of income, i.e., the "Oil", was not completely under the control of the Iraqi Government. The Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC) earlier had an agreement with ERAP, a French company, which used to render assistance in production of oil. The Ba'th regime was not satisfied with the low production of oil by the company and nationalized it 1972. This step gave the Iraqi government total control over its oil-production and sales and paved the way for the regime to reap full benefits and also to cash the opportunity in the face of the steep price rise in the aftermath of the fourth Arab/Israeli War in October 1973. The oil revenue inflows from 1973 to 1979 were very large and had proved to be of great financial profit for Iraq. The development programmes of the State got boost from oil since latter provided the necessary finances.

Nationalization of oil and subsequent price rise also gave impetus to industrialization in Iraq. The 10-year period from 1970 to 1980 was marked by unparalleled growth in the industrial sector. The two 5-year development plans
covering the period from 1970 to 1980 provided a total allocation of 5,199 million Iraqi dinar for the industrial sector, which has been all time high allocation in one decade for industrial sector.

Though the overall growth of industry in Iraq has been impressive, most of the growth has taken place in large firms. By 1971, large scale industries had taken a clear lead in industrial employment and output. Significantly, most of these industries were increasingly capital intensive. Hence, capital stock increased more than threefold between 1960 and 1970 and this trend remained continued throughout the 1970s. But this substantial input of capital stock did not translate into major increase in capital productivity. Moreover, industrial sector failed to keep pace with market demand. Further, the ultimate objective of industrialization—to achieve self-sufficiency could not be gained since growth of industry could not cut down the ratio of imports of goods such as paper, plastics, rubber, and chemicals, etc.

The deplorable conditions of the peasantry, stricken with poverty, disease and illiteracy, could only attract the attention of Iraqi rulers after the overthrow of monarchy. The monarchs of Iraq did not try to improve the positions of 238
the peasants because any change would have affected the landlords. And, since the landlords were regarded as the 'pillar of support' for the monarchical regime it would have ultimately affected the monarchy. In other words, the 'feudal system' was a very important phenomenon. The large number of landowner's took away the lion's share and the peasants were left barely on a subsistence level.

General Abdul Karim Qassim, who came to power after the Revolution of 1958, has issued an Agrarian Reform Law. However, not much headway was made, because of the frequent change of regimes. Added to this were the administrative difficulties in implementing the law. However, a new law dealing with land tenure was issued in 1970 which was based on socialist principles and was designed to improve the peasantry's condition. The new law superseded all earlier Laws and fixed a ceiling on land. Every landowner in possession of lands in excess of the limit fixed up by the State had to give it up on the ground that all lands belonged originally to the State and that most of the landowners had grabbed it through political influence. However, the agriculture sector still suffered from mismanagement of land reforms, low production and other reasons which have been discussed in detail in chapter IV.

239
The war with Iran, compelled the Iraqi Government to adopt *infitah* (economic open door) policy since by 1980 the food import bill has gone up to $1.4 billion. Unable to cope with the situation the regime introduced privatisation of agriculture sector. However, the incorporation of a large number of peasants into the armed forces became another factor which hindered the increase in production.

Presently the situation of Iraqi economy is very grim. The developments programmes which were being carried on during the 1970's were hampered due to prolonged war with Iran (1980-80), followed by the Gulf War (1991) and subsequent economic sanctions imposed by UN Security Council. Recently, after the periodic review the Security council has decided to continue the five-year-old sanctions against Iraq without any change. Now it would be interesting to watch how Iraq comes out from these chronic problems and rebuilds its economy from the lowest point.

Having reviewed the pattern of political and economic development, we have attempted to focus on the pattern of social development, particularly after 1968. During the period 1970-90, Iraq's population had doubled due to high annual growth rate and a sharp decline in the rate of mortality. The most significant demographic trend in Iraq
has been the rapid migration from countryside to cities. The principal cause for this migration is basically economic. However, a sizable number of these migrants remained unemployed. The main cities which attracted migrants were Baghdad and Mosul which have a large number of industries. Significantly, the outcome of this urbanization was the loosening of the homogeneity of traditional society and to bringing different ethnic and social groups together.

We have already seen the heterogeneous nature of Iraqi society. It is important to note here that the most serious demographic division is ethnic. For instance, the Kurds are different from Sunni and Shi'a's as they are not Arabs. The Iraqi Kurds are only a portion of larger Kurdish population with whom they identify themselves on linguistic, cultural and nationalistic grounds. Landau stated that the Kurds provide an example of irredentism. The majority of the Kurds are Sunnis. The second major division splits the population along sectarian lines, that is, the Shi'a and the Sunni. In other words, these divisions split the Iraqi society into three distinct communities, the Arab Shi'as, the Arab Sunni's and the Kurds. Thus Iraq represents a typical
example of the Furnivallian 'Plural Society'.

Inspite of being in minority, the Sunni Arab ruling elites have monopolized political power in Iraq, and have provided political stability at the expense of democracy. However, it is important to note here if the present system gets disturbed, there might be disorder in the country.

There has been marked improvement in the field of human resource development in Iraq after the advent of the Ba'ath regime. Education for both the sexes have been made free. More emphasis was laid on technical courses such as medicine and engineering. Moreover, strength of students at each level increased considerably. However, in quality the increased educational facilities have not yet been able to improve the overall standard. In rural areas these facilities did not extend correspondingly with the urban areas. Nevertheless, education has played an important role in bringing about social change in the country. In other words the educational facilities have facilitated social mobility.

Like education, health services were also made available free of cost. During the period between 1970-90 the country has seen the increase of hospitals and other health centres. Better health care as well as social services have improved the health standards, due to which infant mortality has declined and life expectancy has increased considerably.

Urbanization, expansion in education, and changing occupational structure have also brought remarkable changes in the position of women. Attempts have been made to eliminate social prejudice against women. Education has been made free for girls. Older generation of women, too, have benefited from the educational drive launched by the Government with the purpose of eradicating illiteracy among all Iraqi population. Prior to 1968, women were confined only to agriculture. After the 1968 Revolution, they have taken up different jobs and have penetrated into various professions which have enhanced their status.

The social structure of the Gulf societies has been mainly characterized by patriarchy/neo-patriarchy. However, remarkable changes could be observed in the social structure of Iraq. This was partly due to urbanization, increased educational and health facilities, a changing occupational
structure and the emergence of a class of educated and working women and partly due to social reforms initiated by the Ba'ath Government which took into consideration to some extent, the socialist principles. Now, in the emerging new social order, land does not play any role in measuring of social status of a person; rather, government services have become the main channel of mobility. New occupations, based upon large scale impersonal institutions, took the lead in work-life over individualized trading operations. However, family and kinship loyalty has remained strong.

To sum up, in Iraq hardly any condition for democratic rule exist. State power is imposed by force and is only accepted as legitimate by sympathisers and members of the ruling party. However, the regime portrays itself as if it is backed by majority of the population. Given the tremendous power of the State apparatus coupled with control of oil, the scope for democracy hardly exists. In all likelihood, the State would try to further consolidate its hold on the country rather than to carry out any coherent project of socio-economic development even after the lifting of current economic embargo.