Chapter 5

The Syrian and Iraqi Ba'ath Ideological Differences and Tactical Disputes

Arab Unity

Arab Socialism

Inter-Arab Relations
5.1 Arab Unity

The Arabs, founders of the Islamic Empire in the middle of the seventh century, ceased to control it as a single empire by the middle of the eight century. Since that time the Arabs have remained disunited, although Arabs by language and culture constitute the majority in all countries from Iraq to Morocco. When the calls to unity began to be heard again in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Arab spokesmen were in fact divided among champions of Arab supremacy among Muslims, Champions of Islamic Supremacy in Arab States and of Arab Nationalism. These differences persisted until after World War II. The Arab League founded in 1945 as the first collaborative association among Arab nations, remained ineffective as quarrels persisted between the Hashmite dynasties of Iraq and Jordan and the non-Hashimite dynasties and rulers of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria.

The increasing appeal of Arab as opposed to local or regional nationalism — at least at the level of discourse — may be gauged from the concept of Greater Syria adhered to by the Syrian National Party (SNP), now recapted as the Syrian Social National Party (SSNP). The two rival Hashemite schemes of Greater Syria and of fertile crescent unity remained in the air. Abdullah, who under the terms of his 1946 treaty with Britain was promoted from Ameer to King
of Trans-Jordan, immediately used his new independence to relaunch his Greater Syria Scheme which was elevated to a principle of his government's foreign policy. His Iraqi competitor moved more subtly but also more ruthlessly to promote their own Fertile crescent project. They cultivated an important clientele among the politicians of Syria, but when conspiracy failed to yield tangible results, subsequently was discarded, and with the connivance of pro-Hashemite forces in Syria military attacks were twice planned, although they were not carried out.

The constitution of the Arab Ba'th Party, approved at its first congress in Damascus in April 1947, contained a clear commitment to the political unification of the entire Arab World. Indeed this document declares the struggle to gather all the Arabs in a single independent state to be the party's main goal. This state should be coexistent with the Arab fatherland (WATAN) which was that part of the globe inhabited by the Arab nation which stretches from the Taurus Mountain, the Pocht-i-Kouch Mountains, the Gulf of Basra, the Arab Ocean, the Ethiopian Mountains, the Sahara the Atlantic Ocean, and the Mediterranean.

Michael Aflaq and Salah al-din Beytar were the founding father of the new party and the constitution, which was retained when the party merged with Akram Howranî's Arab Socialist Party in 1953 to become the Arab Socialist Ba'th
Party, remains the latter's basic document of this day, in both Iraq and Syria. However, in the early 1950s and early 1960s divisive tendencies were absent in the party. On the contrary, the Ba'th increasingly and clearly emerged as the driving force for Arab Unity. In this early period nothing yet portended the future paradox of Ba'thi rule in two countries that instead of bringing about unity, it led to further division. Certainly, previous Arab Nationalist Movements had succumbed to division but conditions then seemed altogether different and far from being as promising as in the days of newly acquired independence.

The Ba'th saw in itself the culmination of the history of Arab nationalism, and considered itself to be the one movement that would finally drive home the Arabs secular dream of political unification, and so fulfill their supreme aspirations. This claim accurately situates the party in its historical context of political thought and action, but otherwise is more a political programme than a statement of facts. For many of those embracing Arab nationalism as an ideology it did not culminate in the establishment of a state co-extensive with the entire territory inhabited by Arabs; nor did Arab nationalists ever all subscribe to a definition of the Arab nation as large as he Ba'ths. And quite apart from that, not all of those defined by the Ba'th
as Arabs were Arab nationalist but adopted other locally more constricted nationalism instead.

The Iraqi coup of 1958 served to dramatize that the major remaining obstacle to Arab Unity was no longer foreign influence but disagreement among the Arabs themselves. Under General Qasim a nationalist regime came to power although was inspired and stimulated by many of Nasir's ideas, yet refused to join with him in a common Arab states. People who agreed at least on the social context and purpose of nationalism found themselves interpreting in different fashions, the national interests of each separate Arab state. An earlier generation of Arab nationalist had adjusted itself to an unresolved tension between Arab nationalism and dynastic interests. To the new nationalist, the clash between nationalism and national interests seemed to come as an unexpected shock.

In Iraq itself after 1958, the clash among nationalist provoked repeated bloody disorders and attempts on the life of General Qasim. There were many factions advocating their own sets of ideas regarding the move for Arab Solidarity. The more moderate supporters of Iraqi solidarity with the Arabs (as opposed to Arab Unity) argued that Iraq had not yet got an opportunity freely to develop its own political institutions or freely plan the full development of its own national economy. Why not build up a multy party democracy...
that would reflect the genuine differences of opinion and cultures that exist in Iraq, and discover first the true measure of Iraq's wealth and power instead of forcing Iraq prematurely into the centralized structure of another Arab State. Radical Iraqi nationalists sought to unite Arabs under Iraqi hegemony by laying claim to the oil-rich Sheikhdom of Kuwait and pressing Syria and Jordan to Unite with Iraq.

The pro-Nasir faction in Baghdad were not all of one mind either. The Iraqi branch of Syrian Socialist Resurrectionist (Ba'th) Party fought hard to bring Iraq into the Egyptian-Syrian Union. At first glance, that policy seemed merely a continuation of its established line. The Ba'th Party had been chiefly responsible for tying Syria to Egypt. After the Egyptian-Syrian Union had been consummated, Nasir had not trusted this Syrian basec Party either to become the core of the 'National Union', the sole political movement of the United Arab Republic, or to survive as the National Unions competitor. If the Ba'th now strive for Iraq's inclusion in the UAR, its hope seemed to be that its victory in Baghdad would allow it to strike a new and different bargain with Nasir regarding the distribution of power in a United Arab State. The Arab nationalists in Baghdad who fought unhesitatingly for complete unity with the UAR in 1958 had by 1961 also drawn certain lessons from Syria's experience. Most of them expected Iraq to arrange
in advance that proportion of its revenues which would be allocated to the central Arab government.

The politically active people in the Arab East doubtless recognized by the early 1960s that the quest for Arab Unity was no longer a matter merely of setting relations among Arab governments. Popular Movements had arisen that responded willingly to leaders of neighbouring Arab states or at least to similar programmes. Many Arabs now quite readily treat the struggle for unity, hegemony, or separatism among the Arab states, even when it involves political violence, as an acceptable phase of an internal Arab revolution rather than an inadmissible form of combat among sovereign states. But the simple enthusiasm of 1956, when Nasir was still the only successful champion of Arab Unity is gone. Today, even supporters of Nasir in the most artificial Arab States Jordan, tend to draw distinctions between Egyptian hegemony and Arab Unity. They would yield their separate statehood only in return for a clear statement of their autonomous rights.

In the beginning of this century, Syrian unity with Iraq was mainly the interest of the people's party those predominantly Alepine constituency suffered economically from the Syro-Iraqi border and moreover found itself at a relative disadvantage vis-à-vis its bourgeoisie competitors from Damascus. In other cases, such as Zaims, unity was a
device to prop up unstable rule. Thus in both countries
unity schemes emerged from ‘particularist’ interests for
whom there would be a direct economic advantage or more
generally considerations of power which, of course, then as
much as now were translatable into economic benefit.

However, Syria as a whole was not well disposed towards
Iraq. Other political actors in the country preferred close
relations with Egypt or in some cases with Saudi Arabia, if
only to defend their interests more effectively in internal
conflicts with those who could count on support from Iraq.

Iraq of course, intern considered its own external
alliance in equally defensive terms. Syro-Iraqi relations
consequently oscillated, depending on which group was in
control of government in Damascus. Conflict was over Iraqi
hegemony projects allied to material interests of a faction
of the geographically fragmented Syrian bourgeoisie, as
opposed to the latter’s inner Syrian competitors. It was
exacerbated in 1955 when Iraq signed the Baghdad Pact, which
was seen by Damascus as an attempt to enhance its regional
position through an alliance with imperialist forces. In
Syria the Baghdad Pact split Iraq’s supporters and further
contributed to the country’s rapprochement, with Egypt.

While none of the Arab Unity Schemes had yet been
successful, the Ba’th’s efforts seemed to be more
auspicious. Certainly, there had been agreements of cooperation more or less limited or extensive, but no integration or even merger of states. The Ba‘th now seemed to bring this services of failures to an end. When for the first time it achieved some representation in an Arab government, that of Syria, it attempted and temporarily succeeded in bringing about the depassement of this state a larger entity, the United Arab Republic (UAR). At this point it should be recalled that Michael Aflaq had served as Minister of Education from August to November 1949 under Hinnawi and then, throughout the 1940s and 1950s, had opposed union with Iraq on the grounds that it would only result in increased power for the Hashemites and Britain and consequently contradict Arab independence. Among many of his contemporaries this was an entirely acceptable stance that left no stains on his Arab nationalist reputation and record.

In 1954 general elections Ba‘th was the third largest group in the Syrian parliament, the Ba‘th obtained two key portfolios. Also they talked about the merger of Syria with Egypt. Finally, in 1958 the Ba‘th leaders played a crucial role in persuading a reluctant Nasir to accept the merger of Syria and Egypt to form the United Arab Republic.

The experiment of UAR however failed to meet Ba‘th expectations, and when with the coup of 28 September 1961
the Separatist regime came to power in Syria and put an end to the unitary experience with Egypt. Some Bathists, among them Beytar, even signed a manifesto welcoming the move of the separatist. The signatories did not oppose the principles of Union, but they were disappointed with the shape it had taken. Syrian, in general, had been progressively excluded from decision making and Syria had effectively become an Egyptian province.

While the regime led to low in Syro-Egyptian relations, it meant normalization, even rapprochement in relations with Iraq. This was most visible in the three day meeting in the border village of Albu Kamal of the new Syrian president Nazim-al-Qudsi and his Iraqi counterpart Abdul Karim Qasim. Thus Syria's relations with Egypt and Iraq continued to follow the old pattern of the struggle for Syria when weak regimes in Damascus sought support from Cairo or Baghdad, normally inverting their predecessor's choice.

The alliance came to an end when, on 8th February 1963, the regime of Qasim was overthrown by a Ba'thist coup, supported by Nasirists and independent nationalists. The separatist regime in Syria now found itself encircled by radical Arab Nationalists advocating "Arab Socialism" whether the Nasirist or Ba'thist version, both of which had considerable appeal within Syria itself. And indeed, exactly a month later, on 8th March 1963, the Syrian regime
fell to a coalition of Nasirist, independent nationalist and Ba'thi officers. While the Iraqi Ba'th from the outset controlled the new regime, the Syrian party still had to discard its allies in the coup, a task in which it succeeded as early as July 1963\textsuperscript{12}. These forces led to continue Ba'thi rule in Syria to the present day. In Iraq, ironically non-Ba'thi groups continued to survive in the armed forces and eventually, on 18th November 1963, overthrew the Ba'hist regime\textsuperscript{13}.

Soon after the coup the new regimes in Damascus and Baghdad started to enter into fresh negotiations with Egypt to bring about the Union of three states. The new Unity scheme was supported, though for reason of of their own, by Nasirists and independent nationalists in Syria and Iraq\textsuperscript{14}. Such non-Bathi support, however, did not eclipse the role of the Ba'th, and its image as the driving force for Arab Unity was confirmed and reinforced.

The tripartite negotiations in which Ba'th leaders like Aflaq and Beytar took a leading role led to an agreement Signed in Cairo on 17th April 1963, but this schemes failed just after a Nasirist coup attempt in Syria on 18th July 1963. Ba’thi Syria and Iraq decided to negotiate a bipartite Unity Scheme which fell into Egyptian anger. Although Syria was again linked to one of the two traditional competitors for hegemony in the Arab East, the
bipartite Unity achieved in 1963 differed from previous such alliances in the important respect that now Damascus was quickly asserting itself as an equal partner. However again this Unity Scheme failed as well. The chance was irretrievably lost when the Ba'th regime in Iraq, after heavy infighting, on 18th November 1963 was overthrown by General Abdul Salam Arif. Non-Ba'thi forces had once more caused Arab Unity to collapse at least, so it seemed. The Ba'th regime in Damascus which was not affected by Arif's coup was now left alone, without any potential partner for unity as all other Arab regimes were either too far away or too different in their political outlooks. Consequently, it did not appear astonishing that Syria, despite continuous verbal insistence on the need for Arab Unity, did not embark on any new attempt to realize it correctly.

Between November 1963 and July 1968 the major change in the triangular relationship between Syria, Iraq and Egypt was that Syria and Iraq now tried for Egypt's sympathy, and no longer Egypt's and Iraq for that of Syria. Yet, Egypt's new role was not Syria's old one as under Nasir's rule it continued to pursue a consistent, 'undivided' foreign policy contrary to that at the same time a week regime in Iraq competed for Egypt's favour against an ascendant but as yet only nascent power in Syria. In fact, the Syrian regime was on the ascendant only on the regional level where it sought to create a new dynamic in the Arab Israel conflict. This
strategy inevitably necessitated the vilification of Arif's regime in Iraq on which Nasir relied to contain Syrian adventuresome. Some Syrian Ba'this were also resentful of Arif's coup against the Iraqi Ba'th regime.

The Ba'thist regime again came into power in Syria and Iraq in 1966 and 1968 respectively, and there seemed once again to be two Arab countries ruled by members of the progressive movement. But from the very beginning of this second period of Ba'thi coexistence, Syro-Iraqi relations rapidly and sharply deteriorated. Despite transitory periods of detente the Ba'th regimes of the two countries have ever since been at odds, even at loggerheads, the tension was also manifested during the brief interludes of relative peace.

Nothing in July 1968 seemed to distinguish any longer the Ba'th from all its predecessors in matters of Arab Unity. Like them the Ba'th now appeared as an actor verbally promoting Arab Unity but actually exacerbating Arab division. Either the Unitary discourse did not correspond to the actual policies or it was overtaken by the perverse consequences. Unlike in previous instances, however, now division and disunity occurred between two protagonists professing the same unitary discourse.

The disastrous defeat in 1967, gave a heavy perhaps
even a fatal blow to Arab socialism, Arab Nationalism and the idea of Arab Unity. Indeed the clash of interest and ideological conflict which became hurdle in this Unity efforts and more precisely of the particularist interests of the rulers—only from March 1972 onwards. In the year 1968-72 conflict arose less from a clash of incompatible interests than from compatible interests being simultaneously expressed and defended through the same Ba'th discourse, to be an efficient vehicle of interest this discourse, however, had to be monopolized.18

5.2 Arab Socialism:

With the promotion of idea of Socialism in West Asia, a new generation of politically conscious Arabs came into existence with a desire to control the ruling class which were supported by the foreign tutelage. Elements of foreign domination remained, especially in the commercial and financial fields. So far they were not eager to promote unity among the Arab States, they stood for a highly conservative economic and social philosophy which would preserve their interests. They represented, in fact, a coalition of merchant landowners and tribal leaders the traditionally dominant elements in Arab Society who tend naturally to consider their interests as synonymous with those of the society at large19.

It was natural, therefore, for the new intelligensia to
demand thorough reforms in political, economic and social fields, along with independence and Arab Unity. In more concrete terms, the new middle class wants planned economic development with all of its ramifications, a raising of living standards, state control of the means of production, broad social welfare, land reform, educational expansion and dignity for all, especially in the eyes of other nations.

Giving an impetus to these demands and to the role of the new middle class is the rapidly changing socio-economic structure. The increasing urbanization of the Arab World, albeit far behind that of the West, is expanding the reservoir of malcontents to be activated by the new generation of politically conscious. Also, the very fact of urbanization has brought new problems which cannot be alleviated within the rapidly decaying traditional Social Structure. The rise of labour unions, the importance of the ever expanding student body and the existence of vast numbers of unemployed and under-employed living in and around the cities have brought new forces to be reckoned with. Arab socialism was born of these dissatisfaction and under conditions which have left distinctive marks on the book of its doctrine and on its methods

Aflaq is quite specific in stating his belief that "Arab Socialism" can only be realized completely in one United Arab State. In his writings, Aflaq defined Arab socialism
as an indigenous movement based on an Arab heritage which rejected both the communist and Western Socialist philosophies. The communist ideology was found unacceptable because, among other things, it negated nationalism, preached a mechanical economic theory and presented a threat to individualism. Western socialism, according to him, not only turns against capitalism but against its allies, nationalism and religion.

Aflaq believed that Arabs must build their nationalist ideology on the basis of Ba’thist ideology.

More so in the post war era the Ba’th Party had the advantages of being an organization with little competition beyond the several local nationalist opposition parties existing in Syria and Iraq.

After the Ba’th Party came to power in Syria in 1963, it discussed the relations of the party and government and of party and populace, as well as the problems generated by the establishment of the national guard. It affirmed the right of the people to criticize the party and made a special point that such organizations as those of labour, students and professional people should not be subject to state control.

The conference decided, moreover, that the socialist goals of the party should be put into operation immediately.
Such a move would have been a reversal of Aflaq's traditional attitude that independence and unity were necessary pre-conditions for the successful implementation of Ba'thist (Arab) Socialism. It represents the strong influence exerted during the conference by the extremist wing associated with Ali Salih Sadi and Nur al-Din al-Atassi, Secretaries General of the Iraqi and Syrian regimes respectively. Specifically, the sixth conference statement considered the establishment of collective forms on land processed under the agrarian reform measures as a goal to be striven for urgently. The constitution aims at free compulsory education and free medical care were reaffirmed and urged by the conference. There were only a few references to industry in the statement and no mention let alone any threats of nationalization of foreign companies.

The constitution envisions a United Arab Society encompassing all Arab States, in which social justice will prevail and political liberalism will persuade the people to choose the Ba'th path. The goal of a just and equitable society, in which extremes of wealth and poverty do not exist, is a cardinal one for the Ba'th. The Ba'th constitution, for example, calls for the redistribution of land holdings among the citizens on a just basis (Art. 27), for the nationalization of utilities and large industries (Art. 29), for sweeping guarantees of wages, working
conditions and old age insurance (Art. 40) for complete free medical care (Art. 39) and for free compulsory education through the secondary level (Art. 45 & 46). The constitution is explicit in saying that the educational policy of the party aims at creating a new Arab generation faithful to the unity of its nation and the perpetuity of its mission.

Article 4 of the 1947 Ba'th constitution states that socialism is necessary for Arab Nationalism, being the system which would allow the Arabs to develop their inherent potentialities. Socialism will enable the Arab nation to increase its production and strengthen its bonds. Believing that wealth in the Arab countries is unjustly distributed, the programme calls for its "fair distribution" among the citizens. However, there is no call for a general nationalization of capital. In line with the generally accepted view among socialists, public utilities, major national resources, and large scale industrial and transport services would be nationalized. Foreign owned concessions and company rights would be cancelled. Land reform is envisioned with the size of plots limited to that which the owner can work without 'exploitation of the efforts of others'.

It is significant that the Ba'th has declared that although it believes in socialism because it would realize
social justice, the party would embrace another social
system if it found a better one.

Aflaq claimed that his socialism does not have the
materialistic objective of feeding the hungry and clothing
the naked, 'but the higher one of freeing man's talents and
abilities. This means a destruction of the influence one of
freeing man's talents and abilities. This means a
destruction of the influence of the traditional aristocracy
of wealth which has ruled the Arab countries for
generations, so that lower classes may break out the
economic grip which has held them in a depressed state and
which has blocked their political influence. Here again he
rejects the communist definition of socialism in the words
of Marx and Lenin. The Ba'ths socialism is proclaimed to be
a new form of nationalism.25

In its vision of Arab Unity Ba'thist Socialism envisions
bringing together those Arab countries whose progress is
obstructed by their lack of capital and natural resources
with their better endowed brethren who would share their
wealth.

The Ba'ths attitude toward real estate holdings is
spelled out in the party's programme, ownership of buildings
is to be limited to what can be personally used.
'Exploitation' by means of renting is forbidden. A
reference in the constitution to the state guaranteeing a
minimum ownership of landed property for all citizens would seem to indicate that private home ownership, as well as agricultural plots, is to be encouraged.26

Usury, so prevalent in most parts of the Arab World, is to be abolished. However, interest on money at a reasonable rate is to be allowed. A government bank for agricultural and industrial projects is envisioned. It would issue a currency backed by "national production".

Trade, in all of its forms, is to be controlled by the State. A reference to the maintenance of equilibrium between exports and imports seems to hark back to economic nationalism, or merely shows a lack of economic sophistication. Following on the path of trade restrictions is the concept of a directed economy for the Arab countries and their industrialization. Another interesting aspect of the Ba'th's economic policy is worker participation and profit sharing in the management of factories.

The internal disarray in the Arab world necessitates a far reaching social revolution, according to Ba'thist teaching. The Arabs do not have time to wait for evolutionary progress, especially since the more advanced countries will continue their rate of progress and make catching up impossible. Aflaq lays great stress on a revolution of spirit, especially in the moral and intellectual realms.
The sixth article of the programme ends with the ringing exhortation "to raise in revolt against corruption in all spheres of intellectual, social and political life". Thus, the Ba'th is not only pushing for a resurrection of Arabism, but for revolution, no evolution, in the fullest sense of the term, a forced reformation of the social and political structure of the Arab countries which ousts old ideas and a decadent spirit. As Aflaq states, "the gap and disfigurement in the Arab nationalist structure can only be bridged by a violent wrenching away from the present situation".

In Aflaq's eyes the Arab nation's interior is rotten filled with social injustice exploitation, ignorance, weakness in thought, and lacking in tolerance and love. Thus the Arab people must not only struggle against imperialism and Zionism but against themselves.

Absolute equality before the law is guaranteed to all citizens, as is freedom of expression. However, these appear to be abridged by the addition of the clause so often found in West Asian political documents - within the limits of the law.

In a social level, marriage is a national duty to be encouraged and facilitated by the state. This probably refers to breaking down some of the existing barriers to
marriage.

In conformity with the Ba'th's thesis of awakening the Arab people, the programme includes a special article relating to the encouragement of Arab culture in all of its aspects. Likewise, private organisations and political parties to be given opportunities to function. The constitution also reiterates a continued theme in Ba'thist rhetoric, namely freedom of expression by the individual and the press. However, this may be circumscribed by the higher Arab national interest.29

As in the case with socialist dogma everywhere, class difference and their distinctions, are to be abolished. This applies, not only to economic classes, but to those paragons of Arab civilization - the Bedouin. In Ba'thist eyes they are an embarrassment which retards progress and they must be eliminated by sedentarization. In order to bring the new order to the Arab World the Ba'th envisions the creation of a new generation by means of education.

Carrying further these concept of enlightenment, "Aflaq has stated that even those who oppose the Ba'th's ideas poses a "hidden will" to Arab nationalism that has not yet been revealed to them. Also, underlying Aflaq's thinking seems to be a suffering motif. He has stated that "The driving factor in the Arab world is suffering, which he
regards as a boon which makes more certain the attainment of ideals. Another radical departure from current Arab nationalist thought has been Aflaq's ideas on the subject of the "new Arabs". He called on the Arabs to stop blaming imperialism for all of their ills and to regard it as a result of our own inaction indirectly a change in our rotten internal situation and not as a cause for this situation and its persistence.30

The first step towards freeing the agricultural sector from the pattern of absentee landlord exploiting sharecropper peasant came during the UAR period. Though this pattern had been criticized by the political forces, due to the land reform in Syria followed Egyptian practice.

The notion of land reform, putting farmers on their own land, is appealingly simple. Carrying out is a lengthy and complex task. The government had to establish which land to take, devise mechanisms to get it into peasant hands, and arrange to provide the services — seed, tools, fertilizers — that land lords had provided. Again when the Ba’th came into power 1963, once again the land reform programme was restarted and revised the limit on holdings to between 37 and 125 acres of irrigated and 200 to 750 acres of rainfed land, depending on its location, quality and productivity.31

During the last half of the 1960s, Ba’th ideologues were in control of domestic economic policy. In the countryside
their approach was to concentrate on the establishment of state farms and cooperative societies as agricultural production units. The latter gave peasants usufruct right to land but not ownership. The cooperative provided seed, fertilizer and machinery, but they also imposed restrictions on crops to be planted, marketing and purchases of material. About two thousand cooperative were in existence by 1970. Not all were production units some farmers found these associations beneficial in terms of getting needed services. All in all, however, the system of state farms and enforced cooperatives was unpopular among the farming population.

Further changes took place after Asad came into power in 1970. The regime opted for better performance at the expense of ideological purity. Many state farms were converted to cooperatives and the state farm as a significant agricultural sector virtually ceased to exist. there were fewer than ten in 1978. Naturally, there has been argument within the country as to the proper direction of the agricultural sector. The argument focuses on whether cooperatives should grow or shrink, i.e. whether they should be converted into agricultural production units or their role should be confined to providing seed, fertilizer, marketing assistance or whether they should be allowed to decrease further. Through the 1970s, the advocates of the
latter views have had the upper hand. Pragmatism, not ideology has been the guiding principle of the country's agronomists.

Syria's effort to convert itself from a predominantly agricultural country to an urban one offering to its people a variety of nonagricultural ways of earning a livelihood has involved the expansion—indeed, almost the creation—of many areas of the economy. Industry is a sector that scarcely existed half a century ago. In 1980 manufacturing and mining provided 20 percent of GDP.

Suitably for a country with a large agricultural base and great further potential, a substantial element in Syrian industrial development has involved the processing of domestic agricultural raw materials. Textiles, once a major handicraft business, are a growth industry in the form of both cloth and manufactured garments. To achieve self-sufficiency in sugar the government has built sugar beet refineries.

Asad's liberalized policy toward private enterprise in certain sectors of the economy, the removal of rigid ideologues from positions of influence, and good weather set Syria on a new path of rapid growth during the first half of the 1970s. External aid, which began to flow to Syria from its oil-rich neighbors, developed an erratic quality. It dropped in 1976 because some donors objected to Syrian
intervention in Lebanon that year, was restored in 1977, took a quantum jump in 1979 after the Baghdad summit of late 1978, and dropped off sharply by 1980, again due to political disagreements. Syria continued to try to push forward with projects planned on the assumption of large amounts of aid, the results were added to negative balances of payments and budget deficits. Inflation added to the problem, it has averaged about 10%, rising to more than 15% in 1980.35

In the case of Iraq, radical agrarian reform was one of the main tasks which the revolution tackled in the early stage. As a preliminary changes had to be made in the institutions concerned, and the party’s control of them had to be strengthened. The existing agrarian reform law of 1958 needed drastic amendment, which were issued on 20th May 1969. The revolutionary regime also issued Agrarian reform law 117 of 1970, reducing maximum land holdings and providing new principles for the distribution of land. To conform more closely to the conditions and requirements of production and to secure the rights of poor peasants. The expropriation and redistribution of land were effected throughout the country, except in some parts of the north where exceptional circumstances prevailed.36

Under the revolution, the party’s leadership and democratic practices were extended and developed in rural
areas, and the peasants contribution to the political life
of the country has grown. Peasant associations have
acquired political and economic importance. New patterns of
production have emerged, and the old ones are in decline.
But the present forms of rural ownership, though much
advanced from feudal and capitalist forms are still not
socialist.

Despite the radical reform law, reducing the limits of
ownership and thus providing extra land for distribution to
poor peasants, there are still many peasants, who own no
land and are compelled to hire out their labour to small and
medium land owners, or to migrate to the towns in search of
employment. The natural increase in population, new
families setting up house, and the growing mechanization of
farming will raise their number still further. As a result,
exploitation in rural areas will increase, promoting a new
sort of class conflict, while at the same time unemployment
worsens. Moreover, the break-up of large land holdings
though in itself progressive and democratic, reduces
productivity and harms the general development of
agriculture. The previous agrarian reforms law led to
decreasing agricultural production rather than to its
increase.37

The revolution has made great progress in establishing
state, collective and cooperative farms. However, this
sector does not yet lead in production.

Despite the great achievements made in industrial sector during the period 1974-1981, it still suffers from certain obstacles and drawbacks which negatively affects its course of progress and the achievement of the objective assigned to it. Some of these obstacles and drawbacks are caused by the level of economic progress of the country, the lack of experience in industry and the problem of socialist application. One basic problem facing the industrial sector was the imbalance between the size of its horizontal expansion and provision of basic structure projects such as transportation, roads, railways, communications and Industrial housing. Despite the fact that important progress has been achieved in these fields, they remained below the level demanded by the high investment rate industry.

In the last few years, the national economy has made great strides towards the objectives set by the leadership of the party and revolution.

Through reviewing what has been achieved in the main sectors, one can say that the Iraqi economy has developed in two basic line.

1. Making material progress in the basic branches of economy shown by the large investments, the high rates of growth of the production and the domestic product.
and the new fields of production and services it has entered.

2. Expanding the area of socialist sector and giving it primacy ensuring the promotion of socialist relations of production in various activities of national economy. Along these two lines, the national economy has achieved good results. The socialist sectors contribution to the whole national economy has made a big rise. Its contribution to the GDP rose from 24.5 percent in 1968 to 68.1 percent in 1974, and to 60.3 percent in 1981 in the same periods.

5.3 Inter-Arab Relations:

In the Arab World inter-Arab relations on bi-lateral as well as on the basis of Pan-Arab level have remained concentrated largely on two basic issue i.e. Palestine and Arab Nationalism.

But there are other factors in inter-Arab relations which, despite the lack of visible short-term results, play a fundamental part in strengthening links with the masses in other Arab countries and in laying the foundations for Arab Unity. The domain of economic, cultural and human relations as a whole constitute the material, social, economic and psychological basis for Arab Unity.
Most Arab governments, however, have been concentrated solely with political questions, and agreement or disagreement on them, and have shown indifference to these vital aspects of the life of the Arab nation, its future and the Union of its different parts. The party and revolution have done all they could to overcome this situation, in order to facilitate the attainment of Pan-Arab objectives, by strengthening relations between different parts of the nation, between the masses everywhere, and in all fields.

However, in the Fertile Crescent relations especially between Syria and Iraq have assumed a significant importance especially after 1970 where the issues of nationalism vs. localism have been repeatedly debated and discussed.

After the coup of November 1970 in Syria, Baghdad more often ignored the new rulers' continuous, though slowly abating, insistence on Ba'thi legitimacy. And when voicing its criticism vis-a-vis Syria it again acknowledged the existence there of a Ba'th Party. Even Saddam Hussain did so when he declared:

Our relations with Syria are good but, as far as the Syrian Ba'th Party is concerned the case is different. None of the Crisis this party went through after 1963 revealed a change in its mentality. As to us, we refuse to admit that tanks, guns or fighters planes can replace normal
party methods 40.

The softer line is also illustrated by a rather friendly congratulatory telegram that Hasan al Bakr sent to Hafiz al-Asad after his election as president of Syria in March 1971. Perhaps this more lenient attitude also in part resulted from the fact that Aflaq shortly after Asad's takeover finally settled in Baghdad, thereby conferring additional legitimacy to the Iraqi Ba'th. Even so, till early 1972 the issue of Ba'thi legitimacy progressively disappeared from Iraqi statements as much as it did from Syrian ones. With it the war of word subsided for a while, giving way to a markedly quieter atmosphere.

The aim which Iraq pursued in Syria's internal conflict is reflected in the timing of its reply to her propaganda. That Iraq denied the Ba'thi legitimacy of the Syrian regime only when the latter's internal divisions had clearly emerged, but thereafter denied it vehemently, points to an Iraqi interest in replacing Jadid by Asad. Apart from that, Iraq obviously had to deny the Ba'thi legitimacy of its Syrian counterpart if it did not want to risk its own legitimacy and position being endangered. Although Iraq in these early years was poorer than after the 1973 rise in oil prices it was wealthier than Syria. Thus from a material point of view as well there was no need to rally its apparatus by insisting on Ba'thi legitimacy. 41
Secondly motives in the argument over Ba’thi legitimacy were differences over what Ba’thism should stand for and personal hostilities. However, the coup of 23rd February in Syria advocated a different version of Ba’thism than that of the Qawmuniyya, and a few of them like Jadid, seemed to have some ideological motivation, their main objective was simply to take power. The stronger emphasis on socialism presumably served largely to mobilize supporters who could not be reached with more moderate arguments. The Iraq Ba’th, for its part, had no actual programme at all, and indulged in complete ideological vagueness. As far as ideological differences had a bearing on the conflict this was largely due to the preferences of the Syrian nationalism for the rulers in Iraq which threatened to erode the basis of the Syrian regime.

Ba’thism in Iraq and Syria certainly diverged at the verbal level: whereas the Iraqi party continued to stick to the traditional Ba’thi discourse and vocabulary, Jadid and his supporters borrowed Marxist Leninist terms and concepts. Both sides, however, claimed to recognise the constitution of the Ba’th Party, passed by its first congress in Damascus in 1947, as the theoretical basis of their political practice.

During the and after the October war of 1973 Syria embarked on a more ambitious policy, Iraq, despite its
rapidly growing oil revenues, was still impeded by its conflict with the Kurds and with Iran. After this war tension gradually rose again as Iraq used Syria’s acceptance of the cease-fire to question its Arab legitimacy and to counter its quest for regional influence. However, rather than stepping up the argument, Syria insisted on its own achievement in the war without mentioning those of Iraq.

Regional ambitions in those years appeared more clearly in the policies pursued by Syria. The Syrian regime enhanced its regional position mainly by waging, together with Egypt, the October war in 1973. Though the benefits had to be shared with Egypt, which moreover fought more successfully, the war increased Syria’s political prestige and influence and thus facilitated its access to resources, including political support. In contrast, Iraq, despite its important contribution, obtained little or nothing from this war as both Syria and Egypt, each for reasons of its own, pushed it out; from the outset it had been a game that they had wanted to play without Iraq.

In addition the temporary rapprochement with Iran after May 1974 seems to have been intended to enhance Syria’s position in the region. This move might more specifically be directed against Iraq, then close to war with its eastern neighbor. Improved relations with Iran increased Syria’s maneuverability due to the Shah’s close relations with the
USA and Iran's military strength in the Gulf, moreover, an Iranian credit of some US $150 million for reconstruction after the October War made the rapprochement profitable even in the short term. Though Saudi Arabia and the other Arab repairer of the gulf may have been apprehensive about Syria moving closer to Iran, there could be little objection to the move in the aftermath of the October War.44

It might be objected that, with the increase in oil price after the October war in 1973, Iraq was less compelled than Syria to bargain over resources and influence which to some extent it now obtained by the mere fact of being an oil country. However, to play a role in the politics of the region Iraq had to mobilize not only a certain absolute amount of resources but also a certain relative part of the over all resources available in the region and which, following the increase in oil prices, had increased as much as Iraq's own resources. Consequently, Baghdad had to continue to struggle for access to these additional resources.45

Another conflict during this period intensified or receded chiefly according to the two rows of the trans Syrian pipeline. Of the two pipeline disputes the first concerned the amount of royalties to be paid by Iraqi for oil exports via Syria and was exclusively motivated by considerations of short-term material advantage. The second
dispute, slightly more complicated, arose when in reaction Iraq decided to build alternative pipelines enabling it to discontinue oil exports via Syria. While in this case Syria was again concerned about immediate economic advantages, Iraq was motivated by the long-term desire to ensure its economic and political independence. In addition, the wish to curb Syria's regional ambitions may have played a minor role in as much as Iraq was ready to incur small losses in order to create relatively bigger ones for Syria.\textsuperscript{46}

With the agreement of 6th March 1975 between Iraq and Iran, known as Algiers agreement, the stage was definitely set for an open competition for regional influence and resources between the regimes ruling Iraq and Syria. Since then and indeed till today their bilateral relations have dominated by this competition, even though for a few months in 1978 and 1979 it seemed to have given way to a rather far reaching rapprochement.\textsuperscript{47}

The Algiers agreement, at least for a time, ended the long-standing conflict between Baghdad and Tehran that had been exacerbated after the Ba'athist takeover in Iraq in 1968. Under the term of the accord the two sides would proceed to a precise delineation of their common border in accordance with the Constantinople protocol, of 1913, fixing the border in the Shatt al Arab along the "Thalweg", that is where the river is deepest, and strictly control movements across the
border in order to end or prevent all subversive actions in the respective neighboring country. While the second provision satisfied Iranian wishes, the third one mainly served Iraq as it meant an end to all Iranian support for the Kurdish resistance.

Ironically, by recognizing Iran's dominant position in the Gulf, this agreement enabled the Iraqi regime to strengthen its own internal and regional position economically as well as politically and finally to challenge their Iranian claim over Shatt-al-Arab. In the long term Iraq, by giving a little, gained more. At the regional level the agreement with conservative and pro-American Iran greatly contributed to making Iraq—so far considered as a 'radical' and a trouble-maker—more acceptable as an ally to the conservative Arab States in the Gulf and thus enhanced its opportunities to vie for Arab support. It became much easier for these states to side with Iraq to counterbalance Iranian power in the Gulf and after 1980 to support Iraq in its war against Iran. Without the moderation symbolized by this agreement the Arab Gulf states, though frightened by the Islamic Revolution in Iran, might not have extended their support to Iraq.

In the meanwhile Iraq tried to extract political support from other actors, mainly the wealthy oil countries of the Gulf. By obtaining such support, Iraq
surreptitiously trapped the supporters in its own resources, but also to those of its new dependents. To get its way, Iraq very much like Syria, illustrated its usefulness as well as its disruptive capacities, the former often through the latter, and the latter mainly by highlighting its different stances in Arab Israeli affairs.

In 1975 the prospect of Iraqi prosperity consolidation and strength worried the regime in Damascus, which sought to enhance its regional position and to mobilize Arab resources. But although Syria aimed at enhancing its regional position, it did so perhaps less than Iraq in order to become the main interlocutor of the great powers in the West Asia; possibly its ambitious, especially from 1979 onwards, were more limited and remained within the red line set by Israel.49

Due to their regional competition relations between Syria and Iraq greatly deteriorated till the process in the aftermath of the Camp David accord seemed to be reversed in an almost spectacular volte-face.

The period from 1975 to 78 can be divided into three phases, each distinct from the others, though not always by the same criteria.50

1. From March till early 1975 bilateral relations were dominated by the argument over the Algiers agreement.
reflecting the regional competition, and by the row over the partition of the Euphrates water which was essentially a narrow conflict of interest, that is a conflict over the allocation of clearly defined resources. Open hostility somewhat decreased in the autumn but Algiers and the Euphrates continued to dominate bilateral relations till December 1975.

2. From then till mid September 1976 Syria's policy and intervention in Lebanon became the main issue, again reflecting the competition for regional influence. For some time this competition too was paralleled by a narrow conflict of interest, this time to Iraq's decision to discontinue its oil exports via Syria.

3. Starting with Syria's most serious attempts to control Lebanon, in late September 1976 till October 1978 relations continued to be dominated by regional competition, but this was expressed far more violently than in the earlier phases.

Thus, Asad his major speech delivered on 20th July 1976 not only presented Syria as a defender of the Arab cause by asserting that the intervention in Lebanon served to thwart an imperialist plot staged to cover up the Sinai agreement between Egypt and Israel, but also specifically as the defender of the Palestinians and of Lebanon. Threatened by
partition. Lebanon had to be defended and maintained as a Secular state to prove to Israel and its supporters, the viability of multi-religious states in the West Asia, but also because bound by specific historic ties. Through history, said Asad, Syria and Lebanon have been one country and one people, genuine joint interests ensured. A genuine joint security also ensured.

After a month of Camp David agreement in 1978, Syro-Iraqi relations seemed to have undergone a complete change. The Egyptian-Israeli agreement had apparently induced a swift transition from deep hostility to close cooperation.

The rapprochement of October 1978 was basically the repetition of similar attempts in the past, the only difference being that this time Syrian vulnerability was critical enough and Iraqi flexibility sufficiently strong to bring about the temporary of the two regimes. After Egypt and Israel had concluded the accords, Syria found itself in an extremely delicate position. It could no longer count on Egyptian help in the event of Israeli aggression on Syrian. So that Syria badly needed support from other sides to compensate the new strategic imbalance, and Iraq was the only country which could replace the loss of the Syria. An accommodation with Iraq thus was indispensable for the Syrian regime. This does not mean that Damascus at any time thought of sacrificing its long term ambition in the region.
for short term assistance from Iraq. Rather, Iraqi aid was to be used against Iraqi interests, not only to give the regime in Damascus some temporary respite, but also to realize these ambitions under more propitious circumstances in the future.

The Iraqi side, for its part, tried to take advantage of Syria's new vulnerability and offered its assistance in the hope of reducing Syrian sovereignty and independence. To enhance its chances of success, Iraq this time was careful to adopt a more flexible attitude than in its previous attempts, by omitting an explicit demand for Syria to reject UN resolution 242 & 338.51

Syro-Iraqi relations, in 1980 returned to the state of open conflict that had characterized them prior to 1978-79 rapprochement. Though the means resorted to largely resembled the pre-rapprochement period, a few differences can be distinguished. Foremost among these differences was the establishment of a firm alliance between one of the conflict parties Syria - and another regime in the region - Iran that served to combat Iraq as their common enemy. In the aftermath of the rapprochement, Iraq initially continued to be the stronger side and accordingly provoked the deterioration in relations in and after spring 1980. Syria, on the contrary was still weak when the conflict broke open again and would have to preserve with Iraq a relationship as
cooperative and free from conflict as possible. However, the initial Syro-Iraqi imbalance of strength, first 'rebalanced to the bottom', was temporarily reversed after Iraq, having lost the initiative in its war against Iran, found that from July 1982 onwards it had to defend its own territory instead of attacking that of its neighbor.

Further reports affirm that by summer 1981 General Naqib the rallying force of what they call the Islamic National Front in Iraq, presumably more or less identical to the National Democratic Front but rebaptized to better accommodate its Islamic members. At the same time the Syrian did not stop granting direct support to the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Continued Syrian support for the Iraqi Communists around Aziz Mohammad was apparent when Aziz publicly expressed his gratitude to the Syrian government in February 1982; in the same month he was moreover reported to have been received by president Asad.

Kurdish leader Talabani momentarily incurred the displeasure of the Syrian regime in late 1982 when it transpired that since 1982 he had been in secret negotiations with Baghdad. However, when the talks failed in 1984, the PUK and the Syrian regime reconciled themselves. The price the PUK had to pay was a marked and lasting improvement in the relations between the Syrian
regime and the KDP, its old rival. 54

Except for the KDP which received most of its support from Iran, none of these oppositional fronts and groups had any significant influence within Iraq, not least because they were busy fighting each other.

The official Iraqi assessment of Syrian policy in the Iran-Iraq War was the statement released on 27th June 1982 by the Regional Congress of the Iraqi Ba'th Party. It stated that 'the alliance between the regimes of Iran, Syria, and Libya .. has stabbed Arab solidarity in the back; and that it had also destroyed the results of the Baghdad Summit. Syria and Libya, the statement continued, had committed one of the most serious crime in modern Arab history by supporting Iran, because they thus prolonged the war and prevented Iraq from fighting Israel. At the end of the statement the congress expressed its confidence that the Syrian and Libyan regimes will certainly receive their punishment at the hands of the Arab masses. 55

References
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5. Middle Eastern Choice, p. 273.

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9. Ibid., pp. 78-81.


12. Ibid., pp. 231-33.


18. Ibid., p. 16.


21. Ibid., p. 185.

22. Ibid., p. 190-91.

23. Ba’th Party constitution. See Appendix. A.


26. Ibid.

27. Ba’th Party Constitution, see Appendix A.


29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., p. 454.


32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., p. 80.

34. Ibid., p. 87.

35. Ibid., p. 86.


37. Ibid., p. 85.


41. Ibid., p. 44.

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43. Ibid., p. 61.

44. Ibid., p. 62.

45. Ibid., p. 64.


49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., pp. 86-89.

51. Ibid., p. 136. Also see the Appendix C.

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53. Ibid., p. 157.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid., p. 159.