POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE REPUBLICAN IRAQ

As an ideology, the Ba'ath began to spread in Iraq long before the party came into existence. The political parties that made their appearance after the World War-II failed in Ba'hist eyes to meet the country's needs and aspirations except the Istiqlal Party, the embodiment of the neo Pan-Arab movement, as it was a little bit different from other parties. Later even, the Istiqlal leaders appeared complacent and ready to compromise with the ruling oligarchy which was considered reactionary and corrupt and therefore unworthy of survival. It was therefore natural that a more dynamic nationalist organization should become the center of attraction to young nationalists.

Ba'hist teaching began to enter into Iraq in a steady though in an unorganized way, first by Syrian students and teachers who went either to study or teach in Iraq, and then by Iraqi students who went to study in Syria and Lebanon. The earliest missionaries were a few young men from Alexandretta who, after their homeland had been annexed by Turkey in 1939, went to Iraq to study or settle there in a possible new home.

2. Ibid.
Among the Syrians, Faiz Ismail and Wasfi al-Ghanim were Alawis from Alexandretta, who came to Iraq in the second half of the 40s. In Baghdad University they succeeded in organizing some Iraqi students under the Ba’thist ideology. Other prominent Syrian Ba’thist ideologue at that time was Zaki al-Arsuzi, who in Iraq participated actively in spreading Ba’thist teaching in Baghdad. Prominent among the non Syrian political activist was Abu al-Qasim Mohammed Karu a Tunisian national, who actively participated in preaching Ba’thism in Baghdad University. A number of Iraqies, who had came in contact with Michael Aflaq in Damascus and Lebanon like Abd al-Rahman al-Damin and Abd al-Khaliq al-Khudayri, started preaching the ideas of the Ba’th, after their returning home.

During the first three year, the Ba’thism in Iraq was merely an intellectual circle of students. In 1950, the Syrian command over Iraqi Ba’th was transferred to Iraqi members when Fayi’z Ismail returned back to Syria. Abd al-Rahman al-Damin took the charge of the organization. Subsequently in 1951, Fu’ad al-Rikabi took the charge of the Ba’th Organization and successfully organized it for eight

year. It was under him that the Ba'th rose in number from 50 members in 1951 to more than 100 members in the middle of 1952. According to al-Rikabi the total number of the Ba'thists reached up to 1500 in 1958. The first decade of Ba'thist movement in Iraq was significantly marked with the increase of Shi'i members. This was due to the influence exercised by al-Rikabi in the Shi'i provinces including his native place Nasiriyyah.

The party had grown sufficiently by the fall of 1952 for its participation in the riots of that period against the government's policies. The party issued its first handbill over the signature, Arab University Youth in Iraq, at this time.

By 1954 the party was strong enough in Iraq to issue statements and distribute them in the streets. It opposed the Nuri al-Said policies in Iraq on the national and International level. When the Iraqi government signed the Iraqi-Turkish agreement in 1955, later to be known as

4. Fau'd Rikabi, who succeeded Qadduri as Secretary General, was born in Nasiriyya, a town in Southern Iraq, in 1931 and joined the Ba'th Party while still in college. He became a member of the National Command when he attended the party's second congress in Damascus in 1954 and served in that capacity for the next five years.


Baghdad Pact, the party went into a frenzy of activity against the government. In a statement distributed in the streets of Baghdad in January, 1955, the Ba’th called on the Iraqi people to overthrow the Said government. The greatest boost to the party’s popularity in Iraq came, however, after the Suez Canal crisis. By this time the party had become a major "street power" in Baghdad and was distributing its literature throughout Iraq.

Despite the extreme repressive measures taken against the Ba’th by the Qasim regime, the party grew stronger in Iraq. With its strong machine, it was able to dominate a number of trade unions and the influential Iraqi students organization. It was also able to publish four official underground newspapers: viz Wa’yz al-‘ummal (Workers Consciousness), Al-Ishtiraki (The Socialist), Al-Ittihady al-Watani li al-Talabah (The National Union for Students), Hisab al-Jamahir (Mass Judgement) respectively.

The inter group rivalry in the Syrian Ba’th and the emergence of a new trend within the Ba’th particularly affected the structure of Iraqi Ba’th during the U.A.R. period.

Fu‘ad al-Rikabi who was a member of National Command differed with Aflaq and al-Hurani for their opposition to Jamal Abd al-Nasir’s policies. He along with other National Command members adopted a unionist trend that led to their expulsion from the party in 1959. The group formed their own Ba‘th Party in Lebanon in 1961 while the Iraqi Ba‘th re-organized itself under the leadership of Ali Salih al-Sa‘di.

In 1962, the Iraqi Ba‘th entered a broad alliance with the nationalist officers in the armed forces and together prepared the way to the first coup in February 1963. Subsequently through which for the first time it formed its own government in Iraq.9

After the fall of the Monarchy, the military leaders who carried out the Revolution of 1958 began to fall under the influence of competing parties and groups and each tried to influence the revolutionary process along one ideological line or another. Rivalry between the two top leaders – ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim and ‘Abd al-Salim ‘Arif – led to the devision of civilian leaders into two camps, the Nationalists (essentially Ba‘th and other Pan-Arab elements) and Communists, supported by left wing groups. Moderate

leaders who might have played a constructive role failed to reconcile the two camps and the gap between them became even wider. Since the Nationalists supported 'Arif, who championed the cause of Arab unity, Qasim sought the support of Communists who, though in favour of Arab unity in principle, was against unity with the united Arab Republic.

The Ba'ath captured power from Col. Abd al-Karim Qasim after having alliance with its military officers and other nationalist factions in Feb. 18, 1963. The alliance was aimed to bring Ba'thist to power. Through this alliance the right for participation of other nationalist groups was legally denied by the government. Although Abd al-Salam Arif a pro-Nasserite military Colonel was elevated to the post of presidency of the republic but the real power was in the hand of the Ba'thist who dominated the cabinet and the National Council.

In the cabinet the Ba'thists occupied a majority or, to be specific, twelve out of the twenty-one seats including all the key ministers. Three other seats were filled by prominent members of the old Free Officers.


movement – staff Brigadier Naji Taleb, an independent nationalist, Brigadier Faud Arif, a Kurd, and Staff Brigadier Mahmud Sheet Khattab, who sympathized with the Moslem Brotherhood. Of the remaining portfolios, one went to a member of the landowning Kurdish family of the Barzeingi Sayyeds, two to ex-affiliates of the defunct, right oriented independent party and three to specialists of distinctly conservative temperament.  

It was clear that the Ba’th party, with its roots in Syria, was dedicated to the principles of Arab unity and Socialism. The new Iraqi leaders who were now in power were seeking reapproachment with the united Arab Republic in order to strengthen their hold on the basis of Arab unity before they introduced socialist measures. President Nasser responded on February 21, when he addressed a large gathering in Cairo that Egypt and Iraq were “one nation having one aim” and that “the U.A.R. people whole heartedly with the Iraqi people.”

The differences between the Ba’th-dominated government in Syria and the Ba’th – Arif government in Iraq


vis-a-vis the issue of unity came to surface at this time. Aref, a non-Bathist, wanted cooperation among the Arab governments along the lines of the European Economic Community (Common Market), to be followed by a political and legal union. The Syrian Ba'th government, on the other hand, was advocating immediate union between the "revolutionary governments" of Syria, Iraq, the U.A.R., Algeria and Yemen. The new Ba'th plan called for a federal union with collective leadership\textsuperscript{14}.

Consequently, negotiations for a federation between Iraq, Syria and Egypt were initiated in order to form a new united Arab Republic. Meetings were held in Cairo, Baghdad and Damascus during February and March. Out of these and other consultations came an agreement, signed at Cairo on April 17, 1963, for the federation of these States\textsuperscript{15}.

A referendum was to be held in five months to elect a President of the Federation, a transitional Council and Cabinet were provided for, with provision for an eventual legislative Assembly and Senate, Regional Parliaments and a federal government which would control foreign affairs, defense and national security, finance

\textsuperscript{14} Abujaber, Kamel S, op, cit, p. 69.
\textsuperscript{15} Kimball Lorenzo K. op, cit, p. 109.
economic planning, justice, education and communications. However, the Syrian and Iraqi Ba'thists clashed with Nasser—on certain policy issues. Three major issues dominated the conflict:

1. equality versus inequality of the three parties,
2. collective versus personal leadership, and
3. the monopoly of the Syrian Ba'thists across a broader front which include Pro-Nasserites.

Interpretation of the agreements following its conclusion began to vary between Cairo and the other two capitals with the consequence that the provisions of the agreement were never implemented.16

The outcome was to derive the Iraqi Ba'thists into closer cooperation with their Syrian counterparts. On September 2, 1963, the two countries announced their agreement to establish closer cooperation with a view to achieve the ultimate objectives of unity, Freedom and Socialism.17

The Sixth National Congress of the Ba'th Party, meeting in Damascus on 5-23 October, 1963, passed a resolution approving the principle of full federal union between Iraq and Syria but the Syrian Government made no

16. Ibid. See also Batatu Hanna, op, cit, pp. 1014-1016.
17. Ibid.
more to establish political union between the two countries, since such a union would be construed as an alliance against Egypt.

However in this newly formed Government, the Ba'th leaders were divided into three groups. The right wing group consisted of Talib Shabib, Hazim Jawad, Minister of State, Hardan al-Tikriti, commander of the air forces, Tahir Yahya, Chief of the General Staff and Abd al-Sattar Abd al-Latif, Minister of Communications respectively. This group advocated cooperation with other national elements, especially in the army, whom they thought it might eventually become members of the party and strengthen its position in the country. They therefore pressed for the postponement of the implementation of radical principles, especially Socialism, until the time had came when the country was ready for it. The Left-wing group on the other hand consisted essentially of leaders like Ali Salih al-Sadi, Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior (later Minister of Guidance), Muhsin al-Shaykh Radi, Hamdi Abd al-Majid, Hani al-Fukayki, and Abu Talib al-Hashmi. This group insisted on the implementation of basic principles, especially socialism, on the ground that socialism would secure the support of the masses and of the new generation.

Between these two extremes there was a centre group, composed of Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr, Prime Minister and Salih Mahdi Ammash, Minister of Defence. The centre tried to reconcile the two extreme groups hoping that solidarity might be maintained if both were induced to cooperate on certain matters acceptable to them but Bakr and Ammash did not carry enough weight to be able to prevent the party from breaking asunder.

Shortly after the coup, the regime found itself challenged by its partners, the Nasserites, the Communists, and the Radical Ba’thists. Therefore it launched campaign against all, starting with the communists then Nasserites and lastly with the hard liners of the Ba’th. During their course of confrontation, the Ba’th survived four plots: The first was carried out by the Nasserites and subsequently on May 25, eleven Nasserites Officers were executed by firing squad. The second was held by the Communists on July 3, 1963 in which 35 Communists were condemned to death. The third attempt was designed by several retired senior officers and politicians of the old regime. The plotter received sentences of one to three years in jail. On November, 13, 1963, the fourth attempt was carried out by the radical group of the Ba’th headed by ‘Ali Salih al-Sa’di, the deputy premium and interior

19. Ibid.
The Ba’th Party in Iraq with this support of Abdus Salam Arif was the first ideological party to dominate the government and monopolize power in any Arab country. Its domination, however, was entirely dependent on the power of the military, and it ended when the military withdrew its support. The Ba’th ruler in Iraq as well as in Syria were never able to restore representative democratic government and could never face the electorate in any kind of parliamentary elections. Their regime was troubled by Pro-Nasserist and Communist attempts to overthrow the Ba’thists,

20. Four Supporters were, Hamdi Abd al-Majid Muslim al-Shaykh Rodi, Hani al-Fukaykl and Abu Talib al-Hashimi.

and by disputes and disagreements between the Ba’th rulers themselves which, in addition to their serious blunders, led after nine months to the end of their rule.

Thus, the crisis continued to set the stage for the coup of 18 November, 1963 and the fall of the Ba’th. In fact, the conflict that brought about the end of the Ba’th rule, was between the Iraqi regular army and the National Guards of the Ba’th.

The military coup of 18 November, 1963 was carried out by Abd-al-Rehman Arif with the cooperation of the Ba’thist Commander of air force. The rebels had a full control of power after they succeeded in eliminating the national guardsmen of the Ba’th. Abd al-Rahman Arif was chosen as the new statesman of Iraq. The coup of 18 November, 1963, was a serious setback in the history of the Ba’th in Iraq.

An honest assessment of the achievements of the party after nine months of rule in Iraq leaves the impression that it acted as a reformist party more than a revolutionary one. For inspite of its radical new concept of mass organization, which constitutes the only serious

22. Ibid, see also Devlin, John F, op, cit, pp. 259-72.

23. Ibid.
basis of any popular revolutionary movement, and inspite of its clear views on the shape of new socialist society, incompetence, lack of experience and rifts among its leaders left little scope for serious radical changes.

In July 1968, the Ba'th returned to power in yet another coup. The coup of July 17, 1968 was the eighth among the attempted military coups — after the revolution of July 14, 1958 and sixteenth since Iraq became independent in 1932. It was carried out by the cooperation of the retired Ba'thist Officer — politician, Ahmad Hasan Bakr, with two younger independent Officers in the active service, Lt. Col. Ibrahim Da'ud, Commander of the Presidential Guard, and Abdul Razzaaq Nayef, deputy chief of military intelligence and liaison man between President Aref and the army. Two weeks later, on July 30, it was followed by another coup in which the Ba'thists ousted the two young officers who brought them to power. But the root cause lies in the fact that the regime had neither been sufficiently consolidated under the Premiership of Yahiya nor attained legitimacy by popular consent. Both in the army and the outside official circles, their existed certain groups that were determined to effect a change by force if

25. Haddad, George M, op, cit, p. 157
their demands to participate the political process were not heeded. Since the regime was not prepared to tolerate the opposition, its tenure of office ultimately depended on the loyalty of the army.

The major military units on which the 'Arif regime depended were the Republican Guard, the Baghdad Garrison and Military intelligence. The first was headed by Colonel 'Abd al-Rahman Ibrahim al-Da'ud, the second, under the command of colonel Hammad Shihab, the third under the control of colonel 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Nay'ef. And these officers, especially Naif and Da'ud, who had already become conscious of their power, had their own ambitions and plans for the future. They seem to have tacitly come to the conclusion that if 'Arif were overthrown, they would be the successors on whose shoulders the mantle of the 'Arif regime should fall. Keenly feeling that they were in need of a front that would disguise their personal ambition, they agreed to cooperate with Ba'th party because it was thought it might provide legitimacy for their rule. With a poor record under the first 'Arif regime, they felt the Ba'th party would be the ideal tool in their hands.

On the morning of July 16th., 1968, the

27. Ibid, p. 22.
Regional leadership was meeting in the house of Regional Party Secretary General Comrade Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr to review and settle the final assignments. Unexpectedly, a messenger from Abdul Razzaq al-Nayif arrived with an offer from him to participate in the proposed operation. It was revealed that Ibrahim al-Da’ud had in fact informed Al-Nayif of the coming event and proposed that he will take part with an understanding that he would become the Prime Minister of the new regime. The Party leadership, had to act quickly in view of this dangerous development\textsuperscript{28}. Accordingly Lt. Col. Abdul razzaq Nayif, thirty-four years old, thus became Prime Minister and Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr, assumed the charge of Presidentship in place of Abdus Salam, Asif, Ibrahim Da’ud, thirty-nine years old, was given the defence portfolio and became Lieutenant General and Deputy Commander of the Armed Forces. Among the Ba’th military leaders who had been retired under the preceding regime, Lieut. Gen. Hardan Takriti became army chief of staff and Maj. Gen. Saleh Mahdi Ammash, Minister of Interior. The cabinet included four Kurdish ministers, two of whom were regarded as adherents of the Khurdish leader Mustafa al-Barzani\textsuperscript{29}.


\textsuperscript{29} Haddad, George, M, op, cit, pp. 158-59.
function than a conflict between the Ba'ath and Nayif – Da'ud group ensued, both inside and outside official circles. Premier Nayif made several statements to the press unfavourable to socialism which were unacceptable to Ba'ath leaders. President Bakr, on the other hand, pointed out that the new regime was in favour of an Arab nationalist contrary to socialist policy to which his party was committed and would expect its representatives in the Government to carry out. No less significant was the conflict on foreign affairs. The Nayif – Da'ud group was inclined to cooperate with Western powers and paid lip service to Arab unity while the Ba'ath leaders were opposed to cooperation with Nasir and demanded a neutralist foreign policy. As a result, an atmosphere of suspicion surrounded the relationships between the Ba'ath and the Nayif-Da'ud group and a struggle for power between them ensued.\(^{30}\)

The Ba'ath leaders were not happy with the attitudes and policies of the young officers who brought them back to power. They now used the same unscrupulous maneuvers that the Ba'hist had employed elsewhere in order to oust Nayif and Da'ud because they stood in the way of complete Ba'ath control in Iraq. In Syria, the Ba'histas had succeeded in July 1963 in ousting General Zaid Hariri who

executed the coup of March 8, 1963 that brought them to power and in purging out the non-Ba’thist elements that took part in the coup. The Iraqi Ba’thist did not wait four months or even four weeks to remove those who made the coup against Aref. On July 30, 1968, two weeks after the coup, Col. Nayif and General Da’ud were dismissed from their posts and sent to exile by their Ba’thist partners. The twelve-day-old cabinet was dismissed. Col. Nayif was arrested at noon in his residence in Baghdad and was later sent to Morocco, while the minister of defence, General Da’ud was purged out while he was performing a duty of his office outside the country. It was blood-less Revolution. Some have called it the White Revolution.\footnote{Haddad, George M, op, cit, p. 160.}

In September, the new Ba’thist regime headed by Bakr issued its first provisional constitution, which declared Islam to be the religion of the State, ‘Socialism’ as the foundation of the economy, and RCC (and by extension, its Chairman) as the supreme legislative and executive authority, to which the cabinet and the (projected) National Assembly were to be subordinate. The third of these provisions, stressing the supremacy of the RCC, is evidently the one that has been most assiduously respected since 1968. The RCC is accountable to no one, except to the Ba’th Party; even this degree of accountability is no more than formal.
As far as the two other institutions are concerned, the Cabinet has never exercised more than technocratic authority, and the National Assembly, which eventually came into being in 1980, has deliberative rather than legislative power.  

In the second temporary constitution of 16 July 1970 nationalist and socialist principles (derived essentially from Ba'thist teachings) were more strongly emphasized than in the 21 September 1968 first temporary constitution. Thus in the second constitution, Society as envisioned to be ultimately composed of equal and responsible individuals, presumably to classless society maintained by social solidarity. The function of the State was to help establish this society structured on the findings of science and achieved through a revolutionary process. The State undertook to achieve these objectives by continuous planning and regulating the social and economic system. The country’s natural resources and the instruments of production were declared to be owned collectively by the nation - the State undertakes to exploit them for the benefit of the people as a whole. Private ownership, however, was named recognised and private sectors allowed to operate.


33. Khadduri, Majid, 1978, op, cit, p. 34.
When the Ba'th came to power in 1968 a section within the party felt that it was necessary to make some sorts of accommodation with its former enemies after giving up its total political isolation. Furthermore it needed to produce positive economic policies on the lines of newly framed constitution of 1968 which would be both popular and effective. Thus in 1969 and 1970 the Ba'th began to make official overtures to the Communist Party and Kurdistan Democratic Party along with other 'Progressive forces', calling upon them to participate with it in the 'national struggle' against Imperialism and Zionism, and in the construction of an Independent Iraq and a free and prosperous Arab nation. Thus the Ba'th Party alternately cajoled and pressurized the Communists and the Kurds to join them in a National Front early in 1972. This coalition, which came into being in 1973, enabled them to broaden their power base very substantially. For their part, the KDP and Communists were permitted a certain degree of political freedom, and in particular were allowed to publish their own newspaper and magazines. At the same time, the Ba'th began to make overtures to the Socialist Countries, which bore fruit in the Iraq-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 1972. Naturally the Friendship Treaty was another important reason for the Communists joining the National Front.

34. CARDRI Saddam's Iraq, op, cit, pp. 100-1. See also F.M.A. Card, Arab World File, Progressive National and Nationalist Front, Iraq - 1104/1, 20 January 1982.
end of 1978, there developed a steady deterioration in the relation between the Ba‘th and its main partner the Communist Party. It ended with the Communist decision to take up arms against the regime. They joined the Kurds who too broke alliances with regime and waged an open war\textsuperscript{35}.

In their pursuit of popularity, the Ba‘thist rulers also adopted a bold line on the question of Palestine and the conflict in the West Asia in January 1969, they rejected the U.N. Security Council Resolution of November 22, 1967, in July 1970 they denounced the proposal of American Secretary of State William P. Rogers for a ceasefire at least three months and for peace negotiations through special U.N. envoy Gunnar V. Jarring; in September 1970 they openly pledged to commit their troops in Jordan on the side of the Palestinian Resistance in the event of a showdown with King Husain’s army. But the boldness was more in their words than in their deeds. Their failure to live up to their pledge to the Fedayeen not only cost them dearly in prestige, but also produced a serious rift between them and a section of the Ba‘th Pan-Arab command led by Michael Aflaq. More than that, it heightend the infighting between the military and civilian wings of the Party\textsuperscript{36}.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{35} Sluglett, Marion Farouk, op, cit, pp. 158-170.
\bibitem{36} Batatu Hanna, op, cit, pp. 1096-97.
\end{thebibliography}
However, the decline in the prestige of Ba'thi regime that ensured from its weakness in the Jordan showdown was more than compensated by the popular approval to nationalizing the Iraq Petroleum Company. Before it came to power in 1968, the Ba'th party had called for nationalization of the oil industry, epitomized in the slogan "Arab Oil for the Arabs". Once in the saddle, the Ba'th began to appreciate the difficulties involved in nationalization and decided to proceed step by step toward the ultimate goal of nationalization. On June 1, 1972 the R.C.C. passed a resolution to nationalize the IPC operations and a degree 69 was issued to compensate the company for its assets as redefined under law 80 (1961). A national company called the Iraq Company for Oil Operations was established to operate the fields taken over from the IPC which would be responsible for the rights and assets transferred to it in accordance with degree 69.

Similarly, Ba'thism, although not directly identified with Sunni Islam, also has definite aspirations towards Arab Unity, an ideal for which the majority of Iraqi Shi'i have never expressed much positive enthusiasm. Thus, while not wishing to suggest that all politically articulate Shi'is were attracted to communism, it is safe to say that

37. Khadduri, Majid, op, cit; 1979, pp. 123-129. See also Berindranath Dewan, Iraq the Land of Arab Resurgence, PAI Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1979, pp. 111-129.
few of them were positively attracted either to Arab nationalism or to Ba’thism. The only major exception to this was the group around the Faud al-Rikabi, the Shi’i founder of the Ba’th Party in Iraq in 1952. As he recruited primarily among his friends and relatives, many of the first Iraqi Ba’thists were Shi’is. However, it must be emphasised that they were al-Rikabi’s family and associates before anything else, so that when he left the Ba’th in 1959 almost all of them left with him. Furthermore, when control of the Ba’th passed into the hands of the Tikriti after 1968, there were no Shi’i at all in the higher echelons of the party, a state of affairs that did not change until the appointment of four Shi’i to RCC in September 1977.

Although Shi’is did join the Ba’th Party after it had established itself in power, and a number rose to important positions in the course of time, it can safely be asserted that the majority of the Shi’i population remained indifferent to Ba’thism. After the success of Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979, a considerable Shi’i challenge to the regime came into existence.

38. Sluglett, Marion Farouk, op. cit, p. 194.
Apart from the issue of Arab Unity, which was particularly prominent in the first few years after 1968, the overall ideological framework of the party in Iraq has essentially remained within the original mystical notion of the Arab nation, the Arab homeland, al-watan al-'arabi, and the Arab masses al-jamahir - who wage a fierce and bold struggle against the Imperialist and Zionist enemy and its local reactionary hirelings. Thus the political strategy of the party aims, in a scientific and practical way, at developing Arab trends and tendencies towards the higher national aspirations of the Arab nation in its present stage of historical development. Hence the advancement and development of this nation possibly on all fronts became prominent during the Saddam Ba'thist regime starting from the time when he assumed the post of Vice-President of this republic. But at the same time he may be charged of creating factionalism and Bathization and Tikritization of all the institutions of the state including the army of Iraq. Thus it is desirable to look into the life of Saddam Hussain who is not only responsible for a considerable progress on economic and social spheres but is also beign charged for waging a war with Iran in 1979, which claimed to have taken more than 2,00,000 lifes on the Iraqi side.

Saddam Hussain was born in Tikrit on April

41. CARDRI Saddam’s Iraq; op, cit, pp. 102-105.
28, 1937 in a poor peasant family. Saddam Hussein was nearly eight years old when Michael Aflaq’s Arab Ba’th movement was evolving into a party in Damascus. He had not yet had any formal education, as his relatives wanted him to become a farmer like the rest of the family. But a cousin on his mother’s side Adnan Khairallah helped and encouraged him to join the school. After completing his first year at school, he moved to Baghdad with his maternal uncle Khairallah Talfah, who looked after him because his father had died before he was born.

From the time when he was still in Tikrit, a number of significant events seem to have had an indelible impact on his future career. Khayr-Allah Talfah, who was then an officer in the army, participated in the ill-fated Rashid Ali uprising and took part in the military operations against Britain in 1941. After the fall of the Rashid Ali, Talfah was expelled from service. His detention, along with other officers grieved all member of his family. The impact of the Rashid Ali affair, was one of the principal reason that prompted him to participate in nationalist activities which have as their goal the elimination of foreign influence not only from his country but also from all Arab

42. F.M.A. Card, Arab World File: Iraq No, 1903/1, 16 Nov. 1983.

The second important event in Saddam's life was his decision to continue his studies in Baghdad. After he finished primary education in Tikrit, and while he was still in the second year in high school, he began to follow student activities in Baghdad and aspired to be in the midst of those events. He left Tikrit in the fall of 1955 and entered the secondary school of al-Karkh. While still in school, he became involved in the activities of the Ba'th Party and participated in the abortive coup of 1956. That event was then considered as a significant landmark in nationalist activities and the Ba'th Party played an important role in enlisting students to take part in it. In the following year, Saddam became a member of the Ba'th Party.

The third important event was Saddam's participation in the attempt on Abd al-Karim Qasim's life in 1959. He was one of the ten young men selected to assassinate Qasim in accordance with a plan laid down by Ba'thist leaders. Though he was wounded and sentenced to death in absentia, he fled the country via his native town in disguise to Syria. A year later he made his way to Cairo.

44. Khadduri, Majid, 1978, op. cit, p. 72.
45. Ibid, p. 72. See also Matar, Faud, op. cit, pp. 32-34.
where he completed high school in 1961. Meanwhile, he was drawn into nationalist activities during 1961-62 and became the leader in the Cairo unit of the Ba'th Party. After completing high school, he enrolled in the Cairo University law college in the fall of the 1962 but before he could finish the first year he returned to Baghdad after the Ba'th Party seized power in February 1963. As an activist he became fully involved in the Ba'th Party and was arrested and thrown into prison in November 1964, after the fall of the Ba'th from power. He again consolidated his position when he and other Ba’th members supported Bakr in his drive to control the Regional command leadership. He worked closely with Bakr after the Ba’th seized power in 1963.46

At the end of 1969, and indeed for some time afterwards, there were substantial pockets of opposition to al-Bakr and Saddam Husain within both the armed forces and the party leadership. One civilian member of the RCC, Abd-ullah Sallum al-Samarrai the Minister of culture and information, was demoted to Minister of State in December 1969, then dismissed from the RCC and put out to grass as Iraq’s ambassador in India in 1970.

In November 1969, it was announced that the Deputy Premiership had been abolished, a move directed

46. Ibid, p. 73. See Batatu Hanna, op, cit, pp. 1084-87.
against the two holders of the post, Salih Mahdi Ammash and Hardan al-Takriti; as result neither could chair cabinet meetings in Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr’s absence. Their power were further reduced in April 1970, when both were relieved of their ministeries (and replaced by Sadum Ghaidan at Interior and Hammad al-Shihab al-Takriti at Defence), and appointed ‘Deputy President’. A series of high level military transfers and promotions accompanied this reshuffle 47.

All in all, it proved rather harder to get rid of Ammash and Hardah al-Takriti than Saddam Husain had perhaps envisaged, but eventually the events in Jordan in September 1970 provided Husain and al-Bakr with the excuse they needed to remove Hardan al-Takriti and purge his leading supporters from the armed forces. The non-intervention of the Iraqi Army on the side of the Palestine Resistance could be laid fairly and squarely at the door of Haidan al-Takriti as Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, and it was also widely believed that Saddam Husain had favoured intervention but that Hardan had insisted on thwarting his wishes. Hardan was exiled to Algeria in October 1970, and later took refuge in Kuwait, where he was assassinated in 1971 48.


48. Ibid., p. 135.
Though Ammash as Vice-President almost a year after Hardan's fall, began to feel that there was curtailment on his powers comparing to his Predecessors. Dissatisfied with a position in which he had become virtually a figure head, he often made unwarranted critical remarks about other party members which aroused antagonism and tarnished his image. For these and other reasons, personal and otherwise, the Civilian leaders demanded his removal from the Vice-Presidency. He was appointed Ambassador to the U.S.S.R. in 1971; three years later, he was transferred in the same capacity, first to France and then two years later to Finland.

There were some distinguished party members like Abd al-Khaliq al-Samarrai, Abd al-Karim al-Shaykhli and Salah Umar al-Ali who had distinguished themselves in public affairs. With this pace of time Samarrai as member of both the National and Regional Commands, won a reputation as a dedicated and hardworking leader and became very popular in party congresses and always stood high in the list of Party Candidates for elected positions. But he seems to have become very critical of party leaders in higher echelons. Very soon opposition grew against him; he was finally involved in Kazzar uprising and thrown into prison on the 49.

instruction of Hassan al-Bakr. Similarly, Shaykhli and Salah ‘Umar al-Ali, the first holding the portfolio of Foreign Minister and the other information, were dropped from membership of the RCC and appointed to diplomatic posts abroad. Shaykhli was sent to the United Nations as his country’s head of mission in 1971 and Ali as Ambassador to Sweden in 1972.

Saddam Husain, who quietly worked up his way in the party’s echelons, proved capable of surrounding himself with a number of young men who gave him almost unlimited support to rise to the higher position in the State, next to President Bakr. Championing the cause of civil leadership, he was able to mobilize the growing civilian power against military ascendancy.

In his drive for leadership, Saddam Husain encountered a number of opponents who were prepared to challenge him but none proved more determined, by force if necessary, to oppose him than Nazim Kazzar, Chief of the Security Police. He took an active part in the massacre of Communists following the first Ba’thist coup in 1963 and was appointed Chief of the Security Police at Saddam’s insistence in 1969.

50. Ibid, p. 62. See also Batatu Hanna, op, cit, p. 1097.
51. Ibid, p. 63.
Though he agreed in principle on major issues, Kazzar came into conflict with other Ba’th leaders on the method of dealing with the Kurdish question and communists. Because his harsh measures proved decisive in silencing opponents, Kazzar advocated settlement of the Kurdish question by force and was responsible for the initial clashes between Kurds and security forces and for two unsuccessful attempts on Mulla Mustafa’s life a prominent Kurd leader in 1971 and 1972 52.

Believing that his services to the party were not sufficiently recognized, Kazzar tried to realize his ambition by force. Thus Kazzar devised a plan that had the attraction of enabling him to dispose of almost all his rivals more or less simultaneously. Taking advantage of one of al-Bakr’s relatively rare visits abroad, and realising that protocol would demand that most of the party leadership would be on hand at Baghdad Airport to greet the President on his return on 30 June, 1971, Kazzar invited the two key military members of the RCC, Lt. General Hammad Shihab, the Minister of Defence and Lt. General Sa’dun Ghaidan, the Minister of Interior (who were in charge of the armed forces and the police) to a ‘banquet’, or, according to Ghaidan, to visit his head quarters to inspect some newly installed

52. Ibid, p. 63.
surveillance equipment. On their arrival, the two ministers were bundled down to the cellars, while a special detachment of Kassar's own men was despatched to the airport to assassinate both the President and his reception committee on the former's return from Poland. Fortunately for most of the RCC, the airoplane was delayed and the would-be assassins left the airport, presumably under the impression that the President had somehow got wind of the plot. Meanwhile, Kassar, having watched al-Bakr's arrival on television and thus having seen for himself that the plot had misfired, left Baghdad by road, taking the two ministers with him as hostages, threatening (over the radio) to kill them if he was not given safe conduct out of the country. Unfortunately for Abd al-Khaliq al-Samarrai, Kassar apparently offered to meet al-Bakr at the former's house to discuss his differences with the regime, thus implicating al-Samarrai in the plot. There is no other evidence linking Kassar with al-Samarrai, who, unlike Kassar, had good standing in the Ba'th Party and was an important rival of the al-Bakr/Saddam Husain group. In the end Kassar decided that his safest course of action was to try to reach Iran with his two hostages. When the Party was sighted by Iraqi forces near the Iranian border Kassar killed Shihab and seriously wounded Ghaidan before being captured himself.\footnote{Marion farouk Sluglett, Op, cit, p. 161.}
The successful foiling of the plot was immediately announced on Baghdad radio, and a special court under the Presidency of 'Izzat al-Duri was set up to 'try' the conspirators. On 7 July, it was announced that the court had found Kazzar and twenty-one other guilty, and that they had been executed immediately afterwards. A further fourteen were executed the next day, including Muhammad Fadhil, head of the Ba‘th military bureau Abd al-Khaliq al-Samarrai, apparently saved from the firing squad by the personal intervention of Michael Aflaq and was given imprisonment. After the dismissal of Hardan al-Takriti and Ammash and the foiling of Kazzar’s plot in July 1973, there were no serious challenges to the leadership of al-Bakr and Saddam Husain; at least on the surface, apart from a few purges and dismissals, the two seemed firmly in control. In January 1976, Saddam Husain, who had no military background, had himself ‘promoted’ to the rank of general, retrospectively from 1 July 1973. Later on it was announced that the complement of the people’s Militia, the Ba‘th Party’s own military force under the command of Taha Yasin Ramadan would be doubled, over the next few year, its equipment was gradually built up sufficiently for it to be

54. Ibid, p. 162.

able to act if necessary as a counterweight to the regular armed forces.\footnote{56}

On 4 September 1977, for the second time since beginning of Ba’th rule in Iraq, all R.L. members joined the R.C.C. Between March and September 1977, the R.C.C. consisted of Bakr, Husain, Ghaydan, Izzat al-Duri, and Ramadan. When the R.L. members joined the R.C.C. it swelled from 5 to 22 members. One reason for this sweeping change may have been Saddam Husain’s wish to strengthen his position - 2 of the 17 new R.C. members were his staunch supporters\footnote{57}. At the same time Saddam Husain began his first major foray into inter-Arab politics with the Baghdad Summit and the ensuing ‘reconciliation’ with Syria. It was only with al-Bakr’s resignation in 1979 that the latent rebelliousness of Saddam Husain’s colleagues broke out into the open\footnote{58}.

On 16 July 1979, the eve of the eleventh anniversary of the Ba’th takeover, al-Bakr appeared on television to announce his resignation, and Saddam Husain

\footnote{56. In October 1977, al-Bakr handed over the Portfolio of Defence to his son-in-law, Colonel (Adnan Khairallah, who is also the brother of Saddam Husain’s Wife.}


\footnote{58. Marion Farouk Sluglett, op, cit, p. 208.}
was ‘sworn in’ immediately as President, a transfer of power that had been as meticulously prepared as it had been long expected. Izzat al-Duri, a long-standing and loyal Lieutenant of Saddam Husain, was appointed Vice-President. However, a few days before al-Bakr’s resignation, there were already indications that something else was afoot, with the announcement that the R.C.C. secretary, Muhi Abd al-Husain Mashhadi, was to be replaced by Tariq Hamad al-Abdullah. The full significance of this emerged a fortnight later, on 28 July, when it was declared that a plot to overthrow the regime, masterminded by Syria, had been uncovered; a special party court of seven R.C.C. members was immediately set up under Naim Haddad, and within a few days twenty two people had been executed, including Mashhadi along with his four colleagues who were assigned membership of R.C.C. namely Muhammad ‘Ayish, Muhammad Mahjub, and Ghanim ‘Abd al-Jalil respectively.\textsuperscript{59}

Saddam Husain since, then, has managed to crystallise the Ba’thist theory of action, through meticulous work; a precise and deep supervision of the development of the revolutionary process with all difficulties, complexes and ensuing new facts involved; a

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid, p. 209. See also F.M.A. Card Arab World File, Coup Deta’t, The Ba’th in Power (1968-81), Iraq, 1102/6, 6 January, 1982.
live contact with the party members and the people; a creative ideological effort; and a high preparedness for dialogue and interaction with views and facts. This theory has guided the party in the political, economic, social and organizational fields as well as its relation with the people and in its Arab and International relations in all past phases. It is today the prime source of guidance for the party's activity in all such fields. In this, Saddam Husain has made a valuable achievement in the history of the Party and Revolution, and even in the course of the movements of the Arab and Third World Revolutions.  