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IRAN-IRAQ WAR (1980-1988)
AN ATTEMPT TO EXPLORE THE ROLE OF KHOMEINISM IN THE WAR
by

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B.A. May 1983, Pembroke State University

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ABSTRACT

THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR OF 1980-1988: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE IMPACTS OF KHOMEINIISM

Masoud Bonyanian
Old Dominion University, 1991
Director: Dr. K. Mengisteab

This thesis investigates the impact of Khomeinism on the Shi'ites of Iraq. Specifically it seeks to determine whether the rise of Khomeinism in Iran inspired Iraq's Shi'ite majority to rise against the Ba'athist leaders of Iraq with the object of establishing an Islamic Republic. The paper focuses on the political activities of the Iraqi Shi'ites from Ayatollah Khomeini's rise to power in Iran in February 1979 to the beginning of hostilities between Iraq and Iran in September 1980. The evidence indicates mounting anti-Ba'athist political activity by the Shi'ites which included daily rioting, attempted assassinations, and a rise in the number of Shi'ite underground groups. The paper concludes that the war was Saddam Hussein's attempt to suppress the source of Shi'ia unrest in Iraq, which he believed was the rise of Khomeinism in Iran.

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM: IRAQ INVADES IRAN

Less than a year after the successful Islamic revolution in Iran, the Iraqi troops, by crossing the international border into the Iranian territory, commenced the bloodiest war since World War II. The brutality of the war and the concern over the effects of the fighting on the oil rich region of the Persian Gulf attracted world wide attention. There was a global concern that the war would spill over to the neighboring countries and stop the flow of oil to the world market. Given the dependency of the world economy on the Gulf's oil, that would have had severe consequences for members of the world community. The Iraqi invasion of Iran also increased the chance of a superpower conflict in the region. Due to the abundance of oil, neither the East nor the West could permit any gain by the other in the Persian Gulf. Russian control of the strategically important Strait of Hormuz, from which millions of barrels of oil are shipped daily to the world, would have put Western industry at their mercy.

After eight years of inconclusive and brutal battles, both nations, by accepting the United Nation Resolution 598, agreed to settle their dispute at the negotiating table.

Although a cease-fire came into effect in 1988, it did not produce a concrete peace treaty until Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in August of 1990. Both nations accepted the pre-war boundaries defined by the Algerian Treaty and recently exchanged ambassadors to normalize their relationship. Despite this peace effort by both nations, a chance for resumption of the conflict persists. It is not clear whether Saddam Hussein's peace initiative to Iran was genuine or a result of diplomatic necessity.

To find the basis of a lasting peace between Iran and Iraq, it is essential to study the roots and causes of the 1980 Iraqi invasion. It is only through an objective study of the sources of the war that a lasting solution to the Gulf's conflict can be found.

SOURCES OF HOSTILITY

The war has left both nations with a crippling economy and millions of dead or injured. If one assumes that the Iraqi government acted rationally by ordering its troops to invade Iran, one may ask what made this war worth endangering Iraqi and Iranian lives and economic devastation. What were the goals and objectives of the Iraqi government behind the tragic invasion of 1980?

Ethnic and religious hostilities, drawn out across eight years of bloodshed and destruction, have made citing a single cause of the Iran-Iraq war undesirable, if not impossible. However, most political scientists observing

events in the Persian Gulf region agree that Arab-Persian hatred, the struggle for territory along the Shatt Al-Arab waterway, and Iraqi ambition to become the military leader of the Arab nations have contributed to the Gulf War. A quick review of these factors will yield a better understanding of the conflict.

ARAB AND PERSIAN HATRED

Edgar O'Ballance, a prominent scholar on Persian Gulf politics, stresses the ethnic aspects of the war.¹ He has traced the ethnic hostility between the two nations to the Battle of Qadisiya in A.D 637. In this pivotal battle, an Arab army, inspired by the message of Islam, defeated the Persian army of the Sassanian dynasty. According to O'Ballance, this battle made Arabs and Persians traditional enemies.²

Yhya Armajanu believes that the Persian hatred of Arabs is not a new phenomenon and is rooted in history. He, like O'Ballance, has traced back the roots of this hatred to the destruction of the Sassanian Empire at the Battle of Qadisiya. He believes that the Persians have never forgotten this defeat; they regard it as a chief tragedy in their history.³ With the defeat of Qadisiya, the Persians lost their sovereignty, and it was much later in their history that they finally regained their independence. Although they had been conquered by an alien people who imposed the Islamic faith on them, the Persians never lost

their distinctive identity and cultural heritage. Richard Frye writes, "Iran accepted Islam but changed it by making of it an Iranicized international religion and culture not wedded to Arab and Bedouin customs and beliefs."⁴

Nonetheless, the defeat at Qadisiya was not the only event that brought the ethnic-cultural polarization between Arabs and Persians. The rise of Shi'ism in Persia contributed to the continuation of hatred between the two people. Shi'ism was not founded by Persians, but some Arab writers believe that the faith was employed by Persians, either to "undermine the Sunni creed (to which the majority belonged) or to claim Shi'ism as their own religion."⁵ Arab rulers of Persia perceived the Shi'ite movement in that territory as an act of collective defiance bordering on antagonism toward their occupation. Centuries later, the Iraqi government, though not controlling Iranian affairs as their ancestors controlled Persian affairs, would perceive Iranian Shi'ism as a revolutionary movement designed to subvert the authority of Hussein's Ba'ath Socialist administration, whose members consisted of Sunni Muslims.

Persian determination to preserve their cultural heritage and identity manifested itself not only in their acceptance of Shi'ism but also in their collaboration with the Abbasides, an opponent of the ruling Arab Umayyad dynasty. Therefore, when the Umayyad dynasty collapsed at the hands of the Abbaside dynasty in 750, some historians

viewed it as a Persian victory.⁶ Again, this event from history lurks in the memories of Iraq's modern government. A persistent feature of Iran-Iraq friction, especially since 1971, has been Iran's policy of inspiring the Kurds in Iraq to rebel against Hussein's anti-Kurd brutality. Prior to the 1975 Algiers Treaty, the Shah regularly pursued this doctrine; after the fall of the Shah, the Ayatollah encouraged Iraqi and Iranian Kurds to unite with him under the banner of Islam. To Iraqi leaders, Iran's enduring support of opposition factions in Iraq harkens back to Persia's support of the dynasties that opposed the established Umayyad Dynasty hundreds of years ago.

Historical grudges are but one factor contributing to the fractured relations between these neighbors in the Persian Gulf. Ethnic and cultural differences, based on nothing more than racism--in which the Semitic Arabs of Iraq feel superior to the Aryan Persians of Iran, and vice-versa --have resulted in a deep mistrust of one another. Generations of these populations have been brought up to believe that they cannot trust an "inferior" people at their border, and the political leaders have exploited this mutual disdain to further their own goals for domination of the region.

BOUNDARY DISPUTES (EARLY HISTORY)

The rise of the Safavid Dynasty based on the doctrine of Shi'ism in the sixteenth century stood not only as a

political threat but also as an ideological competitor to the Sunni Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans became concerned that the Safavid dynasty might encourage the Shi'ite subjects under Ottoman rule to demand autonomy and eventually join the Persian Empire. This political and ideological competition manifested itself in numerous boundary disputes between the Ottomans and the Persians. The disputed territories included cities and rivers in modern Iraq.⁷

The founder of Shi'ism as a state religion in Iran was Shah Ismail, who not only united the entire Shi'ite population of Persia but also sought to extend his beliefs into other Islamic lands which were under the control of the Ottoman Empire.⁸ To suppress this new Shi'ite threat, the Sunni Ottomans, who were planning to penetrate westward into Europe, had to postpone their expansionism in order to restore stability in their own territory.⁹ Thus the territory of modern Iraq became the fulcrum of an oscillating conflict between the Ottoman Sultan and Persian Shah.¹⁰

Shah Ismail captured Iraq in 1508 but soon relinquished control after a successful counterattack from the Ottomans in 1514. A similar exchange of victories occurred in 1529.¹¹ This continuing struggle over Iraq between Persians and Ottomans proved only that neither empire was powerful enough to permanently vanquish the

other. The ethnic hostilities described above ignited each side into a zeal to prevail at any cost over an enemy perceived as racially and culturally inferior. These attitudes allowed either side to occupy territory for only temporary durations. Military solutions to territorial disputes not forthcoming, political solutions were sought. The leaders of each empire realized they were exhausting their resources and signed the Amassia Treaty.¹²

MODERN ERA: NEW INDEPENDENCE, INHERITED DISPUTES (1921-1971)

Chief among the Pahlavi regime's objectives, in its territorial policy toward Iraq, was to control at least half of the Shatt-Al-Arab waterway. Although Iran commanded an extensive coastline along the Persian Gulf, it coveted the Shatt, Iraq's only outlet to the high seas, because of its close proximity to Iran's most productive oil refineries. Iraq, on the other hand, adamantly defended its right to maintain sovereignty over the Shatt; to relinquish this outlet would choke off its only method to ship its exports free of the harassment of its historically antagonistic neighbors.

As a countermeasure to Iraq's insistent protection of the Shatt, the Pahlavi regime stirred up internal problems for Hussein's Ba'ath party. The Shah offered military, financial, and moral support to Kurdish insurgents, which reached its apex during the Kurdish Civil War, 1971 to 1975.

This violent uprising in the north of Iraq eventually ended with yet another treaty, the Algiers Pact of 1975, in which Iraq finally relinquished half of the Shatt so that the Shah would end his backing of the Kurdish rebellion. The Algiers Pact created a framework of tense, yet productive co-operation between the two states for nearly five years, as each side strove to put its mutual oil-export interests above anachronistic religious and racial feuds. But this framework began to crack and finally, in 1979, it shattered as the Ayatollah, exiled from his native region as a result of Iraq's truce with the Shah, returned to destroy the Iranian government and inspire neighboring states to do the same.

Before examining the ideological climate that hastened the rise of Khomeinism, a close investigation of the Pahlavi regime which it displaced is in order. It was the Shah's government that supplied arms to the Kurdish rebels in Iraq, forcing Hussein to give up half the Shatt and thereby increasing his insecurity in the region. How did the Shah so suddenly gain military supremacy in the region in 1971? The answer will reveal the reasons for his equally rapid decline only eight years later.

BRITISH WITHDRAWAL, THE RISE OF THE SHAH, AND THE NIXON DOCTRINE

From the end of the Second World War to 1971, the British Navy had maintained a presence as the undisputed

military power in the Persian Gulf. At that time Britain was suffering losses from an Iraqi revolution being fought under the banner of Pan-Arabism. Already in the midst of a worldwide reduction in its foreign troops, Britain decided to withdraw its forces from the region. This move created a vacuum of power in the Persian Gulf. At this time no single Persian Gulf nation possessed the military resources to dominate the region and an era of chronic, small-scale war appeared imminent.¹³

The industrialized nations of the West, most notably the United States, wanted to ensure peace in the region, as war would limit the supply, or at least obstruct the delivery, of oil to the West. These events would increase the price of oil and create inflationary pressure in Western economies. Therefore, after British withdrawal created the power vacuum, the presence of a nation with enough firepower to discourage border clashes or strikes on refineries became of paramount importance to most Western nations. To continue the British role of maintaining peace, security, and navigation in the Gulf, President Richard Nixon arranged for the sale of sophisticated weapons to the Shah of Iran's army.¹⁴ Nixon instructed the United States Department of Defense to "comply with virtually any request from the Shah for the supply of conventional weapons."¹⁵

Safeguarding his country's economy was not the only motive behind Nixon's alliance with the Shah. A look at any

map will reveal Iran's northeastern frontier with the Soviet Union. Reasoning from the premise that the Soviet Union was an expansionist state which respected only military resolve, Nixon wanted to demonstrate America's willingness and ability to support a nation which might be a potential victim of Soviet expansion.¹⁶

Iran's dominion over the east bank of the Persian Gulf was another geopolitical factor that influenced Nixon's support of the Pahlavi regime. Non-military aid would develop export terminals there while military aid would help the Iranians defend it. Finally, Nixon's government wanted to back Iran because its population, clearly the highest in the region, represented a strong labor force to produce oil and a large army to buy and deploy its weapons.

Backed by a rich and powerful ally which had a Presidential mandate to stockpile Iranian arsenals, the Shah soon assumed the role as policeman of the Gulf. Now, the Persian Gulf, instead of having an outside nation enforce the peace, had a local state empowered with an overabundance of military power. Although Iran's new military might was clearly coming from the United States, it nevertheless was viewed by the other states--most notably by arch-rival Iraq--as the supreme military presence. The fact that a non-Arab state should have the balance of power so clearly in its favor infuriated Iraq's government, as Hussein's Ba'ath party was trying to champion the idea of Pan-Arabism in the

Middle East. Internal instability in Iraq, most notably in the form of a civil war with the Kurds, prevented Hussein from challenging the Shah's new strength. Given the sophistication of the rebels' weapons and supplies, Iraq's suspicion that the Shah played a leading role in Kurdish aggression aggravated the historical antagonism.¹⁷

Besides the presence of sophisticated weaponry in the hands of Kurdish insurgents, Iranian hegemony in the Gulf fueled Hussein's belief that the Shah was abusing Western military aid. In 1971, Iran overran and occupied the islands of Tombs and Abumosa which had Arab populations. Hussein saw his Persian rivals using their newfound military might for non-defensive purposes against his people, the Arabs. Although he possessed the means to oust Iranians from these islands, he could do so only at the cost of his war against the Kurds. Hussein grew frustrated at seeing the Iranians openly challenging and defeating his ideal of Pan-Arabism in the Gulf. His appeals for help from the other Arab nations received cold responses. The more moderate states did not want to support Iraq, a nation which only two years earlier had ignited a revolution against the peacekeeping British. The 1968 revolution, fought under the banner of Pan-Arabism, led to the British withdrawal, and that in turn led to America's arming Iran. Many Arab states reasoned that Hussein was largely responsible for the rise of Iranian adventurism.¹⁸

During the early 1970's, then, the Persian Gulf became a theater for superpower involvement, as the Soviet Union offered military sales to the embattled government of Iraq. Not only did Soviet aid help restore a more even balance of power, it introduced the fact that the United States would not have the only military influence in the region.

IRAQI-EGYPTIAN RIVALRY AND THE FORMATION OF THE HUSSEIN DOCTRINE

Military support of Iran was not the only American involvement in the Middle East that irritated Iraq. Even after the Kurdish civil war ended in 1975 and the Iraqis and Iranians signed the Algiers Pact, Hussein could not be content with the status of his power. A brief era of cooperation existed between the Shah and him, as both sides shared the Shatt-al-Arab. But Hussein looked west and realized that he had another rival for leadership of the Arab world: Egypt. Constantly quarrelling with Syria over the interpretation of Ba'ath ideology and nervous over the growing American influence, Iraq was the only nation espousing an idea of Arab self-determination. Yet, Hussein felt insecure about his military reputation and harbored doubts as to how he could back up his doctrine of Pan-Arabism without the strongest military in the region.

Two events occurred in the late 1970's which presented Hussein with the opportunity to assume the strongest military posture in the region. First, Egypt agreed to the

Camp David Accords, a peace agreement with Israelis worked out through the offices of an outside force. Hussein's propaganda machine convinced the Arab masses that Egypt compromised Arab interests for the benefit of Israel and America. He argued that Egypt could claim any military supremacy or protection of the Arab world while signing a peace treaty with the enemies of the Arabs. Next, in 1979, the Shah's government and his military force (Hussein's perpetual enemy) collapsed under the Ayatollah's revolution. With Egypt out of favor and Iran in shambles, Iraqi leaders felt that they had achieved the long-awaited opportunity to assert their military leadership of the Arab world.

Murray Gordon asserts that the war with Iran was:

. . . [an attempt by Hussein] to make his country the acknowledged regional power, assuming, in effect, the role that the Shah had played for a number of years. As an Arab country championing Arab unity and the cause of the Palestinians, Hussein was no less anxious to establish himself as the ideological successor of the late Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser by rallying the Arab world around the flag of pan-Arabism.¹⁹

Iraqi interests in the Gulf, then, stemmed from geography, ideology, and military ambition.

Being practically landlocked and subject to the maritime goodwill of Kuwait and Iran, Iraq felt it vital to maintain its only outlet to the Gulf, which afforded a cheaper means to export oil and import other resources. Its only alternatives lay in the heavily-taxed overland routes through Syria, Jordan, and Turkey; these territories were

also subject to terminate goodwill at any time. Iraq believed it needed complete sovereignty over the Shatt.

By virtue of its ideology, Ba'athist leaders of Iraq perceived their role to be the protectors of Arab lands in the Gulf. Egypt, historically an ideological and military leader in this regard, was unfit because of its geographical displacement and its treaty with Israel. Iran, for nearly a decade the clear leader in manpower and weapons, was not only self-destructing militarily, it was threatening to destroy its smaller Arab neighbors. Iraq felt it must act to back up its Pan-Arab rhetoric with strong police action. Finally, a successful demonstration of Iraq's fortified armies would gain Hussein's country its coveted international recognition.

In order for Iraq to achieve its objectives, it needed to complete three steps. First, Egypt had to be expelled as Iraq's main Arab competitor. Second, Iraq had to nullify the Algiers Pact, in which it relinquished half of the Shatt-al-Arab. This act, though necessary to curb Kurdish violence, was contrary to Ba'athist ideology. Iraq's self-proclaimed mission, after all, was to liberate Arab lands from foreign occupation not to surrender land to non-Arab Iranians. Third, Iraq needed to militarily prove its claims of capability to defend itself and all Arab lands.

According to Gordon, Iraq's first obstacle was overcome by hosting an anti-Egyptian summit conference in

October 1978.²⁰ It was during this summit that Hussein successfully was able to unite his diverse Arab guests--hard-line Syrians and Libyans as well as moderate Saudis and the Gulf sheikhdoms--in their disdain for Egypt. The conference ended with harsh criticism and the expulsion of Egypt from the Arab league.²¹

Another factor that stood between Iraq and the materialization of its goals for supremacy in the Arab world was the 1975 Algiers Treaty. Faced with Kurdish military uprisings supported by the Shah (which drained Iraqi labor and capital, thus hindering its plans for development), Saddam Hussein met with the Shah in an attempt to end Iranian support of the Kurds.²² The negotiations of June 5 and 6 bore fruit; on June 6, 1975, Algerian President Boumedienne announced the news of the agreement between the Shah and Saddam Hussein. Iran agreed to stop assisting the Kurdish rebellion; in return, Hussein granted the Shah his long-time claim of ownership over half the Shatt-al-Arab.²³ Although the treaty gave the Ba'athists the opportunity to consolidate their power throughout Iraq, it embarrassed the party whose platform stressed the safeguard of Arab lands. From the time of the treaty until the fall of the Shah, Iraq and Iran experienced a period of commercial cooperation. Beneath their understanding, however, flowed an undercurrent of distrust and resentment over being forced to share land with enemies whose hatred stemmed from racial and cultural

battles stretching back for generations. As the established government of Iran began to fall, and the revolutionary forces began to export their revolution to smaller Arab communities, Hussein seized the opportunity to nullify the Algiers Treaty and reclaim his role as protector of Arab lands.

As it will be demonstrated in the following chapters, Hussein engaged in extensive talks with other Arab leaders before he took action against Iran. During these diplomatic missions, the Iranian government continued to unravel. Its economy depleted because of strikes during its revolution to overthrow the Shah, its military system disorganized because of revolutionary executions of high-ranking officers, and its society in chaos because of the struggles for power among different factions, Iran became an attractive prey upon which Iraq would demonstrate the military power that it held in such high regard. By achieving a rapid victory over a weakened opponent, Iraq could prove to the Arab world and the superpowers that it was the new military power in the Persian Gulf. Early strikes into the Khuzestan region of southwest Iraq (just north of the Shatt and called Arabistan by the Iraqis) yielded convincing victories for the well-armed forces of Hussein. They reached and captured the important port city of Khorramshahr; afterwards, they encountered stiff Iranian resistance. The Iraqi invasion soon became static, its offensive drives repeatedly repelled

by the tenacious Iranians. The war became a draw, with each side inflicting damage to the other, but neither able to put together a string of victorious battles. As each side exhausted itself to the point of cease-fire in the late 1980's, Hussein's ambition to become the hegemonic power in the Gulf became unreachable.

IDEOLOGICAL INCOMPATIBILITY

There is one other source of hostility that has not received proper scholarly attention. That is the incompatibility of the Iranian ideology of Pan-Islamic with the Iraqi ideology of Pan-Arabism.

Since seizing power in Iraq in 1968, the Arab Ba'ath socialist party had envisioned a Pan-Arabic nation. Its main foreign policy goal was to form a large unified state governed by Arabs for Arabs. In 1979, Iraq's neighbor Iran witnessed the Islamic revolution, a movement fighting for the doctrine of Khomeinism. Unlike the Ba'athist, Khomeini envisioned the Islamic states (most of which had Arab population) united under a single ideology: his interpretation of Islamic fundamentalism. Each ideology wanted to unify the region into a single state, yet their unification ideas were diametrically opposed. The Iraqi ideology was secular and denounced religion as a factor of disunity. The Iranian ideology was religious and denounced politics as spiritually corrupt.

The purpose of this research project, therefore, is to

try to establish that the incompatibility of Khomeinism with Ba'athism and the growing popularity of Khomeinism among the Iraqi Shi'ites threatened the survival of the Iraqi regime. This menace from Iran created a sense of insecurity among the Iraqi leaders which eventually led to the 1980 Iraqi invasion. This is not to suggest that the mere existence of ideological incompatibilities between the two nations resulted in the commencement of the fighting. Iran and Iraq, despite their ideological incompatibilities, could have lived side by side in the same way they had co-existed under the reign of the deposed Shah. What provoked the Iraqi leaders to attack Iran was the susceptibility of the majority of their population to Khomeinism. The remainder of this research project will be an attempt to answer the following questions to link Khomeinism to the beginning of the 1980 Iraqi invasion.

1. Had Khomeinism found grounds among the Shi'ite population of Iraq prior to the war?
2. Was war a response to Khomeini's increasing influence among the Iraqi Shi'ites?
3. Was one of the Iraqi leaders' multifold objectives in invading Iran to divert the militant zeal of Iraqi Shi'ite's majority?
4. Was war an attempt to shift their concentration from the Khomeinist idea of the Shi'ite brotherhood--their common faith with Iranian

Shi'ites--to the Ba'athist idea of nationhood?

METHODOLOGY

To establish the incompatibility of the two ideologies and to suggest that Ayatollah Khomeini's ideas actually were a menace to the Iraqi regime's survival, the following method will be used:

1. A comparative study of Ayatollah Khomeini's Pan-Islamic thoughts and ideas of the Islamic Republic, and the Ba'athist Pan-Arabism ideas as articulated by Michel Aflaq, the founder of Ba'athism, will be undertaken. It is by comparing the goals and objectives of each ideology that one can establish whether any incompatibility existed prior to the war.
2. To establish that Khomeinism had found grounds and had become a threat to the survival of the Iraqi regime, the activities of Shi'ite population of Iraq since the emergence of Khomeini to power in Iran in 1979 to the beginning of hostility in 1980 will be studied. To measure the Iraqi Shi'ite's disenchantment with the Ba'athist ideology and their attraction to Khomeinism, the following indicators will be used:
 - a. The Shi'ite riots in support of Khomeinism and rejection of Ba'athism in Iraq.
 - b. The assassination attempts and the activities

of the Iraqi Shi'ite underground groups.

An increase in the level of the above variables (since Ayatollah Khomeini took power in Iran) will suggest:

1. That Khomeinism had found grounds in Iraq prior to the war;
2. That Khomeinism had become a threat to the survival of Ba'athism; and
3. That the war was a response, by Iraqi leaders to Khomeinism, to eliminate the source of threat to their existence in Iraq.

SOURCES OF DATA

To collect data, the author has relied on existing publications on the war. Also, pamphlets on the war published in English by the embassies of Iran and Iraq have been utilized. These pamphlets will give a better understanding of the war from the point of view of each combatant.

The information in Chapters Three and Four is gathered from the daily newspapers and radio broadcastings of Iran and Iraq. To secure this information the author has relied on Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, Daily Report: Middle East and Africa (FBIS MEA).

Another source of information for this research paper comes from personal visits by the author to the area. During these visits in the summer of 1983 and the fall of 1986, the author personally visited the battlegrounds and

had the opportunity to conduct interviews with the Iraqi prisoners of war. In addition to the prisoners of war, four high-ranking members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard were interviewed.

DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One is designed to provide a general overview of the causes of the war. Chapter Two will discuss the components of Ba'athist ideology and how, contrary to its primary objective of unifying all Arabs, it became a source of isolation for Iraqi government. This isolation created the feeling of being surrounded by enemies and was the root of Iraq's insecurity. Chapter Three will be a study of Khomeinism and its impact on Iraqi Shi'ites. Political activities of the Iraqi Shi'ite since the advent of Khomeinism in Iran will be the central focus of Chapter Four. Chapter Five will constitute the conclusion of this paper.

ENDNOTES

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³Yahya Armajani, Iran (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 54.

⁴Richard N. Frye, The Golden Age of Persia: The Arabs in the East (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1975), 3-4.

⁵Majid Khadduri, The Gulf War: The Origins and Implications of the Iraq-Iran Conflict (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 6.

⁶Armajani, 62.

⁷Khadduri, 10-11.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Jasim M. Abdulghani, Iran and Iraq: The Years of Crisis (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1984), 4.

¹²Ibid., 5.

¹³Ibid., 74.

¹⁴J.B. Kelly, Arabia, The Gulf and the West (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), 293.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Murray Gordon, Conflict in the Persian Gulf (New York: Facts on File, 1981), 34.

¹⁷Abdulghani, 55-57.

¹⁸Gordon, 93-96.

¹⁹Ibid., 157.

²⁰Ibid., 153.

²¹Ibid.

²²Khadduri, 61.

²³Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

MILITARISTIC IDEOLOGY IN IRAQ: THE ARAB BA'ATH SOCIALIST PARTY

The leaders of Iraq and Iran had their respective visions of unifying the nations of the Middle East according to their own nationalistic ideologies. Since the beginning of its seizing power in Iraq in 1968, the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party (ABSP) envisioned a pan-Arabic nation. Operating from the premise that the dominant population in the region is Arabic, and that Arabs were being exploited by the Western powers for their labor and resources, the ABSP wanted to form a large, unified state governed by Arabs for Arabs. Ten years after the Ba'ath party seized power in Baghdad, the Western-backed government of the Shah of Iran was swept from power by the Islamic Revolution, an explosive movement fighting for the doctrines of Khomeini. Not unlike his Ba'athist adversaries, Khomeini envisioned the Islamic states, most of which had Arab majorities, united under a single ideology: his interpretation of Islamic fundamentalism.

Each enemy wanted to unite the nations of the region into a single nation, yet they based their unification schemes upon ideas that were diametrically opposed. The Iraqi ideology was insistently secular; it denounced

religion as a factor in disunity. The Iranian ideology was fiercely religious; it denounced politics as spiritually corrupt.

In this chapter an attempt is made to identify Iraqi ideology as the ruling Ba'ath party embodied it. A militant and revolutionary ideology, it used violence not only to gain control of the government but also to enforce its rule over non-Arab dissident groups, such as the Kurds and the Shi'ite Muslims. In spite of its difficulty in maintaining unity among groups within its own population, the ABSP strove to impose its ideas of Arabic unity upon a skeptical Arab community in the Middle East. Iraqi imposition of an unpopular ideology created chronic diplomatic trouble which persisted from the beginning of its rule until the rise of Khomeinism in 1979.

THE ARAB BA'ATH SOCIALIST PARTY: THE POWER OF PERSUASION

The ABSP had first tried to gain control of the Iraqi government in 1963. In this first thrust for power the Ba'athists disrupted the established government but were unable to replace it with their own ruling majority. Part of their problem was that military officers, who held moderate Ba'athi beliefs, assisted the first revolt; they later opposed the radical Ba'ath fighters who had forced the coup. These moderates joined the Nasserist regime led by Abd al-Sallam Aref, who commanded the standing army. This force easily suppressed the violent protests that the Ba'ath

radicals put forth. However, dissidents and protestors included many, if not all, Arab officers defeated by the Israelis in the War of 1967.¹

By July of 1968 the ABSP had organized a strong coalition with non-Ba'athi army officers. This wing launched a successful revolt against the sitting Nasserist government. Expelling many of the moderate Ba'athists who held key positions in the Nasserist government, the ABSP consolidated its power as the ruling party.²

The 1968 revolution, which created the framework for the Iraqi government that launched the invasion against Iran in 1980, differed from the many failed coup attempts that had preceded it. What made the second Ba'ath coup so significant was that it combined an ideology with military execution. Earlier coup attempts on ousting an established faction had never planned a national course to follow after the establishment had been removed. Lacking any national agenda, victorious revolutionaries soon became targets for dissatisfied groups of the population. By the mid-1960's, Iraq was mired in its usual cycle of revolt and counterrevolt. With the rise of the ABSP, however, a revolution backed by an ideology with national and international goals came to power. The ABSP, on the strength of its political planning, was determined to break the cycle of revolution and counterrevolution that had forced its own ouster in 1963.

BA'ATHIST IDEOLOGY

Michel Aflaq, a Greek Orthodox Christian, and Salah al-Din Bitar, a Sunni Muslim, consolidated their ideas of secular socialism into the doctrine of Ba'athism. Dissatisfied with British and French rule, which they viewed as imperialism, Aflaq and Bitar began to promote the idea of establishing one Arab nation. All of the tenets of Ba'athism serve Arab nationalism--the idea that all Arabs naturally belong together in one homeland. The Ba'athists disregard all boundaries between Arab nations, claiming that boundaries are the arbitrary decisions of Western powers who fear a unified Arabic nation.³

According to Ba'athist ideology, the mission of the Western powers is to prevent Arab unification. The Ba'athists argue that a unified Arab state would give rise to a renaissance of Arabic culture, art, and philosophy, which would easily overshadow the past achievements of the West. In addition, a unified Arab nation would achieve economic and military power that could easily rival or overwhelm any Western power or alliance. Fearing this the West imposes boundaries and exploits the resources of the Arabic regions, promoting its own industry and relegating the Arabs to a subordinate existence.⁴

When dissidents of pan-Arabism argue that Arab unification is difficult because of the myriad differences among Arabs regarding, among other facets of life, their

political affiliation, the Ba'athists argue that such political fragmentation is the creation of Western imperialism. Disunity among Arabs, contend the Ba'athists, is the cause of Arab inferiority in the world; it is the sole factor preventing the Arabs from achieving cultural, military, and economic supremacy. Ba'athist doctrine states that the Arab nation is an indivisible political and economic entity, and that, "No Arab country can live apart from the other."⁵ As a result of this belief, the Ba'athists argue that the existing political divisions among Arabs are artificial and subject to change. In the words of Aflaq, "We struggle until we can reunite these scattered members, until we may reach a wholesome [state and homeland]."⁶

Another characteristic of Ba'athism is its secularism. According to Aflaq, Islam is only one component of Arab culture and heritage; therefore, Islam must be subordinated to Arab nationalism. Among the implications of the Ba'athist's secular bias is the hostile friction that developed between Iraq and the Khomeinist regime in Iran. A Persian nation, Iran was already in low esteem among the Ba'athist Iraqis; under Khomeini, Iran became an outright enemy. Like the Ba'athist ideologues, Khomeini envisioned that the states in the Middle East would erase their Western-imposed boundaries and unite into one supnation. However, Khomeini's vision contained one huge difference:

his utopia would unite under the guidance of Islam, and secular nationalities and political groups were to be subordinated, if tolerated at all. As Khomeini rose to power in the late 1970's his government and that of Saddam Hussein were, ideologically, on a collision course. Each one was calling for the unification of states in the Middle East, with his own nation serving as the model; each one vehemently denounced the focal point of the other's unification scheme. Combined with the centuries-long border disputes and ethnic hostility between Iran and Iraq, a war between these countries was inevitable.

A striking similarity between Iraqi Ba'athism and Khomeinist Islam is that both are revolutionary philosophies. Ba'athism does not believe in slow, evolutionary changes in politics. Instead, it states that the transformation of society must be achieved through military force. Forming its international policy, the Ba'athists encouraged other Arabic people to use the same revolutionary tactics that swept the ABSP to power in Iraq in the late 1960's. Article 6 of the party's constitution states, "To rely on slow evolution and to be satisfied with a partial and superficial reform is to threaten [Pan-Arab] aims and to ensure their failure."⁷ This stipulation created mistrust among Iraq's moderate neighbors, who feared that the Ba'athist regime would export their revolution. It would persist as a constant diplomatic problem for Iraqi

leaders throughout the 1970's, until Khomeini's revolution provided a greater threat.

In forming an economic policy, the Ba'athists adhered to socialism. This would oppose the capitalist ambitions of Western powers dealing with Arab states and further distinguish Arabs from the imperialist foreigners. Ba'athist ideologue believed that socialism, with its appeal to economic equality, would create a broader popular base; they believed that Arabs could achieve greater unity under an economic plan that discouraged competition. Capitalism, which emphasized competition, was viewed as another means of fragmentation imposed from the West. According to the Ba'athist constitution, "Socialism constitutes, in effect, the ideal social order which allows the Arab people to realize its possibilities and to enable its genius to flourish."⁸

Having developed an ideology, the ABSP fortified its revolutionary thrust with an ingredient that had been lacking from every previous attempt to seize power in modern Iraq. The Ba'athist Constitution stressed Arab superiority and unity above all else. It denounced the existence of borders between Arab peoples. It encouraged the use of revolution to topple the followers of Western imperialists. It denounced Islam as a source of disunity. It promoted socialism as a vehicle to allow the greatest number of Arabs to achieve prosperity. Most of all, it provided the

revolutionary forces with a national agenda of objectives and goals to be reached after the sitting government had been removed.

Ba'athist leaders, however, knew their opponents. In 1963 those opponents had succeeded in keeping the Ba'athists from establishing a government. While their constitution gave them a blueprint for executing policy after the revolution, it would not be well received by many Iraqis. Specifically, non-Arabic Kurds, Shi'ite Muslims, and rival political groups such as the communists would oppose the Ba'athists doctrine. The Ba'athists realized that ideology alone would not ensure their staying in power.

EARLY BA'ATHIST CONSOLIDATION BY FORCE

Following its successful coup in 1968, the Ba'athist leaders realized that they needed armed might and merciless resolve in order to implement their party ideology. The leaders of the 1968 coup, obsessed with the bitter failure of the 1963 coup, were determined to apply an unbreakable hold on their power.

Ba'athist organizers offered high government positions to leaders of Aref's army, encouraging them to become traitors in return for post-revolutionary power. Colonel Abd al Rahman Ibrahim al-Dawud and Colonel Abd al-Razzoq al-Nayif, high-ranking members of Aref's command, provided vital assistance to the success of the Ba'ath coup. They were promised cabinet positions after the coup. Once the

Ba'athist organizers realized that the revolution was a success, they conveniently nullified any deals that had been made with members of the old regime.⁹

Fearing that rival factions could combine to drive it out of power, the ABSP immediately began to repress any sign of dissent. In the earliest stages of its government the ABSP imprisoned or executed the prominent political figures of the old regime. Notable among the deposed leaders was Abd al-Rahman al-Bazzaz, a nationalist ideologue and Prime Minister under Aref's rule.¹⁰ The Iraqi intelligence service, a new force of internal security under the ABSP, assassinated the ex-foreign minister, Dr. Nasser al-Hani, and General Nasrat, a central leader in the 1963 coup who helped the Ba'athists come to power.¹¹ The insecurity of the Ba'athist reached outside of Iraqi borders; it compelled them to hunt and eliminate the exiled General Hardan Altikriti, one of Saddam Hussein's rivals. Saddam's security force uncovered the General in Kuwait and gunned him down.¹²

Ba'athists aware of the communist influence in Iraq declared, "Anyone with communist affiliations in the past who joins the party of the army or security branches without notifying the authorities of his past, is liable to the death sentence."¹³ The campaign of terror against the communist party resulted in 150 arrests in the province of Kut. Forty members of the communist party, including a

member of the central committee, were arrested in Kirkuk. In February of 1969, the Ba'athists arrested Aziz al-Has, leader of the Iraqi communist party, and all members of his politburo.¹⁴

The communists were not the only group targeted for Ba'athist oppression. The ABSP regarded any group that did not adhere to its ideology as an opponent; it eliminated any opposition to its rule. Kurds and Shi'ite Muslims, in addition to the communists, suffered casualties at the hands of Ba'athists. Government security forces brutalized the Kurdish village of Dakan in Mosul shortly after the 1968 revolution.¹⁵ In a separate massacre five Shi'ite clergy were executed without any explanation to the public.¹⁶ These shows of force were designed to subdue the opposing and uncooperative elements of the Iraqi society.

Even when Ba'athist militia were not harassing Kurds or Shi'ites, these groups felt the government's biases against them. Ba'athist ideology called for the establishment of a dominant Arab state; the Kurds under Ba'athist rule sensed their alienation from this doctrine. The Dakan incident proved that their perceived alienation was no illusion. If the pragmatic goals of these executions seem unclear, the ideological motives were well understood by the victims. Ba'athist laws and positions favored Arabs and were designed to create a privileged class of Arabs. The Kurds, a non-Arab people living on Arab soil, were

notoriously absent from any government policy. The Ba'athist position held such a hard line against non-Arabs that the disenfranchised Kurds felt compelled to rally for their own status as citizens. The government, fearing violent uprisings, responded not through compromise but through brutality. It believed that killing the Kurds would convince them that they should never oppose their superiors.

Ba'athism also denounced religion as counter-productive to the goals of the state; the government viewed any religious group as a force which promoted disunity. Therefore, the Shi'ite Muslims met a fate similar to that of the Kurds. Since the Shi'ites were strong in their Islamic spirituality the Ba'athist dictatorship viewed them as subversive: they would put Allah above the Arabic nation. Like the Kurds, the Shi'ites were ignored, if not denounced, in high-ranking governmental positions. The Shi'ites, however, were not afraid to fight and die for their faith. Realizing this, the Ba'athist security forces chose violent suppression and overt discrimination instead of concessions for the Shi'ite population.

The Ba'athist position backfired, as the Kurds sought military help to take up arms against their oppressors. This cycle of violence and counter-violence only fed the Ba'athist government's paranoia and insecurity, leading it to seek its own military aid from the Soviet Union. With such help, Iraq was willing to compromise its belief in Arab

self-determination for the sake of having enough firepower to repel any force that might question the legitimacy of its government.

When Khomeini's Islamic Revolution began to erupt in Iran, Iraqi leaders saw a definite need for their military buildup. Khomeini spoke directly to all Muslims, especially the oppressed Shi'ites in Iraq; to the Iraqi Shi'ites, the Ayatollah was presenting a means for their independence. Fearing this, the Iraqi government was prepared to mobilize for an invasion that could eliminate militant Islam at its source. A victory against Khomeinist Iran would, Iraq believed, convince the Shi'ites that national might is superior to religious zeal.

Iraqi Kurds and Shi'ites deeply feared and mistrusted the post-revolutionary government. Realizing that these people, who did not fit the ideal Ba'athist state, represented a large portion of the Iraqi population, the Ba'athists reciprocated the Kurds' and Shi'ites' fear and mistrust. The Ba'athists, however, had the advantage of an internal security force and firepower. Bloody crackdowns against church and minority groups defined the early years of the Ba'athist regime and civil war against the Kurds persisted throughout the 1970's. Even the Ba'athists who were not in complete agreement with the new policies of the party were murdered.¹⁷

The brutality of the Ba'athist regime in Iraq created

an atmosphere of terror in the country, which resulted in a general hatred of Iraqis toward their leaders. The Ba'athists, aware of their unpopularity and isolation among different facets of their society, became more paranoid and insecure, which resulted in ever-harsher measures to suppress opposition. Neighboring Arab states watched events in Iraq with suspicion and caution. They feared the exportation of revolution and mistrusted the Ba'athist call for the elimination of boundaries between Arabic countries. At the same time, Iraq's neighbors could see that the Ba'athists were having trouble unifying the different factions of the population within its own borders. Ba'athist ideology had created a violent and repressive government and a volatile state in Iraq. Other Arab governments were careful not to align too closely with such an unpredictable force. Still, Iraq's strict government maintained its grip on the country, managing its resources and building economic and military power; it could not be ignored.

THE IMPACT OF BA'ATHISM ON IRAQI FOREIGN POLICY

The new Ba'ath leaders of Iraq were determined to achieve and extend party goals and objectives not only in their own territory, but also over the entire Gulf region. Iraqi policy ran counter to that of other Gulf nations and soon became a source of hostility between Iraq and its neighbors.

The Iraqis saw the region as being controlled and ruled by imperialist and Zionist forces; their revolutionary government strove to change the existing status quo. The Iraqi Ba'athists viewed their revolution as the way to achieve independence and believed it should be a model for future pan-Arabist revolutions in the Middle East. According to the National Action Charter proclaimed by Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr, Iraq's duty and task would be "to support the revolutionary changes in the Arab countries and to bolster the liberal and national progressive movements in support of the objectives of the Arab struggle."¹⁸

This statement implies that Iraq has given itself the right not only to lay out the goals and objectives of other Arab nations, but also to support revolutionary measures, such as armed conflict, taken to promote those goals and objectives. The support of violent revolution and to consolidate "the developing relations with patriotic and nationalist liberation movements" became Iraq's main policy after its 1968 revolution.¹⁹

Ideological commitments written in Iraq's foreign policy soon became the source of its political isolation in the region. Iran (then under the Shah), Saudi Arabia, and other conservative Arab states were determined to preserve the status quo. They saw in the Western powers an enormous market for their oil. Their populations were gaining prosperity, not through a socialistic levelling-off but

through the forces of production and consumption. The people in these countries were free and encouraged to practice their religion which enforced strict yet unimposing codes of civil conduct. Only in Iran, where the Shah eventually abused his advantages and cracked down on his people, did a cause for revolution become apparent; however, Iraqi doctrine had little direct influence on Iranian civil unrest, as will be discussed later.

Nevertheless, Iraqi doctrine was determined to upset the affairs of its neighbors. Its belief that the existing borders in the region are artificial and subject to change created mistrust and suspicion among the Gulf states, which feared that Iraq would try to eliminate the borders by force. The other Gulf states kept their political distance from Iraq, creating in Iraq a feeling of encirclement by perceived enemies. This feeling was similar to that which the Ba'athists perceived from the Kurds and Shi'ites within their own territory. Iraqi insecurity reached its peak during the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The Ba'athist government believed that the Iranian Shi'ites could rally Iraqi Shi'ites to revolt because Shi'ism, or any form of religion, was an anathema to Ba'athism.

The Ba'athist regime saw in Khomeinism the greatest threat to its rule. The Ba'athists had been enforcing their rule for ten years. To preserve their revolution, which it perceived as fragile in spite of its massive assistance from

the USSR and its brutally effective police force, the Ba'athists government modified its foreign policy. When Iraq finally did violate an existing border, invading Iran in 1980, it had to convince its Arab neighbors that its actions were pragmatic and not a verification of its revolutionary rhetoric. Saddam Hussein dispatched delegations to the capitals of all Arab nations. He sought to repair the damage caused by Ba'athist revolutionary doctrine, bring Iraq out of its isolation, and convince other Arab leaders that his army was most fit to squelch the Iranian menace.

The smaller Arab states in the Gulf did not oppose Iraq's invading Iran, even though the invasion disrupted trade in the region; the two most volatile revolutionary countries were firing at each other instead of exporting their revolutions to the more peaceful countries. Now that the combatants have achieved a cease-fire, however, the other Arab countries continue to distrust Iraq for its non-recognition of international boundaries.

IRAQ'S RELATIONS BEFORE THE WAR

The fact that Iraq was able to achieve an entente with several of its neighboring states might challenge the fact that Iraq was isolated, due to its ideological commitment, by other Arab nations prior to the war. But Hussein's government achieved this entente only after negotiations that extended for nearly a year. While Kuwait, Bahrain, and

Saudi Arabia were feeling the heat from Iran's revolution, none of them actively sought Iraqi assistance in opposing the new menace. Iraq initiated all of the diplomatic sessions designed to address the Iranian problem and many Arab states believed that the Iranian revolution was subordinate to the establishment of a Palestinian homeland. So a symptom of Iraqi insecurity in the region can be seen in the government's spending months in explaining its position to neighbors who could see what was transpiring. While Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia offered rhetorical support for Iraqi measures against Iran, none of them offered actual military support. Finally, Syria, with which Iraq shares its western border and upon which Iraq depends for some of its overland shipments of oil, clearly opposed an Iraqi invasion of Iran.²⁰ Most of this opposition stemmed from the open political hostility between the Ba'ath Party of Syria and that of Iraq.

Reviewing Iraq's geopolitical position in 1979 and early 1980, one finds the following characteristics. Its eastern neighbor, Iran, has suffered a violent revolution which has crushed a standing government. It is training devotees of Ayatollah Khomeini in the ways and means of shock warfare, thereby exporting its revolution. Khomeinism is gaining sympathizers among the Shi'ite population of Iraq, which feels it has been persecuted for

too long by a minority Ba'athist dictatorship. Iraq, however, notices a superficial weakness in Iran's military organization and political institutions, both of which are being taken over by the Revolutionary Guards and mullahs.

To the southeast of Iraq, Kuwait suffers a series of terrorist attacks which employ tactics similar to those that swept over Tehran. Iraq needs Kuwaiti goodwill. Although Kuwait covers far less territory than Iraq, it controls a far greater area of navigable coastline. While Iraq depends upon good relations with Kuwait to maintain its access to the Persian Gulf, Kuwait has absolute sovereignty over more shipping outlets; the burden of maintaining good relations between Kuwait and Iraq falls on Iraq. Therefore, Iraq sends a delegation to Kuwait to declare its willingness to retaliate on either nation's behalf, against any Iranian aggression. Kuwait, uneasy about having a well-armed competitor to the north, nevertheless offers verbal endorsement for Iraqi military proposals.²¹ Iran, after all, had been sending shock troops into its country.

Beyond Iraq's western frontier, Saudi Arabia strengthened its ties with the United States while offering verbal support for Hussein's call for Arab unity against a non-Arab adversary. Like Kuwait, the Saudi Arabian government gave audience to Iraqi military proposals.²² A Muslim Sunni government, it wanted neither to abandon the Sunnis of Iraq nor to appear in complete accord with a

socialist and secularist dictator.

If Saudi Arabia proved that having a government comprised mainly of Sunni Muslims was no basis for forming an alliance with Sunni-governed Iraq, then Syria proved that having a Ba'ath Socialist government also was no basis for forming an alliance with Ba'ath Iraq.²³ On the contrary, Syrian President Hafez al-Assad proclaimed support for Khomeini's revolution and its infiltration of Iraqi life. Al-Assad has maintained a lifelong rivalry with Saddam Hussein over the interpretation of Ba'ath ideology. He has perceived Hussein as the major stumbling block in achieving unity with Iraq.²⁴ Furthermore, Khomeini inspired Shi'ite Muslims in Lebanon to support Al-Assad's objectives in that country. By opposing Iraq, the Syrian government could damage Hussein's influence in the region and return the favor of Khomeini.

Looking to the north and east, Iraq faced openly hostile forces. Looking to the south and west, Iraq faced calculating and neutral forces that could swing toward Iran's appeasement, should Iranian intimidation succeed in the region. Within its own boundaries, Kurds rallied aggressively for independence. The existence of these hostile external and internal forces created a sense of paranoia and encirclement by enemies among Ba'athist of Iraq.

Aside from Ba'athist ideology, which became a source

for Iraqi isolation in the area, the boundary disputes with its immediate neighbors are another source of hostility between Iraq and the Arab world it wanted to lead.

IRAQI-KUWAITI BOUNDARY DISPUTES

From the time Kuwait achieved independence in 1961 to the time Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations had been strained. From the beginning, Iraq refused to recognize Kuwait as a sovereign nation; it had always viewed Kuwait as a part of Iraqi territory. To force this point, and to demonstrate a physical manifestation of its pan-Arab policy--the erasure of boundaries--Iraq engaged its troops in outright border raids against Kuwait in 1973 and 1976.

Due to outside pressure from England and other Arab nations, Iraq grudgingly recognized Kuwaiti sovereignty, but it refused to recognize Kuwait's possession of the islands of Warba and Bubyah. Iraq argued that it needed the two islands to protect the port of Umm Qasr, Iraq's access to the Gulf.²⁵ Iraq also believed that by occupying these two islands, it would have the ability to perform larger tasks with its navy in the Gulf.²⁶

Despite chronic objections from Kuwait, Iraq continued to occupy the islands. For the duration of Kuwaiti nationhood, Baghdad maintained a rhetorical battle with its neighbor. However, immediately following a diplomatic mission from Baghdad to Kuwait during the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Iraq withdrew its troops from the contested

islands. Shortly thereafter, the first Iraqi troops crashed across Iran's southwestern frontier.²⁷

IRAQI RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA

Iraq has fared no better in its relations with Saudi Arabia than it has with Kuwait. Hostility has defined these countries' diplomacies since they first gained their own sovereignty. Khadduri attributes this hostility to the existence of a large Shi'ite population in the southern region of Iraq; the conservative Wahhabi sect of Saudi Arabia views the Iraqi Shi'ites "with disfavor and suspicion."²⁸

The aforementioned doctrines of Ba'athist foreign policy, which respect no boundaries between Arab states and which financially and militarily supports revolutionary movements, have gone far to create friction between Iraq and Saudi Arabia. In addition, Iraq's opening of a relationship with the Soviet Union created ill-will between the two countries, as Saudi Arabia has always been a staunch ally of the United States. Finally, the border dispute over the neutral zone until the mid-1970's was another source of disagreement between the two countries.

IRAQI RELATIONS WITH SYRIA

Tension between Syria and Iraq is rooted firmly in ideology. Both nations believe in Ba'athist concepts, but different interpretations of those concepts along with the

rivalry over the leadership of the party has created enormous conflicts. Beside ideology, the division of rights to control the waters of the Euphrates River has caused strife between the two Arab nations. Both nations, desperately in need of a water supply for agricultural development, have tried to resolve their differences through diplomatic means. However, due to the political rivalry between Iraq and Syria over the leadership of the Ba'ath Party, none of these vital negotiations has borne fruit.

IRAQI RELATIONS WITH JORDAN

Since Iraq and Jordan achieved their nationhood each has been ruled by members of the Hashimi dynasty. Their relationship had been characterized as friendly and good before 1958. This situation changed, however, when a bloody coup in Iraq usurped the Hashimi hold on the throne and took their lives. The Hashimi dynasty has not come close to having a role in Iraqi government since the coup; still, there exists a group of Iraqis loyal to the former ruling family. This group looks to King Hussein of Jordan for guidance and leadership.²⁹

Although no evidence exists that King Hussein remains involved with his Iraqi supporters, the Ba'athists feel threatened by him. King Hussein, in turn, feels threatened by the Iraqi Ba'ath Party, due to the existence of an active Ba'athist organization in Jordan which follows the Party line emanating from Baghdad. Compounding this distrust,

Iraq sent military hardware to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) during its massive uprising in Jordan in September 1970. Iraqi suspicions of Hashimi loyalists in its country and Iraq's direct involvement in hot fighting on Jordanian soil have strained relations between the two nations.

IRAQ AND THE SMALLER GULF NATIONS

Due to their size and lack of a strong military, the smaller Gulf states cannot ignore Iraq and Iran. Before the fall of the Shah these smaller countries had relied heavily on Iran to counter Iraqi radicalism. When the Sultan of Oman was threatened by forces financed by the Iraqi revolutionary fund, he asked for and received military aid from the Shah. The Iraqi-backed revolt was crushed. Lack of trust in Iraq among the lesser Gulf states stems from the following: Iraq's claim to Kuwait in 1961; the Iraqi military attacks on Kuwaitis in 1973 and 1976, leading to Iraqi occupation of Warba and Bubyah; Iraqi financial and material support for revolutionary groups in the Gulf, such as the Omman rebels; and Iraq's Pan-Arab policy, which contested the legitimacy and boundaries of all Arab states.³⁰

IMPLICATIONS OF IRAQ'S DIPLOMATIC PROBLEMS

Perhaps the most outstanding implication of Iraq's diplomatic problems has been the self-defeating nature of

Ba'ath ideology. The Ba'athists believe that all Arab people should live as a unified nation, free of the arbitrary boundaries imposed by the West. It also states that to achieve a unified, pan-Arabic nation, the existing non-Ba'ath governments, such as the monarchy in Jordan, must be overthrown by force; Iraq has committed itself to a policy of supporting violent revolutions. Iraq's advocacy of war for the sake of forming a single nation has undermined its mission to promote Arab unity; other Arab countries grow more protective of their sovereignty and borders in the face of its unstable neighbor Iraq.

In addition to developing an ideology at cross purposes to itself, Iraq's Ba'athist constitution led to the country's political isolation throughout the 1970's. With its rhetoric calling for the end of recognized boundaries between Arab nations and its promotion of revolution in other lands, Ba'athism planted the seeds of conflict between Iraq and its neighbors. The Ba'athist government persisted in allowing conflict to grow, allowing border disputes, personal feuds, and ideological battles to disrupt cooperation in the region.

Many countries in the Middle East viewed Iraq as a pariah, economically rich and militarily strong, but likely to use its power to subjugate the weak and harass its peers. Therefore, the other nations avoided maintaining strong ties to Iraq, as conflict would be the likely result. They

looked to Iran as a counterforce in the region, relying on the Shah and his massive American-supplied army to keep Iraq from exporting its Ba'athist revolution or violating international borders.

How then was Iraq, encircled by unfriendly neighbors, able to convert its adversaries into allies shortly before it invaded Iran? How was this diplomatically isolated nation able to convince the Jordanians, the Saudis, the Kuwaitis, and the smaller Arab Gulf states that it was no longer a threat--in spite of its Soviet-backed military strength and its expansionist, revolutionary policies?

Saddam Hussein was able to turn the Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution in Iran to his diplomatic advantage. Khomeinism had such a sudden and devastating impact on the security of the region that Ba'athist rhetoric suddenly appeared tame by comparison. Ba'athist rhetoric was unpopular even in its own territory. It had failed to unify the disparate Kurdish and Shi'ite groups in Iraq and it had not gained a widespread following in most Arab countries. Even Syria, which has kept its Ba'athist government, could not agree with Iraq on the best way to achieve the Ba'athist ideal of Arab unity.

Khomeinism, on the other hand, quickly gained a wide following among the Shi'ites of the region. Khomeini orchestrated a populist movement which offered real progress and independence for believers regardless of their race or

nationality. Moderate leaders of the Persian Gulf states feared Khomeini's popular appeal more than they feared the Ba'athists. The Ba'athists, sensing the fear of Khomeinism, altered their revolutionary rhetoric to accommodate the Arab world's need for protection against the Persian-led Islamic Revolution.

Khomeinism, with its deadly religious zeal on display for all the world, frightened the Arab states in the Gulf region into tolerating Iraq's attack in 1980. Khomeinism, which provoked the Iraqi attack, will be the focus of the following chapter.

ENDNOTES

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⁵Sylvia Haim, Arab Nationalism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 233.

⁶Ibid., 248.

⁷Ibid., 233.

⁸Ibid., 235.

⁹Khadduri, Socialist Iraq, 21-30.

¹⁰Amazia Baram, "Saddam Hussein: A Political Profile," The Jerusalem Quarterly (Fall 1980), 119-21.

¹¹Ibid., 120.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Sadir-al-Khalil, Republic of Fear (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), xv.

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¹⁵Ibid., xvi.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Baram, 120.

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¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Claudia Wright, "Implications of the Iran-Iraq War," Foreign Affairs 59-2 (Winter 1980-81), 278.

²¹*Ibid.*, 280.

²²*Ibid.*, 279-82.

²³*Ibid.*, 282-84.

²⁴Baram, 135-38.

²⁵Khadduri, Socialist Iraq, 154.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 154-55.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 158.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹*Ibid.*, 165.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 167.

CHAPTER THREE

UNIVERSALIST IDEOLOGY: KHOMEINI'S INTERPRETATION OF ISLAM

This chapter describes some of the principles of Shi'ite Islam, which is the basis of Khomeinism. The intent is to trace the rise of Khomeinism in Iran and its appeal in Iraq. Khomeinism fueled the Islamic Revolution and threatened to spread to neighboring countries in the Persian Gulf region. The spread of Khomeinism in Iraq became the concern of the Ba'athist government. Iraq, having the largest Shi'ite population outside of Iran, had cause to be concerned with the spread of Khomeinism into its territory. As time went on, Iraq's fears were realized.

One of the most significant characteristics of the Shi'ite sect of Islam is the belief in the institution of Imamate. In order to understand Iran's politics and foreign policy, one needs to understand the political implication of the Imamate. It was the belief in this institution that illegitimized the Shah's leadership and gave rise to the Islamic Republic. Also it was the incorporation of Imamate in Iran's foreign policy that became the main source of threat to the neighboring Moslem countries. Most importantly, the accession of Khomeini as the Naib Imam, "leader who rules on behalf of Imam," plus the spread and

acceptance of his ideas by the Iraqi Shi'ites, undermined the leadership and ideology of the Ba'ath Party in Iraq. This eventually led to war between Iraq and Iran. The focus of this chapter will revolve around the institution of the Imamate and Khomeini's interpretation of it. The insecurity of the Iraqi government and the decision to go to war with Iran will become more clear as Khomeinism is discussed in this chapter.

THE INSTITUTION OF IMAMATE

After the death of the prophet Mohammed, the Moslem community was divided into two groups over the leadership of their community. One group, who became known as the Sunni, argued that since the prophet did not name any successor, a committee comprised of clerical elders must choose the successor. The Shi'ite, the rival group in this division, refuted the Sunni method of succession and believed that the prophet designated Ali, his son-in-law, to be his successor. These beliefs have survived to the present day.

The Shi'ites also believe that the true and legitimate successor to the prophet is the Imam, the divinely appointed leader of the Shi'ite community, the first of whom is Ali and the last of whom is the Twelfth Imam. The Twelfth Imam is in a state of Ghaiba, or "absence from the physical world".¹ No other form of government or institutions, except that of the Imam, is legitimate to rule over the Moslems. This form of succession and the clerical

executives who comprise this rulership are known as the Imamate.

Khomeini, like all Moslem clerics, based his ideas of government on the issue of the Imamate. What makes Khomeini different from other Shi'ite scholars over the Imamate is his concept of Vilayati Faqih, which is also known as Khomeinism. He set forth his concept of politics and government in his book, Islamic Government. The main idea in his book is, unlike the popular concept of the separation of church and state, that the fusion of religion and politics is the basis of a true and just government.²

Khomeini's concept of Vilayati Faqih consists of several contentions. The first of these contentions is that rulership belongs to Allah. To exercise this rulership on earth Allah entrusted the prophet Mohammed and the Imams that succeeded him. In his book, Khomeini raises the question of Moslem rulership in the absence of the Twelfth Imam:

Now in the time of absence there is no provision for a certain person to manage the state affairs. So what is the opinion? Should we allow the Laws of Islam to continue to be idle? Do we persuade ourselves to turn away from Islam, or do we say that Islam came to rule people for a couple of centuries and then to neglect them after that? Or do we say that Islam has neglected to organize the State?³

By raising these questions he comes to the conclusion that the Moslem community needs to form a government of their own in the absence of the Twelfth Imam. In his writings, Khomeini seeks more answers that he will use to

form the basis of his claim to power:

Isn't the government one of the necessities of life? Despite the absence of a provision designating an individual to act on behalf of the Imam in the case of his absence, the presence of the qualities of the religious ruler in any individual still qualify him to rule the people.⁴

Without a clear doctrine of who is to govern in the absence of the Imam, Khomeini constructs one to legitimize his claim to a supreme position of government. The reader should be aware that as Khomeini developed his political philosophy he had already earned the title of Mujtahid, which is explained below.

He states that there are two qualities which the ruler of a Moslem community must possess: knowing Islamic laws and being a just person.⁵ To Khomeini, no one other than the Faqih or Mujtahid (titles which denote high learning on judicial matters) possesses these qualities.⁶ Therefore the Mujtahid rules as Naib Imam, on behalf of the absent Imam. Khomeini concludes that the Islamic government that is ruled by Mujtahid is the best form of government that can safeguard the interest of all Moslems.⁷

Since rulership belongs to Allah, and Allah has entrusted the prophet and the Imams with this power, the Mujtahids and Faqihs are the only legitimate people who could rule in the absence of the Imam. According to Khomeini, the problem with the rulers of the contemporary Moslem countries was that their rulers were not Faqih or Mujtahid. Therefore, they do not possess the right to rule

over the Moslems; they must be overthrown.

WHO IS A MUJTAHID?

A Mujtahid is a person who has reached the status of Ijtihad, "learned judgement," based on Islamic Laws about political, social, and economic matters of individuals.⁸

As Ramazani states,

To Faqih belongs temporal as well as spiritual authority which he would exercise it in the absence of the Twelfth Imam who will appear (Zuhur) ultimately as Mahdi (Messiah) or the Sahib-Ezaman (Master of the Age) to establish just and equitable rule.⁹

Hamid Algar defines the importance of Mujtahid in the following way:

The Mujtahid is not merely a legal authority, one who can give an expression of opinion in this fashion concerning a problem of Islamic laws; he is also a person whose views must be followed.¹⁰

Imams in Shi'ite doctrine are not only the spiritual leaders of the society; they are the political leaders as well. According to Khomeini, the role and functions of the Imam will be conducted by the Mujtahid. Their decisions and orders concerning different aspects of Moslems must be followed by Shi'ites as if they were those of the prophet. He writes,

If a knowledgeable and just jurist undertake the task of forming the government, then he will run the social affairs that [the] Prophet used to run and it is the duty of the people to listen to him and obey him.¹¹

To follow the guidance of Mujtahid is called Taqlid and is a religious obligation of Shi'ites.

The importance of Mujtahid therefore lies in the following ideas:

1. He is the only legitimate person who can rule and form a government on behalf of the Twelfth Imam.
2. Since there is no separation of church and state in Islam, the affairs of the state and economy fall into the jurisdiction of Mujtahid.
3. Members of the Shi'ite Sect are compelled by their faith to follow the guidance and leadership of Mujtahid in every aspect of life.

The religious duty of the Shi'ites to follow the guidance of, and give allegiance to, the Mujtahid became the basis of Khomeini's power in countries with Shi'ite populations.

Khomeini's interpretation of the Mujtahid, an elite class to which he belonged, has immense political implications. It gives him the power to form the only legitimate government on behalf of the absent Imam and obliges the Shi'ites, regardless of their nationality, to pledge allegiance to him. Furthermore, his ideology became a destabilizing factor in the area, since it did not give legitimacy to other governments ruling the Moslems. Khomeini became a major threat to countries with a large Shi'ite populations, such as Iraq.

The Iraqi Shi'ites, who since 1968 had been oppressed

by the minority Sunni government (a secular, socialist government) saw Khomeini as a leader who would rescue them from political, social, and economic inequalities. They became disenchanted with pan-Arabist ideology of Ba'ath party and embraced Khomeini as their leader, the Naib Imam.

KHOMEINI'S WORLD VIEW

To understand Khomeini's attitude toward world politics, one needs to understand the way he perceives the world. His perception of the world is, to some extent, similar to that of Karl Marx. Whereas Marx divides the world into two camps, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, Khomeini divides the world into the mustakberin and the mustazafin, "the oppressors and the oppressed." Like Marx, Khomeini defines the current history as nothing more than the struggle between these two camps; in Khomeini's view, the mustazafin are being exploited by the mustakberin.¹² The mustazafin work to extract and refine the oil and other raw resources, only to live in poverty and misery as these resources are shipped to the west and the east, to the profit of the mustakberin. Khomeini believes that there are infightings and rivalries among the mustakberins, but all of the oppressors are united to prevent the oppressed from becoming liberated.¹³ This is how Khomeini justifies Iran's isolation in the world. He sees Iran as the leader of the mustazafin's camp seeking liberation from America, Europe, and Japan. He preaches that to prevent liberation, the

mustakberin have imposed international isolation on Iran and have created a state of war.¹⁴ To Khomeini, the struggle of the oppressed against the oppressors reminds him of an event from Islamic history, the Battle of Karballa. In that battle, Imam Hussein knowingly embraced death. Outnumbered and outgunned by Yazied, who falsely claimed to represent Islam, Imam Hussein did not surrender but fought until every member of his followers was massacred. It is only in this historical context that Khomeini's uncompromising attitude toward the superpowers and the war with Iraq can be understood. To Khomeini, Imam Hussien knowingly reached martyrdom to set an example for the Shi'ites to rebel against injustice and oppression.¹⁵ Although his country's military capability is no match for that of the superpowers, he believes it is more honorable to die than to live in a state of political and economic enslavement by the big powers.¹⁶

According to Khomeinism, the main goal of the mustakberin in the Third World is to change the cultural and traditional way of the oppressed people and to replace it with values and cultures of the mustakberin's world. To achieve this objective the superpowers have imposed puppet regimes in the Gulf and other parts of the world. These regimes have the interest of superpowers in mind and are indifferent to the social and economic needs of their countries. They are there to secure political and cultural

domination of the superpowers in the mustazafin's camp. Khomeini's dislike of the leaders of the Persian Gulf countries, the Iraqi government in particular, stems from this world view. On many different occasions, he asked the Moslem people to overthrow their "corrupt rulers" and to establish an Islamic republic.¹⁷

Khomeini vehemently rejects nationalism and the existence of boundaries among Moslems. He views both phenomena as the creation of mustakberin.¹⁸ Khomeini's rejection of nationalism is based on the notion that all Moslems are equal in the eyes of Allah. Nationalism discriminates and creates friction among believers, since it advocates a hierarchy of men based on their racial background.¹⁹ Khomeini advocates the elimination of boundaries among Moslem countries and supports the creation of an Umma, "a community based on commonality of faith."

THE DUTY OF EXPORTING REVOLUTION

Another important component of Khomeini's ideology similar to Marxist doctrine is the belief that his revolution is universal and must be exported. If Khomeini had confined his revolution to Iran then his war with Iraq most likely would not have occurred, despite the ideological incompatibilities of the two countries. He believes it is the religious duty of Iranians to export their revolution to other countries. Soon after his ascension to power he addressed the nation, declaring: "We should try to export

our revolution to the world."²⁰ Iran's ideological commitment to export the revolution was reiterated by Iran's first president, Abol Hassan bani Sadr. Speaking to a large crowd in Tehran he said, "Our revolution will not win if it is not exported."²² This aspect of Khomeini's ideology created a great concern among the Persian Gulf nations, Iraq in particular.

The next chapter is designed to trace back the appeal and infiltration of Khomeinism among the Iraqi Shi'ites.

ENDNOTES

- ¹Khadduri, The Gulf War, 65.
- ²"Khomeini," Iran Times (December 1, 1989) 11.
- ³Ruhollah Mosavi Khomeini, Hukumat Islami, in Iraq and Iran: Roots of Conflict, translated by Tareq Y. Ismael (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982), 118.
- ⁴Ibid., 121.
- ⁵Ibid.
- ⁶Ibid.
- ⁷Abdulghani, 179.
- ⁸Nikki R. Keddie, "Is Shi'ism Revolutionary?" in The Iranian Revolution and The Islamic Republic, eds., Nikki R. Keddie and Eric Hooglund, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 120.
- ⁹R.K. Ramazani. Revolutionary Iran, Challenge and Response in the Middle East (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 19-20.
- ¹⁰Hamid Algar, "Iran and Shi'ism," in The Islamic Revolution in Iran, ed. Kalim Siddiqui (London: The Open Press, 1980), 6.
- ¹¹Ismeal, 121.
- ¹²Ramazani, 24.
- ¹³Richard Cottam, "Iran - Motives Behind its Foreign Policy," Survival, 28, No. 6 (November/December 1986): 489-91.
- ¹⁴Ibid.
- ¹⁵Robin Wright, Sacred Rage: The Wrath of Militant Islam (New York: Linden Press, 1985), 37.
- ¹⁶Cottam, 489-91.
- ¹⁷Abdulghani, 179.

¹⁸Ramazani, 20-1.

¹⁹Khadduri, The Gulf War, 111.

²⁰Ramazani, 20-21.

²¹"World Briefs," Washington Post (February 5, 1980),
A12.

CHAPTER FOUR

IRAQ BECOMES A TARGET

Although every one of the Persian Gulf countries has a substantial Shi'ite population, Iraq became Iran's main revolutionary target. This was due to the existence of the largest concentration of Shi'ites outside of Iran and the existence of the holiest Shi'ite Shrines in Iraq. The body of Imam Ali, the son-in-law of the prophet, the shrine of Imam Hussien, a symbol of Shi'ite bravery and sacrifice, are among many Shi'ite shrines located in Iraq. Khomeini had also spent fourteen years in exile in the city of Najaf, where he established connections with Iraqi Shi'ite leaders opposing the Ba'athist regime. Also, the existence of a long border with Iraq made that country the most convenient target for Iranian attacks. Because Iraq is closer to Iran than other Gulf States, Iran could provide a refuge for Shi'ite rebels in Iraq. The Iraqi Shi'ite underground groups could have easily carried out sabotage activities and fled to Iran to escape prosecution.

IDEOLOGICAL CLASHES AND EXPORTATION OF THE REVOLUTION

Khomeini's incorporation of religion as the driving force behind Iran's foreign policy collided with Iraq's secular orientation. The Ba'athists viewed religion as a

divisive factor that would not serve the purpose of Arab unity.¹ In a speech to Iraqis, Saddam Hussein emphasized that religious association must be subordinate to Arab nationalism.² He said, "Our Party is not neutral between belief and disbelief, it is on the side of belief always. But our Party is not a religious party and it should not be so."³

To Khomeini, Arab nationalism and its ascendancy over religion is heresy and promotes racism. Unlike the Ba'athists, whose mission is to create a united Arab nation, Khomeini expresses the need to create a united nation based on Islamic law. In an interview on October 15, 1979, Khomeini's foreign minister Ibrahim Yazdi said the Arabs "can never triumph unless it is through Islam."⁴

To the Ba'athists, not only is Khomeini perceived as a threat to their rule in Iraq, but his ideology is a great menace to Arab nationalism as well. Khomeini's notion of creating an Islamic republic embracing all the Arab countries of the Middle East, along with his vehement rejection of Arab nationalism as an un-Islamic movement, runs contrary to the vision of the Ba'athists, whose ultimate goal is the creation of a nation based on the commonality of race.

IRAQ'S POLICY OF "WAIT AND SEE"

Despite its ideological incompatibility with Iran, Iraq adopted a policy of "wait and see" toward the Iranian

revolution. The Ba'athists neither condemned nor welcomed the revolution; they were, however, concerned about Khomeini's influence in Iraq among the Shi'ites. He had lived in Iraq for over fourteen years and had established himself as a prominent Shi'ite leader in that country. As a result, he had gathered a great number of followers within the Iraqi territory. Incidentally, in 1977 when Khomeini was living in exile in Iraq there was civil unrest in Najaf. The unrest soon spread from Najaf to other Shi'ite cities in Iraq. The unrest was so popular that the local police in cities of Karbala, Samarah, and the district of Al-Thawra in Baghdad called on the National Guard for help.⁵ Although the Ba'athists did not link Khomeini to these civil unrests, his influences among the Shi'ite population raised a great concern. It is important to note that the 1977 riots were the only recorded Shi'ite unrest since the establishment of Ba'athism in Iraq in 1968. This situation changed and civil unrest by Shi'ites became widespread as Khomeini ascended to power in 1979.

AL-SADR'S ACCEPTANCE OF KHOMEINISM

Once Khomeini returned victoriously to Iran, he began an organized attempt to export his revolution to Iraq. He chose Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir Al-Sadr, a close friend and a prominent Islamic theologian, to lead the Iraqi revolution against the Ba'athists. Ayatollah al-Sadr was born into an Arab family in Iraq and was well known to Iraqi Shi'ites for

his scholarly work on Islamic economy and Islamic philosophy. Al-Sadr became the chief Mujtahid in 1970, following the death of his predecessor, Muhsim Al-Hakim. Ayatollah Al-Sadr shared Khomeini's dream of establishing an Islamic republic. In his first meeting with Khomeini (which took place in Najaf in 1967), they discussed the need for the creation of a Shi'ite underground group to overthrow the Iraqi regime.⁶

After the successful Islamic revolution, with Khomeini's encouragement, Al-Sadr became more active in organizing Iraqi Shi'ite's dissidence. His activity with the underground Al-Dawah group became a well-known fact after the Iraqi security captured members of that organization in 1979. In an interview with the daily Al-Jumhuriyah published in Baghdad on May 21, an official member of the Al-Dawah underground resistance confessed that the organization draws its inspiration from the thought of Mohammad Baqir Al-Sadr. The source acknowledged that Khomeini is the man "from whom he [Al-Sadr] receives orders."⁷

Despite government warnings, Al-Sadr organized and gave his blessings to rioters who wanted to topple the government. On June 18 Radio Tehran, in support of Al-Sadr, asked the Iraqis to overthrow the Ba'athist regime in Iraq.⁸ The same source also reported on June 19, that the Iraqi Shi'ites, responding to Al-Sadr and Khomeini's plea

for establishing an Islamic Republic, had marched in Shi'ite cities of Iraq and called for overthrow of the government.⁹ As a result, martial law was imposed on the city of Najaf and a portion of Baghdad. There were reports that two hundred Shi'ites had been killed during the unrest.¹⁰ The idea of the creation of an Islamic Republic was welcomed by students and other intelligent sectors of the Iraqi society. Pictures of Khomeini as the spiritual leader of Iraqi Shi'ite movement were seen in virtually every anti-government demonstration.¹¹ In the midst of all this civil disturbance Radio Tehran broadcasted this message, "People of Iraq, it is time for you to unite as one man to topple the regime of tyrants in revolutionary Iraq."¹² This remark inflamed the Shi'ites and aggravated the already chaotic situation in Iraq.

The summer and fall of 1979 can be characterized as the seasons of chronic public demonstrations and riots by Iraqi Shi'ites in support of Khomeini/Al-Sadr's ideas. What gave the riots durability was, in fact, the government's reaction to the unrest. There was a commemorative service for every Shi'ite killed in a demonstration. These commemoratives, organized by the victims' families, usually ended in more riots and civil disobedience. The government, aware of the fact that the rioters were receiving their inspiration from Khomeini through Al-Sadr, decided to put Al-Sadr under house arrest to control and limit his

activities. To prevent any public gatherings to protest Al-Sadr's house arrest, the government closed all the entrances leading to the Shrines of Shi'ite Imam.¹³ This government action enraged the Shi'ite community of Iraq and caused more civil unrest. As soon as the news of Al-Sadr's house arrest reached the Shi'ite cities of Karbala, Najaf, and Summera, the angry Shi'ites took over the streets and shouted "Death to the enemies of Islam."¹⁴ The demonstrators also reaffirmed their allegiance to Al-Sadr and pledged solidarity with the aims and goals of Khomeini.¹⁵

From his house arrest, Al-Sadr secretly sent a letter to his supporters, warning them of a government plot and creating a split in the Shi'ite movement to weaken its effectiveness. He also asked his supporters to continue their struggle against the government under the leadership of the Naib-Imam, Ayatollah Khomeini, until a republic based on laws of Quran could be established. He wrote, "I call upon you to preserve unity of opinion, to effect unity among all Moslem groups and to achieve a great Islamic society under the wise leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini."¹⁶

This letter, and the civil unrest that followed it in Iraq, infuriated the Ba'athist government. An Arab Mujtahid, Al-Sadr, was inflaming an Arab nation to strike against the ideals of an Arab state on behalf of a non-Arab revolutionary. As a result, the Iraqi government policy of "wait and see" soon was replaced by a ruthless anti-Shi'ite

and anti-Khomeini campaign of terror. Radio Tehran reported on June 27 that the Iraqi security forces claiming Khomeini's house in Najaf as the main source of agitation and opposition, stormed the house and arrested three hundred people gathered there to inquire about the health of Ayatollah Al-Sadr.¹⁷

Responding to the Iranian agitation of its population, Iraq also exiled thousands of Iraqis of Iranian descent and many Iraqi Shi'ite leaders to Iran.¹⁸ Among those expelled was the popular clergymen of Najaf, Khatam Yazdi, whom the government suspected of collaboration with Iranians.¹⁹ The fact that Khomeini received Yazdi personally and gave him refuge in the holy city of Qum reenforced the Iraqi claim of Iran's hands in its domestic problems.

THE SPLIT IN THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMAND COUNCIL

As the Shi'ite public riots and demonstration persisted, a split occurred within the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) of the Ba'ath government of Iraq. The split occurred over the government's handling of Shi'ite unrest. A group headed by President Ahmed Hassan Al-Baker believed that the harsh treatment of Shi'ites did not serve the best interest of Iraq and would push the Shi'ites further into the arms of Khomeini. A second group, headed by the ambitious vice-president, Saddam Hussein, disagreed with Al-Baker's notion. He believed that through standing tough to the Shi'ites and supporting the sectarian movements in Iran,

he could convince Khomeini to stop his exploitation of the Iraqi Shi'ites.²⁰

Saddam Hussein was born on April 28, 1937, in Tikrit, a small town near Baghdad. Saddam's father died when he was an infant; thus his maternal uncle assumed the responsibility of rearing him. He developed anti-Western sentiments when his uncle was expelled from the army for anti-British activities.

He joined the Ba'ath party in 1957 and was among the few selected by the party to assassinate President Qasim in 1959. Although he was wounded during the assassination attempt, he managed to escape to Syria and then to Egypt, where he completed high school in 1961. The assassination attempt brought Saddam prestige and prominence within the Ba'ath party.

The successful 1968 Ba'ath coup attempt toppled the regime of President Arif. Saddam, as an organizer of the coup, became a key member of the RCC.

As a result of the Al-Baker/Hussein disagreement, Al-Baker resigned. The coup attempt that followed his resignation suggests that he was forced by Saddam to abdicate his powers. This coup attempt was particularly important as it was engineered by the Shi'ite members of the RCC.

THE COUP ATTEMPTS BY SHI'ITES

As soon as the news of Al-Baker's resignation was

announced, an unsuccessful but important coup attempt took place in Iraq to prevent Saddam Hussein from seizing the power. On July 29, Radio Iraq announced, "A treacherous and lowly plot perpetrated by a gang disloyal to the party and revolution has been discovered."²¹ The radio did not disclose any names. Muhyi Al-Dn Abd Al-Hussein Mashhadi, chief of the presidential office and secretary general of RCC; Adnan Al-Hamadani, deputy premier and minister of planning; and Abd Al-Jalil, minister of higher education, engineered the plot. All three men were of Shi'ite origin and were high members of the RCC.²² The motive behind the coup attempt was Saddam's harsh treatment of Shi'ites. The three men feared Saddam's treatment of Shi'ites would alienate them and eventually would lead the country to a civil war. The Shi'ites' coup attempt by high-ranking members of RCC reveals the depth and magnitude of Khomeini's infiltration in Iraq. To eliminate this split, Saddam Hussein began a process of party purification. One hundred and twenty senior members of the Ba'ath party were arrested.²³ It is not known exactly how many of them lost their lives. What is certain, however, is that Saddam severely punished the participants of this coup, thereby setting an example for his opponents. It is reported that Saddam personally ordered the execution of twenty-one members and made the surviving members of the RCC witness the execution process.²⁴

THE WAR OF THE MEDIA

Ayatollah Khomeini's desire to export his revolution to Iraq manifested itself through an anti-Ba'athist media campaign aimed at subverting the Iraqi regime. Shortly after the establishment of the Islamic republic in Iran, a propaganda war erupted. At first, the Iraqi mass media followed their government's policy of "wait and see" toward the revolutionary Iran. From the beginning, however, the Iranian mass media supported the idea of exporting revolution to Iraq. The Iranian papers and media systematically attacked the nature of the Ba'ath ideology and accused the Iraqi leaders of being the product of imperialism. To facilitate its listeners in Iraq, Iran began broadcasting programs in Arabic, focusing on the internal problems of the Iraqi government. Frequently the program in Arabic language encouraged the Army and the Iraqi people to rid themselves of the Ba'athist.²⁵ The daily newspapers in Iran often criticized the living condition of the Shi'ites and accused the government of "deliberate discrimination"²⁶ against the Shi'ite community.

The two daily Iraqi papers of Al-jumhuriyah and Al-Thowra soon began to retaliate against the Iranian media. It is important to note, at the outset, that the Iraqi media responded in a defensive manner. Often their commentaries were aimed at dissuading the Iranians from interference. For example, in a June 14 editorial, Al-Thowra warned

Iranians of interfering in Iraq's domestic issues and wrote, "[Iran will] pay a high price, because the revolution in Iraq has a longer and stronger arm than they imagined or are made to believe by hypocrites and those whose hearts are diseased."²⁷ As the agitation of the Iraqi Shi'ite by the Iranian media continued and Saddam was able to fasten his grip to power, Iraqi media began an aggressive propaganda campaign against the Iranian revolution; for example, Iraq began to broadcast, in Farsi, a daily program to undermine the Iranian government. The Farsi broadcast consisted of three segments. Every day the Iraqi-sponsored program would start with a commentary criticizing the Iranian government of interfering in domestic affairs of Iraq. The second portion of the program would focus on the failure of the revolution to fulfill Iranian dreams. In this segment, the inability of the Iranian government to curb unemployment and to provide housing for the homeless were the central topic of discussion. In the last part, letters were recited from Iranians who had fallen out of love with the Islamic revolution.²⁸

Frequently, the Iraqi media questioned the nature of the Iranian revolution and accused its leaders of being products of imperialism. Al-Thowar, the official organ of Ba'ath party, on July 28 in its editorial wrote, "The Tehran rulers are trying in vain to prove their hostility toward imperialism. They are the lackey of imperialism."²⁹ This

aggressive method of expression was a direct result of Saddam's seizure of power. He perceived Khomeini as a vital threat to his leadership and believed that by conducting a propaganda campaign of his own he could unify enough opposition in Iran to counter Khomeini's influence in Iraq. The strategy to some extent brought him success as the Mojahedin Al-Khalq, an opposition group to Khomeini, joined him to overthrow the revolutionary government of Iran.

THE SHI'ITE UNDERGROUND GROUPS

One of the most important effects of the Islamic revolution of Iran on Iraq is the resurgence of Shi'ite underground groups. Although the Shi'ites of Iraq, due to the nature of their belief, are political groups, they lack the organization and leadership of the Iranian Shi'ites. The only semi-organized Iraqi Shi'ite resistance group, prior to the Islamic Revolution in Iran, originated some time in 1968-69.³⁰ Hanna Batatu, a prominent scholar on Iraqi Shi'ite underground groups, identifies the creation of Al-Dawah with the chief Mujtahid Muhsin Hakim.³¹ Although Al-Dawah had few members at the time, its importance came from its being the only organized body through which the Shi'ite could voice themselves. This was evident during the 1977 Shi'ite riots in Najaf, where the groups' call for a demonstration against government was welcomed by the Shi'ite community.³² The demonstration of 1977 turned into a riot and resulted in the execution of eight Shi'ite dignitaries,

five clergymen and three laymen.³³

The Najaf riots made heroes out of Al-Dawah members, but it was not until the successful Islamic revolution in Iran that the group's membership and activities increased. The Islamic revolution in Iran also gave birth to the emergence of other Shi'ite underground groups such as Mujahidin and the Soldiers of Imam.³⁴

After the death of chief Mujtahid Hakim, Ayatollah Al-Sadr became the spiritual leader of Iraqi Shi'ites. His leadership united and gave direction to the oppressed Shi'ite community of Iraq. Soon he became the symbol of Iraq's Shi'ite opposition to the Ba'athists. Demonstrations and riots that took place right after the revolution in Iran were believed by the Ba'athists to have been organized by him through Al-Dawah. What bothered the Iraqi regime more than anything else was the close association of Al-Sadr with Khomeini. Al-Sadr shared Khomeini's vision of establishing an Islamic republic where all Moslems, regardless of their race and nationality, would come together based on commonality of their faith. Both leaders shared the goal of implementing the institution of Vilayat Al Faqih, "the rulership of society by Mujtahid."

The implementation of this belief would have stripped Saddam from power. Saddam, fearful of Al-Sadr's influence among the Shi'ites, put him under house arrest to control his activities. On July 19 Radio Tehran reported that Saddam

became furious to find out that the house arrest caused more riots and that some members of the Ba'ath party were murdered by Al-Dawah supporters in Al-Khalis district of Diyala province and Baghdad.³⁵ To him, this was a betrayal of pan-Arabism. Saddam vowed, "I shall not allow the Iranian experiment to be repeated in Iraq and Ayatollah Al-Sadr become Imam Sadr."³⁶ He ordered Iraqi security forces to conduct a major crackdown to eliminate the Shi'ite underground groups. The operation was to some extent successful and resulted in the arrest of high-ranking members of the Al-Dawah group. On May 15, 1980, Radio Baghdad reported the arrest of fugitive Aziz Ali, a high ranking member of Al-Dawah. He publicly confessed that his group, in alliance with other Shi'ite groups, was preparing to carry out assassination attempts on the life of RCC members in order to destabilize the government. He also confessed that he "distributed arms that were smuggled from Iran among the party cells."³⁷ The arms included revolvers, hand grenades, and silencers.³⁸

In an interview with Al-Jumhuria on May 21, 1980, another captured member of Shi'ite underground groups named Al-Sadr as the agitator responsible for recent Shi'ite disturbances. He claimed that Al-Sadr received orders directly from Khomeini and passed them on to the Shi'ites opposing the Iraqi government.³⁹ He also claimed that the opponents of the Iraqi regime received financial and

military support along with their training for sabotage activities in Iran.⁴⁰

In the midst of the government crackdown two other important assassination attempts took place. The target in these attempts was Saddam Hussein and his family. On June 20, 1980, a Beirut newspaper reported that a group armed with hand grenades and automatic weapons attacked the President's entourage. Saddam escaped injury, but the report indicates that several members of his bodyguards were killed or injured.⁴¹ The second attempt was directed against Saddam's brother, Barzan Takriti. He also escaped injury, but the group Al-Dawah claimed that his wife was killed in the attack.⁴²

The allegation by captured members of Shi'ite underground groups, along with the increased assassination attempts on the lives of members of the Ba'ath government, was enough evidence for Saddam to order that mere membership in the Shi'ite groups was punishable by death.⁴³ He also responded to the increased Shi'ite activities by ordering the execution of Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir Al-Sadr and his sister Bint Al-Huda.⁴⁴

The execution was believed not only to be a move to suppress the source of hostility to Ba'athist rule in Iraq, but also to be a direct retaliation for the assassination attempt on the second most powerful man in Iraq, Tariq Aziz. He escaped the attempt on his life but was injured by

fragments of a hand grenade.⁴⁵

The execution of Al-Sadr did not suppress the members of the Shi'ite underground movement. Instead, it made them more determined to overthrow the regime. Not only did the underground movement now have the dream of establishing an Islamic republic in mind; they also became obsessed to avenge the government for murdering their spiritual leader.

It was in the nature of the Iranian ideology to create an Islamic community that would encompass the entire area. This concerned the Iraqi government. Since 1968, the Ba'athists had nourished the dream of unifying the area under the banner of Arab nationalism. All their effort, plus their rulership in Iraq, was shaken by the revolution in Iran. Saddam Hussein, witnessing the idea of Khomeinism sweeping his nation and other Arab-inhabited areas, decided to suppress the Islamic movement.

Aware of the historical animosity between Arabs and Persians, he attacked Iran to unite his nation behind the banner of Arab nationalism. He referred to this war as Saddam's Qadessyh, referring to the battle that took place between the Arabs and Persians over 1000 years ago in which the Arabs defeated the Persians.

Although Saddam tried to convince his people that the war was a war between Arabs and the Persian enemy, it truly was a war of ideology. It was a war between pan-Arabic and pan-Islamic goals of unification. Hussein, by attacking

Iran, was trying to divert the attention of his Shi'ite population to the war. This, he hoped, would unite his divided nation.

ENDNOTES

- ¹Ismeal, 118.
- ²Ibid.
- ³Abdulghani, 181.
- ⁴U.S. Department of State, Foreign Broadcasting Information Service Daily Report: Middle East and Africa (hereinafter cited as FBIS MEA) (October 16, 1979), R2.
- ⁵Fenner Brockway and Ann Clwyd, M.P., Saddam's Iraq: Revolution or Reaction? (London: Zed Books, 1989), 165.
- ⁶Amir Taheri, The Spirit of Allah (Maryland: Adler and Adler, 1986), 161.
- ⁷FBIS MEA (May 22, 1980), E4.
- ⁸FBIS MEA (June 20, 1979), R13.
- ⁹Ibid., R13-14.
- ¹⁰Ibid., R14.
- ¹¹Ibid.
- ¹²Ibid.
- ¹³Morteza Masaeley, Iraqi of Iranian descent, Interview by Masoud Bonyanian, August 14, 1983, Ahwaz, Iran.
- ¹⁴Ibid.
- ¹⁵Ibid.
- ¹⁶FBIS MEA (June 12, 1979), R5.
- ¹⁷Ibid., (June 28, 1979), R1.
- ¹⁸Ibid., (July 2, 1979), R9.
- ¹⁹Ibid.
- ²⁰M.S. El Azhary "Introduction" to The Iran-Iraq War, ed. by M.S. El Azhary (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 2.

²¹FBIS MEA (July 30, 1979), E1.

²²Khadduri, The Gulf War, 75-78.

²³Claudia Wright, "Iraq - New Power in the Middle East," Foreign Affairs 59-2 (Winter, 1979-80): 266.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵FBIS MEA (June 20, 1979), R13.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid., (June 15, 1979), E1.

²⁸Ibid., (July 29, 1979), E3.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Brockway, 165.

³¹Hanna Batatu, "Shi'i Organizations in Iraq: Al-Dawah, Al-Islamiyah, and Al-Mujahidin," in Shi'ism and Social Protest, ed. Juan R. I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 179-200.

³²Ibid.

³³Brockway, 165.

³⁴Batatu, 179.

³⁵FBIS MEA (July 20, 1979), E2.

³⁶Ibid., (June 28, 1979), R1.

³⁷Ibid., (May 15, 1980), E3.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., (May 22, 1980), E4.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., (June 5, 1980), E1.

⁴²Ibid., (July 9, 1980), E3.

⁴³Brockway, 166.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵FBIS MEA (April 1, 1980), E1.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Throughout the centuries, Arabs and Persians have fought bitterly over the valley of the Tigris River, especially in its southern regions where it joins the Euphrates to form the Shatt and flow into the Persian Gulf. Treaties have been signed and violated, leaders have sacrificed generations, and still neither side has ever maintained sovereignty over this land. In the modern era, from 1921 to 1971, outside powers, mainly Britain, had kept military forces in the region to discourage warfare among the smaller nations.

In 1968, Iraq rebelled against British occupation. Hussein rallied the rebels under the banner of pan-Arabism, for he wanted Arabs to determine their own fate in their native lands. This action upset some of the more moderate Arab states who saw their stability in the continuation of British presence in the area. As a result, Iraq became isolated from the goodwill of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and United Arab Emirates. Iraq had also developed poor relations with Syria, as each nation adhered to a different interpretation of Ba'ath ideology.

Compounding Iraq's problems, the United States began

to pour money and military hardware into Iran. Nixon supported the Shah to contain Soviet expansion, develop a rich source of oil, and create a market for weapons. Hussein feared Iranian abuse of this support, as Iran began to raid Arab islands and supply Kurdish insurgents on Iraqi soil.

Again, Hussein felt threatened from within and from outside his country. He felt compelled to seek help from the Soviet Union which could help him restore a balance of power with Iran. Still, the only way he could remove the Iranian presence among the Kurds was by surrendering half of the Shatt, his only outlet to the Gulf.

Hussein had invoked pan-Arabism in his fight against the British which isolated him from the moderate Arab governments. After the British withdrawal, Iran made a mockery of his pan-Arab ideology. A Persian country, Iran possessed the strongest military; it supported a civil war in Iraq and proved that Hussein could hardly defend his territory, let alone other Arab states; it forced Iraq to seek help from a non-Arab power, the Soviet Union; and it forced Iraq to surrender the Shatt, an Arab land.

After suffering these losses, Hussein looked for ways to regain respect in the region. He saw his chances when Egypt, the acknowledged leader of the Arab world, signed the Camp David Accords with Israel, a hated non-Arab state. The fact that the United States engineered this treaty fueled

Hussein's argument that the Camp David Accords were not to the Arabs' favor. Hussein led the movement to oust Egypt from the Arab league. He saw more chances to regain stature among his neighbors when the government of the Shah began to crumble in 1979. As Khomeinist forces disrupted and liquidated the Iranian military command, and as they began to export their revolution to Arab lands, Hussein claimed to be the only military force able and willing to contain Iranian aggression.

Hussein sought a military solution to the apparent failings of his pan-Arab doctrine. By recapturing the Shatt and vanquishing Iran, which he believed would be easy after Khomeini destroyed the Shah and his power structure, Hussein believed he could demonstrate to the world the strength of his ideology. He also had hoped the war would contain the spread of Khomeinism in his country.

At the outset of this research paper, the author suggested that the increase in opposition among Shi'ites toward the Ba'athist regime of Iraq provoked the Iraqi government to attack Iran. Shi'ite opposition of the Iraqi government, a domestic problem, plus the increasing regional isolation of the government, an international problem, created in Iraq a sense of insecurity. This insecurity laid the foundation for Saddam Hussein's decision to go to war with Iran.

The selected indicators for this study were the number

of Shi'ite riots and increased activities of the underground Shi'ite groups in Iraq from Khomeini's Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 until the beginning of the war in 1980. The other major indicator to suggest the validity or invalidity of the above statement was the change, if any, in the number of assassination attempts on Ba'athist leaders in Iraq by Iraqi Shi'ites since the ascent of power by Khomeini.

All the documents studied suggest that there was an increase in the level of activity in each indicator listed above. During the Khomeini era in the Persian Gulf, there were more riots, more underground Shi'ite groups forming, and more attempts on the lives of Ba'athist leaders by Iraqi Shi'ites than before Khomeini's Islamic Revolution. Due to the secrecy that surrounds the Iraqi government and the censorship of information flowing out of that country (a symptom of its insecurity), it is difficult to determine the precise extent of the increase in the number of events in each indicator. But what is certain is that a discernable increase occurred in every indicator.

As was demonstrated in Chapter Two, the incorporation and implementation of Ba'athist ideology into Iraq's domestic and foreign policy isolated Iraq within the region. The Ba'athist rejection of the existing boundaries in the region, along with the idea of creating one Arab nation, aroused the concern of other Arab leaders. Iraq's desire to destabilize the territorial status quo and to create a new

international order collided with the desire of other Arab leaders who advocated the preservation of the territorial sovereignty of each nation. As a result, Iraq became isolated by the other Arab nations, especially those with whom it shared a border.

Domestically, the idea of creating a single Arab nation based on Arab nationalism was not well received. Its nature antagonized the Kurds, who are not Arabs, and the Shi'ites, who are highly religious. The Kurds had feared that Arab nationalism would treat them as second-class citizens; therefore, they refused to pledge loyalty to the Ba'athist rule in Iraq. The Kurds have registered their rejection of Ba'athism by declaring war on the central government. The Kurdish question in Iraq is still unresolved as they continue to fight the government. The Iraqi government has also failed to bring the Shi'ite community under its political umbrella.

Because the Shi'ites are Arabs, they would not suffer as much as the Kurds would in the creation of a larger Arab union. Nevertheless, they still reject the Ba'athist idea of Arab nationalism. What prevented the Shi'ites from joining the Ba'athists in their quest for Arabic unity was their strong belief in the fusion of politics and religion. The Ba'athist idea of secularism and socialism continues to disturb the Shi'ite community in Iraq.

As the result of having alienated two large segments

of its society along with its Arab neighbors, Iraq developed a sense of insecurity. This insecurity has been demonstrated by a chronic state of Iraqi hostility with these internal and external forces. Iran, under the revolutionary leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, became the main external focus of Iraqi hostility. Its close proximity to Iraqi territory, including the Kurdish and Shi'ite regions, and its desire to export the Shi'ite movement, combined the worst elements of Iraqi fear.

The Ba'athists of Iraq found themselves ideologically incompatible with Khomeini's regime. To their dissatisfaction, they also discovered the growth of Khomeinism among their Shi'ite population. Rising to power at an alarming rate, toppling the Shah, and gaining converts everywhere, Khomeinism had become an avenue through which the Shi'ites sought independence from the oppressive Ba'athist regime.

The documents concerning the riots reveal a direct relationship between the rise of Khomeinism in Iran and an increase in the frequency of rioting. Documented evidence of violence in Najaf, Shi'ite shrines, and other Shi'ite locations in Iraq (which this paper covered in Chapter 4) stand as a firm indicator that Khomeinism was disrupting daily life in Iraq, thereby increasing Iraq's insecurity.

Khomeinism also led to the formation of underground Shi'ite movements in Iraq. The sources studied revealed

that these newly-established Shi'ite received their political inspiration from the chief Mujtahid of Iraq, Ayatollah Al-Sadr. Interrogated members of the Shi'ite underground movements revealed that Al-Sadr received his orders from Khomeini. During his period of house arrest in Iraq, Al-Sadr sent a letter to his followers encouraging the Iraqi Shi'ites to continue the Revolution and to strive for the establishment of a unified Islamic Republic under the leadership of the Ayatollah Khomeini.

This letter and the civil unrest that followed in Iraq, infuriated the Ba'athist government. An Arab Mujtahid, Al-Sadr, was inflaming an Arab nation to strike against the ideals of an Arab state on behalf of a non-Arab revolutionary. This event was completely unacceptable to Iraq whose insecurity was reaching a breaking point. In response to the Al-Sadr affair and the increased activity of the underground movements, the Ba'athist government announced that the mere membership in any Shi'ite organization would be punishable by death. Such a strong statement by the Iraqi government decisively indicates that the activities of underground Shi'ite militant groups had increased to unbearable proportions.

The sources studied also indicate that prior to the Islamic Revolution in Iran only one Shi'ite group existed in Iraq. After Khomeini's seizing power in Iran, underground Shi'ite activity in Iraq literally exploded. Therefore, a

direct relation exists between Khomeinism and the proliferation of militant underground movements by Iraqi Shi'ites.

It must be noted that the underground organizations attempted a number of assassinations, many of which were successful. Ba'athist leaders were always the targets of these attacks. The assassination attempts included at least one each against Saddam Hussein, his brother Barzan, and Tariq Aziz, widely acknowledged as the second most powerful man in Iraq. Barzan escaped his assassination attempt, but the attack killed his wife.

No political assassination attempts by religiously-motivated Shi'ites had been recorded in Iraq during the time between the Ba'athists rise to power in 1968 and Khomeini's rise to power in Iran in 1979. This long period of relative calm changed dramatically after Khomeini's ascension to power. This jump in the number of assassination attempts in Iraq following the ascension of Khomeini strongly indicates that Khomeinism had a violent and destabilizing effect on Iraqi life.

Another area that was affected by Khomeinism was Iraqi media. At the outbreak of the Iranian Revolution, the media had a "wait and see" attitude toward events in the region. Soon, however, it responded to the perceived threat of Khomeinism. An inflammatory war of words was conducted by the Iraqi newspapers and radio broadcasts. This verbal

war was designed to undermine the Islamic Republic of Iran. Statements in the media referred to Khomeini and his colleagues as gangs of imperialist lackeys disguised as clergymen. By publishing these remarks, the Iraqis sought to discredit Khomeini's credibility among Iraqi and Iranian Shi'ites alike.

All the indicators presented at the outset of this paper and examined during research reveal an increase of militant Shi'ite resistance to the Ba'athists of Iraq during the period of Khomeini's rise to power in Iran.

It is true that racial, cultural, and territorial factors have surrounded the Iran-Iraq relationship since the earliest records of each nation's history. It is also true that rivalry existed between the two nations before Khomeini seized power from the Shah. Despite these differences, however, the two countries refrained from declaring war on each other during the modern era. Open warfare between Iran and Iraq did not begin until the forces of Khomeinism took over Iran, which has been shown to have provoked widespread civil unrest in Iraq. These series of events support the direct relationship between the emergence of Khomeinism and Saddam's decision to invade Iran. Militant Shi'ite fundamentalism in Iran affected affairs in Iraq, inducing Iraq to launch a strike against Iran, triggering eight years of inconclusive war.

The Persian Gulf War, a terrible waste of lives and

resources which dominated affairs in the region in the 1980's, stands as a contemporary installment in a centuries-old saga of animosity between Iran and Iraq. Modern efforts at peace ended in 1980 as the Iraqi army crossed the international boundary into Iran and launched the bloodiest conflict since the Second World War. The leaders of each nation, Ayatollah Khomeini and Saddam Hussein, viewed the Persian Gulf region as the battleground on which each would prove the superiority of his ideal, a single state unified under a single, widely-shared element.

For Saddam, that element was Arab nationalism, and the war would regain for his people their lost gateway to the Gulf, the Shatt-Al-Arab. In addition, Saddam's war would punish Iran, whose Khomeinist philosophy was perceived as a threat to the creation of an Arab Union.

For Khomeini, the war was a blessing. It unified Iranians under the banner of defense against a foreign invader. His Islamic Revolution was rapidly gaining adherents all over the Islamic world, successfully driving out the Shah in Iran and threatening the legitimacy of Saddam and other Arab leaders of Gulf states. But as a Revolution, his movement suffered from a power struggle among different groups in Iran. The war enabled Khomeini to consolidate power and gradually eliminate all opposition to his leadership of the Revolution.

The establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran

added a new dimension to the already complicated relations between Iraq and Iran. Festering with ethnic and cultural hatred, the relationship grew worse with the advent of Khomeinism. It added ideological strife (Arab nationalism versus pan-Islamism) to the existing disputes. Resorting to military solutions did not prove the superiority of one set of ideals over the other. The conflict unsolved forces the global powers to intervene in the region's affairs. In striving violently to unify the region into a single state under a single ideology, which they believed would bring forth Arab or Islamic self-determination, the warring nations have achieved precisely the opposite. Today, the region is more fractured than ever and, therefore, vulnerable to outside intervention.

Despite the recent peace agreement between Iran and Iraq, the existence of ideological differences will force each nation to perceive the peace agreement as a temporary truce. After eight years of bloody war Iran and Iraq still have the same objectives that led them to the commencement of the war. The recent Iraqi attempt to annex Kuwait is clear evidence of the Ba'athist commitment and determination to the goals of their ideology. On the other hand, the continuation of the Iranian involvement with the Shi'ite groups in Lebanon demonstrates that the war did not change their dream of Islamic unification in the area.

The problems that led to the war have not been

resolved. Rather, out of diplomatic necessity Saddam Hussein once again was forced to accept the Iranian demands for the cessation of hostility. The relationship between the two nations is as unstable today as it was before and the area itself vulnerable to another war.

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