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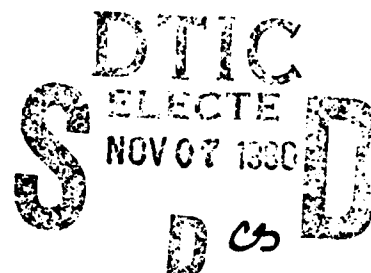
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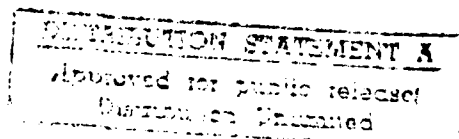
SADDAM HUSSEIN AND THE USES OF POLITICAL POWER

An Examination of the Relative Power of
the Cult of Personality and the Nationalist Myth

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INTRODUCTION

The success of Saddam Hussein in governing Iraq for the eleven years since he became president and secretary general of the Revolutionary Command Council has been nothing short of amazing. In the time since he replaced his mentor General Hassan al-Bakr, Saddam has not only manage to stay in power, but has strengthened his position in spite of a devastating war and other setbacks to the point where it currently takes a coalition of practically all of the world's major governments just to keep his army in a stalemate.

The study of how Saddam has been able to consolidate his power to such a degree is a useful one for the political scientist. It would show how one man has been able to take a party which has traditionally been unwieldy and subject to factionalism, and mould it into a single, coherent body for the validation and legitimization of personal rule. It would show how the various national and religious differences of the society have been, at least superficially, painted over and kept in check by the control mechanisms of the state and party.

In this paper, I will examine the various methods which are used for control in modern Iraq: the security apparatus, the Ba`th party, the rise of a Saddam Hussein cult of personality and the ideological and rhetorical appeal to both international issues and what is promoted as a uniquely Iraqi history and identity harking back to ancient times. Then, I will evaluate these four factors in an attempt to discover the most important ones in allowing Saddam Hussein to retain and even expand upon his power base.

Historically, the problem of governing Iraq has defeated most of the forms of government in existence in the Middle East. The failure of the monarchy with its British support and constitutional trappings, the communist supported socialist Qassim, the failure of the first Ba`thi government, and the more pragmatic rule of the Arif brothers made the question "Is Iraq governable?" a gloomy one for the political scientist of the 1960s.

Yet, since 1968, the Ba`th has been in power in Iraq. Since that time, the party has gone from being a movement which emphasized its national and socialist nature while at the same time down playing personalities to a movement which has essentially become a mechanism to socialize the population to accept and recruit members into the cult of personality which has emerged and been developed around the "leader-necessity"--Saddam Hussein al-Tikriti¹.

In the 11 years since he became President of Iraq and Secretary General of the Regional Ba`th Socialist Party, Saddam Hussein has managed to not only prevent a regime change, but also to consolidate his personal control over all aspects of the Iraqi government while at the same time pursuing ventures which would have certainly led to the toppling of a weaker ruler. The long war with Iran, which Saddam initiated, became a test of Hussein's strength when, in the mid 1980s with the war going badly for Iraq, Iranian demands for a peace made the removal of

¹A phrase which is explained in The Central Report of the Ninth Regional Congress June 1982 [sic], by the Arab Ba`th Socialist Party (Iraq), P. 25.

Saddam a key condition². The fact that Iraq was able to pursue the disastrous war for years is a testimony to the degree to which Saddam has been able to stifle dissent, consolidate power, and identify himself with the state.

To Western observers and politicians, the most notable feature of Saddam's rule is the development of an almost comical cult of personality and the parallel rise of the political myth of an ancient Iraqi nation which has always played a leading role in the defence of the Arabs. Pictures of Saddam displayed throughout the country have been seen by the Western Media as indicative of a kind of "Big Brother" which in turn has led to almost unanimous support for Saddam among the Iraqi people.

But what is the political utility of the myth of the Iraqi nation and of this cult of personality? Does this in itself allow Saddam the extraordinary latitude and control he has enjoyed as the ruler of Iraq? Is this in itself effective, or are the ideological foundations of Ba`thi rule under Saddam Hussein reliant on other structures for their success? In this paper, I will examine the various political myths which have been developed during the rule of Saddam Hussein: first, that of the existence of an Iraqi nation and then the myth of the historical leading role among the Arabs of that nation. Next, I will examine the Saddam cult of personality which has evolved within the last eleven years, and attempt to assess its impact. Then, to gauge the strength of these measures, I will examine the role of the Ba`th party and the

²Isam al-Khafaji, "Iraq's Seventh Year: Saddam's Quart d'heure?" in Middle East Report, March-April 1988 p. 39

security apparatus under Saddam Hussein. An examination of these four factors should allow one to draw conclusions about the political efficacy and usefulness of the myth of an Iraqi nationality and the cult of personality which has been fostered about Saddam Hussein. My examination begins with the myth of Iraqi nationality.

IRAQ'S INTERNATIONAL ROLE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF IRAQI NATIONALITY

Since the coming to power of Saddam Hussein, there can be no doubt that his government has devoted a considerable amount of time to international issues. This is not surprising considering the domestic problems of the country, and the time honored effect of diverting attention from domestic problems which comes from an international emphasis in policy. Two policies have been emphasized: Iraq's opposition to Zionism, and Iraq as a leader of the Arabs against the Persian menace. These policies have been actively pursued under Saddam Hussein to the detriment of the earlier Ba`thi policies of Pan-Arabism.

The idea of Zionism as an implacable enemy to Iraq and the elimination of Zionism as the main focus of Iraq's policy has gained impetus under Saddam, and has been prevented from being even more prominent only by the onset of the war with Iran.

Iraq is not on the front line with Israel, and her contributions to the Arab struggle have tended to be more rhetorical than military. It's involvement in the 1967 and 1973

wars was small, but Saddam is fond of selectively using statistics which seem to make Iraq's role more of a leading one. For example, in 1980, Saddam was quoted as saying:

How shall Iraq stand in case of a Zionist aggression? In 1967 Iraq sent an army to fight on two fronts. In 1973 Iraq fought air battles on the Egyptian front, and fought with all weapons on the Syrian front and protected Damascus from falling, and we were assisted by the Syrian patriots. I think it was only Iraqi planes which fell on the occupied territory of Palestine³.

This is certainly putting a brave face on matters, but the fact remains that Iraq was a major combatant in neither of the wars.

The verbal barrage stepped up considerably in the wake of the Israeli raid on the Osirak nuclear complex in 1981. Saddam sought to portray the attack as giving Iraq the same frontline status as Lebanon, and claimed that the attack was directed at "the whole Arab nation and to its legitimate interests and natural right to freedom and progress."⁴ In the same address, Saddam refers to other grievances against Israel and claims that Israel plans to occupy Iraq. With Iraq at last having the legitimacy as a front line state which had been denied her in the past, Saddam wasted no time in taking advantage to his new status as a primary target of Israel.

An international meeting in solidarity with Iraq was held in Baghdad, where the front line status of Iraq was formalized, and

³Saddam Hussein, Iraqi Policies in Perspective, p. 67.

⁴Saddam Hussein, Speech at the International Meeting for Solidarity with Iraq, p. 10.

expressions of Saddam's undying determination to fight the Zionist enemy were forthcoming in abundance. An appeal was also made for more funds to aid Iraq in her battle against the common enemy, and to facilitate the rebuilding of the nuclear reactor⁵.

Iraq has also been active in publicizing and funding the cause of the Palestinians. This has extended from statements of support to funding terrorist organizations⁶. When the intifadah began in Israel, Iraq let her support for the uprising be well known, and publicized her donation of three million dollars to aid in the uprising⁷.

The domestic effects of these policies are not to be ignored. The struggle against Israel is one which is probably supported by the vast majority of Iraqis, and for Saddam Hussein to be seen to be pursuing it more actively than other rulers makes him that much more popular. Moreover, by bringing what had been a distant conflict home to the Iraqi people, Saddam can claim an urgency of defense which could serve to allow further suppression of dissent.

The second international issue which Saddam has emphasized is that of opposition to the Iranians and their "schemes of Persian domination." The most obvious manifestation of this is, of course, the war with Iran. Saddam has personalized this conflict, and sought to link it with the early Arab victory

⁵ibid. See also President Hussein's Press Conference on Iraq's Policies, pp. 11-28.

⁶Vice President's Task Force on Combatting Terrorism, Terrorist Group Profiles, pp. 3-29.

⁷Saddam Hussein, On Gulf War, pp. 30-36, among others.

over the Persians by referring to the war as "Saddam's Qadissiya Battle."⁸

The war against Iran has been portrayed as much more than an interstate dispute by the Iraqi government. Both to the Iraqi people and to the other Arab states, the war has been represented as a struggle to contain an expansionist revolutionary Persian regime which seeks to rule over the entire Arab world.

Saddam takes some pains to deride the Islamic motives behind the Iranian republic in the war, and even goes so far as to claim that no non-native speaker of Arabic can ever hope to understand Islam⁹. Khomeini is portrayed as an apostate who plays on the gullibility of simple people in an effort to spur them on into a war which is both futile and entirely the fault of Iran.

The level of rhetoric picked up with the discovery of Israeli covert military assistance to Iran. The war could then be presented as an extremely clever Zionist plot, with Khomeini being either the dupe or willing accomplice of the Zionists. Much is made of a "historical parallel" to the fall of Babylon to the Persians and the falls alleged facilitation due to Jewish prisoners starting fires behind the Babylonian defenses¹⁰.

The major impact of the war to Saddam Hussein's image, however, has been the boost which it has given to his claim to be the leader of the Arab nation. Iran's claims to be the vanguard of

⁸witness the chapter "Saddam's Qadissiya Battle" in Ninth Congress Report [sic], pp. 169-244.

⁹Saddam Hussein, The Khomeini Religion, pp. 32-34.

¹⁰These ideas are explicitly put forth in From Saddam Hussein to Iranian Peoples. The historic argument is in the roughly translated From Nebuchadnezzar to Saddam Hussein: Babylon Rises Again, pp. 13-15.

an Islamic revolutionary movement which was going to reform all of the decadent regimes of the Arabian peninsula made Saddam's task much easier in this regard. Saddam was able to rightfully claim that Iraq was fighting to defend the Arab frontiers, and less rightfully that if Iraq failed the entire Arab nation would be invaded. In an interview with Kuwaiti journalists, Saddam brings up the idea of an Iraqi defeat leading to a new Arab dark age, saying "Had we been defeated, we would have been damned by every Arab for the next five thousand years."¹¹

Saddam wasted no time in making the most of this. His message was aimed at two audiences: his people and the other Arab states. The domestic message was that failure would lead to colonization by the alien Persians. The international image, which had profound domestic implications, was that Iraq was the only thing keeping a revolutionary, expansionistic state in check. The international image went over well, and led to financial support, public support and encouragement for Iraq, with most of the world's governments turning a blind eye to the various abuses which went on within Iraq¹². International support for Iraq could be associated with Saddam Hussein and publicized domestically thus leading the populace to think that all of the various governments which had an interest in containing Iran were unconditional supporters of Saddam. The financial support which they provided was indispensable to Iraqi efforts to prosecute the

¹¹On Gulf War, p. 43.

¹²The various instances of which can be seen every day in the Western media following the invasion by Iraq of Kuwait.

war¹³, and allowed Iraq to carry on a devastating war while at the same time limiting its effects on the domestic quality of life, carry out a huge program of public works and rebuilding war damaged cities¹⁴, and providing crowd pleasing measures such as giving demobilized soldiers a new car. In these ways, Saddam was able to deflect criticism from his "Qaddissiya Battle" by in effect buying silence with foreign money.

Saddam's bid for Arab leadership came at the expense of the Egyptians, who were isolated after the Camp David accords. Comparisons were made between the Iraqis defending the Arab nation's frontiers for eight years, and the Egyptians making peace with the Israelis. Much is made of Iraq's claim to have been the only modern Arab state to have fought a war which has lasted longer than a few weeks and has not ended in disaster¹⁵. While such posturing may accord a degree of international legitimacy, there is no doubt that its domestic result was a rise of pride in the Iraqi state and, of course, the leader of that state. Thus, Iraq's attempts to appear at the forefront of the Arab world again consolidate Saddam's rule.

Another well documented effort of the Saddam Hussein regime has been directed towards the establishment of an Iraqi identity derived from the state's Mesopotamian history. The study

¹³Support was estimated in 1988 as being \$40 billion in loans from the industrialized countries, with an equal amount of debt expected to be written off from the Arab countries. Janet Sutherland, "Iraq" in MEED Handbook 1990, p. 73.

¹⁴An exhaustive pamphlet of figures and statistics, though with a focus on efficiency which probably gives a low estimate of costs, is Ministry of Information and Culture, Basra Reconstructed.

¹⁵On Gulf War, pp. 56-62.

of pre-Islamic Iraq has been greatly encouraged by Saddam Hussein, and the amount of funding which he has directed to archaeological research has surpassed that of any previous regime, even though the government also had an ongoing war to fund¹⁶.

The Iraqi government has been engaged in the reconstruction of Babylon, and draws a rather tenuous analogy between the ancient civilization with its conquests of Palestine and battles with the Persians and the current concerns of Iraq¹⁷.

Mesopotamian imagery is used for the National Assembly, which meets in the Hammurabi buildings, opposite a monument with cuneiform characters prominently displayed. This imagery can not be lost on the members of the National Assembly, which contains a diverse ethnic mixture of ideologically sound Iraqis and was founded, in no small part, to promote Iraqi unity¹⁸.

The image of Iraq as the cradle of civilization, as the birthplace of the Arabs and the heartland of Islam is one which Saddam has subscribed to heartily, saying "there are abundant verses in the Quran itself indicating clearly that the role allotted to the Arab was that of leadership¹⁹." He has derided the ability of non-Arabs to ever understand Islam, and claims that the re-establishment of ancient civilizations in Iraq is evidence of the

¹⁶Amazia Baram, "Mesopotamian Identity in Ba'ithi Iraq" pp. 442-443; From Nebuchadnezzar to Saddam Hussein, all.

¹⁷See the description of the (pre-Saddam) depiction of Nebuchadnezzar leading the Jews in chains to Babylon in Baram, p. 430.

¹⁸Stated in Ministry of Information and Culture, The National Assembly, p. 17.

¹⁹Saddam Hussein, The Arabs and the Leading Role in the Message of Islam, p. 14.

superior strength of the people, giving strong hints of divine ordination²⁰.

The political uses of this mythology and the claims associated with it are manifold. One of the most persistent problems bedeviling rulers of Iraq has been that of reconciling the three different communities within the state with a central government. The Pan-Arabism which was the sole driving ideological imperative of Ba'thism held little appeal for Kurds and the Iraqi Shi'i community, both of whom were faced with the possibility of being submerged in a huge Arab nation made up mostly of Arab Sunnis. Accordingly, the Ba'thi ideology was poorly received in these communities, particularly after the disasters of 1963 and 1964. The idea of a distinct Iraqi nationality, with its own distinct heritage, distinct concerns and therefore distinct policies is one which could appeal to these groups²¹. The myth of an Iraqi nation is one which allows Saddam to claim overriding Iraqi interests when the demands of Pan Arabism are too rigid, and which can be used to console the myriad of Iraqi groups when they get out of hand.

The claims of the primacy of the Mesopotamian (and therefore Iraqi) civilization over all the other civilizations, to include Egypt, is also not without political use. In the battle for

²⁰See the long account of Arab logic, ending with "It was this particular trait, so peculiar to the Arabs themselves, that was the object of the Almighty's favour and it is to it in particular that the Arabs owe their being the repository of the Almighty's trust in so far as their being given the leading role in propagating and spreading the divine message." The Arabs and the Leading Role, pp. 19-20.

²¹This idea is covered in depth but with a focus on the pre-Saddam Ba'th ideology in Amazia Baram, "Qawmiyya and Wataniyya in Ba'thi Iraq: The Search for a New Balance".

the leadership of the Arab world, the claim to have been the originator of Arab culture can easily be transferred to a claim for a top position among the Arabs. The fact that the other major claimants for cultural primacy, the Egyptians, previously claimed legitimacy as the descendents of an ancient civilization and are the prime rivals for Arab ascendancy only makes the promotion of Mesopotamian identity that much more important. Saddam has not been slow to allow the distinction to be drawn, as in this passage from the Ministry of Culture and Information pamphlet describing Saddam's role in rebuilding Babylon:

President Saddam Hussein was acting in his capacity as heir to this great civilisation, and descendant [sic] of those Arab dynasties which gave the world a great deal in all walk of life. His Excellency realized the distinguished role Babylon played, through its patriotic kings, to ward off the successive dangers which threatened its existence²².

Most importantly, the promotion of a Mesopotamian identity and of Iraqism has allowed for Saddam to keep the ideological rhetoric of Pan-Arabism, while not being constrained by the ideological requirements of Pan-Arabism. The excuse that "We are Iraqis, and are different from the other Arabs" allows for the pursuit of state interests when there is a conflict with Pan-Arabism. Thus, Saddam is able to focus on solidifying his domestic base without having to expend major effort on unity schemes which he probably knows are doomed to failure. He can

²²From Nebuchadnezzar to Saddam Hussein, p. 27

claim that the concerns of the Iraqi nation must be dealt with before the concerns of the greater Arab nation, and in this way can pursue his own agenda without being called to account by a higher ideology. Thus, the promotion of an Iraqi national identity becomes an inseparable adjunct to the concept of the "Leader-Necessity," and ensures that his power is truly unrestrained. The interests which he serves are Iraqi interests, which he alone defines, and he does not have to worry about any higher interests conflicting with his judgement. Thus, in the Iraqi nation which he has promoted from a Mesopotamian identity, Saddam Hussein's judgement reigns supreme. He made the link between the Mesopotamian past and the Iraqi present explicit in 1981 when, speaking on the Zionist threat but no doubt with the thought of accommodating Iranian cease fire demands in mind, he stated "Here in Mesopotamia the earliest civilization of mankind emerge. Such a nation can in no way surrender and accept servitude on its own territory."²³

THE CULT OF PERSONALITY

The base of Iraqi nationalism which has been carefully cultivated under Saddam has served to free the Iraqi leadership from the constraints of a higher ideology. The interests of the new, Iraqi nation needed to be redefined. It only remained for Saddam to ensure that he be the one defining the goals of the new

²³Saddam Hussein, Speech at The International Meeting for Solidarity with Iraq, pp. 19-20.

Iraqi nation. To ensure that he had the controlling role in setting the new national agenda, Saddam began a process of self promotion which can only be described as a cult of personality.

One of the most notable features of Saddam's rule since 1979 has been the prevalence of his image throughout Iraq. The colossal castings of his arms in Baghdad and the massive portraits of him which dominate every public square in Iraq have been the subject of much derision in the West. Similarly, the ways in which he has sought to portray himself, such as by claiming descent from the son-in-law of the Prophet appears and his habit of frequently appearing in uniform seems to Westerners to be nothing other than rampant egomania. Yet there is a reason behind all of this. An examination of the way official post 1979 accounts of his early life and career in the party portray him, together with an examination of some of his public appearances should allow us to draw some conclusions relating to the political utility of this cult of personality among his two target audiences: the people of Iraq who are in effect kept out of power due to the monopolization of power by a small elite, and the elite itself.

It is important in the promotion of a leader that he be portrayed as destined for the role and greatness which he will eventually assume. In one official biography, he is depicted, at the age of ten, to be so determined to go to school that he sets off on foot for a long voyage to a village where there is a school. When he stays at a relative's house overnight, the ten year old boy

is given his first pistol, a revolver²⁴. The idea that a ten year old would be mature enough to handle such a weapon, or would even know how to use it, obviously is intended to foreshadow the strength and accomplishments of the later national leader. It is interesting to note that in one biography, the constant carrying of a pistol by Saddam is mentioned repeatedly by the author, thus emphasizing that this is a man who is strong and powerful, as exemplified by the weapon he has carried since the age of ten. The retelling of this story is bound to affect both of the target audiences. Since the 1930s the concept of Iraqi nationalism has been bound up with militarism²⁵, and a man who displayed such determination and militaristic skills at such an early age can no doubt be seen by the people as a budding leader. The elite who surround Saddam can also not help but notice and take heed of his determination.

A second example of the emphasis of Saddam's past is the lurid account of his role in the assassination attempt on 'Abd al-Karim Qassem and his subsequent escape. Official biographies of Saddam describe in detail the ordeal of Saddam being wounded in the leg, his ruthlessness in refusing to take a dying comrade to hospital because of the police and, in the safe house, Saddam

²⁴Amir Iskander, Saddam Hussein: The Fighter, The Thinker and the Man, p. 28; Fuad Matar, Saddam Hussein: The Man, the Cause and the Future, p. 31.

²⁵Phebe Marr, A Modern History of Iraq, pp. 69-70. The development of the Army was the among the first priorities of the regime after the mandate ended, and thus militarism has become almost synonymous with "Iraqism."

giving detailed instructions to one of his companions to remove the bullet lodged in his leg without the benefit of anesthesia²⁶.

The description of the flight then involves a midnight horseback ride to Tikrit, and Saddam swimming across the Tigris River in the middle of the night (with his lame leg). Finally, Saddam is seen disguised as a beduin and joining a caravan across the Syrian border.

All accounts emphasize the braggadocio and courage of the young Saddam. They also show the ruthlessness with which he threatens to shoot the assassination attempt driver in the back when he decides to take a wounded accomplice to hospital. The fact that these events have been chosen to be emphasized and repeated shows much about the importance which is attached to them and the image of the leader which they would no doubt foster. They combine to show a man who is tough and dedicated, but who would also not hesitate to take whatever action he felt necessary to protect himself. These accounts can be seen by the public as a thrilling adventure where the leader shows his derring-do: they would be seen by the political elite of Tikritis and others around Saddam as an accurate illustration of what they could expect were they to interfere in how he thinks the state should be governed.

It is notable that, with the exception of the attempt on Qassem, little is made of Saddam's party activity in the first Ba`thi regime or subsequent affairs before the coup of 1968. One

²⁶Matar, p. 34; Iskander, pp. 60 - 73, under the somewhat fanciful title "Journey of the Wounded Knight."

explanation for this could be reluctance to associate Saddam too closely with the earlier, failed Ba`thi regime and its policies. Indeed, Saddam is reported as only taking part in one party action between the 1958 revolution and the split with the Syrian Ba`this in 1966: the assassination attempt on Qassim. In a state where the leader is supposed to be the embodiment of national will, there is no question of associating him with failure: this would mean that he could fail again. This thought would undermine his rule.

The clearest example of how Saddam has had history manipulated after 1979 is in the various accounts of the two coups of 1968. The fact that the Ba`th had to purge the members of the first coup who had made the coup possible after only 17 days has generated much discussion in both the Eighth and Ninth Regional Congress reports. The *prima facie* impression of Ba`thi duplicity has required that lengthy rebuttals be made in both accounts.

The basic facts of this matter are not in dispute. On 17 July 1968, a successful coup was led against `Abd al Rahman Arif by the Ba`th and two key military officers, `Abd al-Razzaq al-Nayif and Ibrahim al-Da'ud. In exchange for their participation, al-Nayif was to be made the Prime Minister, and al-Da'ud the Minister of Defense. Their participation was key to the success of the episode. 13 days later, they were both exiled, and the government was taken over entirely by a Ba`thi Revolutionary Command Council²⁷.

²⁷A good chronological account of this is in Marr, pp. 208- 213.

Obviously, this quick change among the conspirators has the hallmarks of a power grab, and would call into doubts the legitimacy of the aims of the revolution. If not refuted, these doubts would make what the Ba`th was claiming to be a revolution appear as an ordinary coup. There would be corresponding damage to the image of Saddam as an unassailable leader.

The Eighth Congress' account of the two coups gives very pragmatic reasons for the alliance with al-Nayif and al-Da'ud. They are basically twofold: first that al-Da'ud was the commander of the Republican Guard, and thus his support was key for a successful coup; and second that al-Nayif, who found out about the coup and could have alerted the government to it, demanded to participate²⁸. Underlying these two constraints are two party concerns, also stated explicitly. The first is that it would have taken a long time for the party to overthrow the government entirely by itself, and the second is that the Ba`th feared that an even more reactionary regime would take advantage of what the Ba`th saw as a nation riven with foreign spy rings, corruption and chaos²⁹.

The basic justifications put forward here are entirely pragmatic. A meeting which took place at al-Bakr's house, and the discussion and decision which followed are presented as group decisions, with no one person being named. The entire operation is presented as one taken by a smoothly working organization, with no one person in a position of primacy. While some anxiety is

²⁸The Political Report of the Eighth Congress of the Arab Ba`th Socialist Party op. 23-25.

²⁹ibid, p. 23.

acknowledged on the part of Ba`th members who did not know about the last minute deal with al-Nayif and thus would have wondered about his presence in the government as Prime Minister, the overall conclusion which one gets is of a well planned group operation taking place with everyone doing their jobs and no one assuming an overarching role.

The Ninth Regional Congress takes a tone which is substantially different. The tone for this treatment is set, with considerable understatement, right at the start of this account:

The Eighth Regional Congress has dealt with some aspects of the conditions and needs emerging in that phase, but it has not tackled them with necessary clarity, especially with regard to the Party's internal life and the Revolution's subjective conditions³⁰.

There are two major differences between the Eighth and Ninth Congress's accounts of events. The first is in the Ninth Congress's reference to the first coup as a "draft revolution," with the second coup being the actual revolution³¹. The implication here is that there is much more of a suggestion of planning and control by the Ba`this. In contrast to the improvised nature of the reaction to al-Nayif's ultimatum shown in the eighth congress report, here one sees a plan which has been carefully and patiently laid. The sudden intrusion of al-Nayif is not a crisis in the ninth report, rather it is an inconvenience

³⁰Ninth Congres [sic] p. 26.

³¹ibid, p. 27.

which was easily dealt with. The man who singlehandedly deals with it is, of course, Saddam.

The second difference, which goes a long way towards explaining the first, is the emphasis placed on the role of Saddam Hussein. Where the eighth congress's report plays down personalities (indeed, Hassan al-Bakr is mentioned only because the meeting the night before the coup was held at his house), the ninth report glorifies Saddam Hussein to the exclusion of all others. He was, we are told, the mind that "organized, planned and took precautions."³² Obviously, the surprise which al-Nayif managed to spring on the anonymous conspirators of the earlier report could not have been a major impediment with Saddam doing the planning. His taking the credit for the entire operation forced the ninth congress to minimize what was obviously a major setback in Ba`thi plans. It is hard to see how it could have been planned for in advance to allow an unaffiliated conspirator to enter the conspiracy at the last moment and demand the role of prime minister in exchange for nothing other than his silence. Yet the requirements of building the image of Saddam as the originator of all that is successful in the Ba`th (and Iraq) requires that this major incident, reported honestly in the eighth report, be minimized in the ninth.

The ninth congress report goes on to describe Saddam driving in the first tank to assault the presidential palace, a story which is also told in his official biographies. This is a particularly unusual claim for two reasons, the first being that

³²ibid.

Saddam has no military experience. This may not be a deficiency for some tasks in a coup, but is a definite flaw for someone trying to drive a tank for the first time in the middle of the night. The difficulty of this task must mean that if Saddam was indeed in "the first tank" to assault the lightly armed presidential palace, he was probably there only as a passenger.

The second fact which calls this statement into question is the fact that while the eighth congress report does not mention any of the conspirators by name or go into the part they played in the actual coup, both Batatu and Marr in their comprehensive works give the names of several Ba`thists who did take part in the assault. But neither list of names includes Saddam Hussein³³.

The purpose of this charade is for the leader to be able to claim that he had made sacrifices and led valiant efforts to help the revolution. This in turn obligates the followers to try to match the leader's example, and allows the leader to call on his subjects to make similar sacrifices without the accusations of hypocrisy. Saddam's claims to have led the assault gives him credibility with his people.

The second phase of the coup, the "White Revolution" of 30 July, is presented in the ninth report as the sole idea of Saddam:

However, on July 30, Saddam Hussein was indeed the Revolution's Leader. It was he who insisted on liquidating the counter-revolutionary forces and that very soon. It was he who devised

³³Marr, p. 210. Hanna Batatu, The Old Social Classes and Revolutionary Movements in Iraq p. 1074. There is a possibility that Saddam was one of the "minor party officials" whom Batatu mentions as accompanying the raid, but this seems unlikely as Saddam was, at the time, the number two man in the regional Ba`th.

the plan, chose the time of execution, designated the roles of participants and himself dealt the decisive blow. Hence the true birth of the Revolution--which brought forth the course through which we are living today³⁴.

This exceptional passage links explicitly the purpose of Saddam in emphasizing his role in the Ba`thi seizure of power. By allowing himself to be portrayed as the guiding power behind the Ba`thi "revolution", Saddam has helped to ensure that he will be inseparable from that "revolution." By his reference to the "true birth of the Revolution," the reader is left in no doubt whatsoever who the father of that revolution is. The implications of this pronouncement is also clear. The "Leader-Necessity" made the birth of the revolution possible. The entire revolution was his sole idea. Therefore, to criticize the leader would be to criticize, albeit indirectly, the revolution. Once again, Saddam Hussein is seen as the personification of the party and the revolution. Thus it is made simple for patriots to identify with him, and treasonous to dissent against him.

At the elite level, this account also has its uses. Those who might be capable of overthrowing Saddam have no accurate way of gauging whether the people believe this or not, but surely the thought of an entire state mobilized behind a single leader must enter the calculus of a person who wishes to overthrow that leader.

Indeed, Saddam has ensured that he is the only leader known to his subjects. By having his image posted in every public place,

³⁴Ninth Congres [sic], p. 27.

he has effectively made discussion of any leader other than himself unthinkable. The centralization of power, and the exclusion of others from the public sphere, has made it impossible for any other figure to be known on a national level. There simply is no alternative leader to Saddam Hussein in the minds of Iraqis, because no one else has been allowed to rise to any comparable level of prominence. Even the war did not allow military men to rise to undue prominence: the frequent command shuffles and rotations prevented one man from grabbing the spotlight for long, and all of the heroes publicized from the war were dead ones. They were capable of glorifying the state and her sacrifices and of being cast in oversize bronzes along the Shatt al-Arab pointing at Iran³⁵: they are not capable of challenging Saddam Hussein in any meaningful way.

Saddam is also careful to give the impression that he is concerned about the welfare of his people, and has adopted a manner of touring the country which suggests that he is trying to appear to be a "good king."

The "good king" was a Russian Czar who was liked by his people in spite of the miserable state of their lives. The people were convinced that the Czar had their best interests at heart, and that things were bad only because the true situation was being hidden from him by evil advisors. Therefore, the "good King" is one who, when he walks among his subjects, seeks out problems and uses his royal fiat to solve them. Saddam has

³⁵A good treatment of this was in the "Rear Window" program on Saddam's monuments in Iraq broadcast on Channel 4, 23 May 1990

behaved like this on numerous occasions. Last January, on a tour of Mosul, he expressed shock when townsfolk told him that they could not buy western food or appliances, and personally ordered that \$50 million of scarce foreign reserves be spent on western consumer goods³⁶. The advantage of promoting the "good king" image is that it allows a ruler to take all the credit for good things in the regime, while taking none of the responsibility for the regime's failures. It makes all of the people in the government below the leader appear as evil, and thus consolidates the ruler's position. By promoting himself in public as the sole person who can make good things happen, he is both making himself indispensable to the people, and is increasing the amount of popular resistance which any prospective coup leader must think he will face.

In summary, the political aims of the cult of personality which Saddam Hussein has encouraged are directed at two audiences. The first target audience is the effectively powerless mass of Iraqis, to whom his message of being the embodiment of the national will is strengthened by his association with all state institutions. He projects himself to this audience in many different guises, but one which is emphasized most effectively is that of a military leader. This allows him to capitalize on both the historical association of Iraqi independence with an Iraqi military, and with the strongman (one could even say monarchic)

³⁶MEED, 26 January 1990, p. 18. Various government publications emphasize the openness of the upper leadership to complaints from the people, especially when they relate to the actions of officials. An example of this is Saddam Hussein on The Application of Justice, p. 16. Biographies also describe Saddam as holding "open court."

tradition in Iraqi politics since either independence or 1958, depending on how the argument is phrased.

He also portrays himself as a fixer of problems, a sort of padrone, who is concerned about the welfare of his people, and solves their problems on the spot. This image is particularly useful, as it can be used to keep subordinate leadership just that: subordinate. If the President fixes problems as soon as they are brought to his attention, it must follow that the only reason the problems haven't been fixed earlier is because lower officials are incompetent or deceitful. Therefore, this method encourages animosity towards lower officials which in turn makes it easier for Saddam to claim that keeping himself in power is the best protection for these officials from the righteous wrath of the people.

The second targeted audience is that set of lower officials and party leaders who might be capable of overthrowing Saddam. To these people, the message of the cult of personality is simple: overthrow me, and the people will have at you. Additional compliance is assured by emphasizing the dedicated and often ruthless nature of the actions taken by Saddam Hussein in defense of the party or of himself.

THE BA'TH PARTY

Saddam Hussein's method of controlling the Ba'th party (and by extension the entire political process) is also a textbook case

of how to establish forced unity where previously there was dissension and plotting.

Almost immediately after assuming office as president, Saddam announced the uncovering of a coup attempt within the Revolutionary Command Council which happened to include several of those who were considered to be his major rivals for leadership within the party³⁷. This in itself is not unusual for a new leader trying to establish himself as the undisputed ruler of a country. What was both masterful and telling about the rule of Saddam Hussein was the way in which he disposed of the alleged conspirators. Seven of the members of the RCC were enlisted as a special tribunal, and passed judgement on 68 accused conspirators, some fellow RCC members, sentencing 22 to death. The death sentences were carried out the next day, with Saddam and other RCC members watching³⁸. The actual firing was done by "delegates" from each regional chapter of the Ba`th, who were selected by their own chapters and sent to Baghdad expressly for this purpose³⁹.

The way these trials and executions were handled was extremely effective in helping Saddam consolidate his power. By having RCC members judge their former colleagues, Saddam was able to show to the country as a whole that the Ba`th was taking collective action, thus dispelling the notion of an individualistic power grab. The RCC members who acted as judges were made, in

³⁷recounted in several sources, the most succinct being Farouk-Sluglett et al, p. 23.

³⁸Bengio p. 326.

³⁹as proudly noted in the authorized biography by Fuad Matar Saddam Hussein: The Man, the Cause and the Future, p. 58.

effect, co-conspirators with Saddam, and thus were forced to be in his camp. After their involvement in sentencing their former colleagues to death, they would find it difficult to oppose Saddam Hussein on any ideological or ethical grounds: the only possible challenge which could be mounted by party leaders tainted along with Saddam would be simple power struggles, and would be unlikely to gather much support.

A similar masterstroke was in making the local branches select and dispatch executioners. Just as with the RCC, this measure in effect made co-conspirators of each of the local organizations, and made sure that no one in the party organization escaped collective responsibility for the executions. Since any coup against the Saddam Hussein regime would no doubt seek to punish Saddam (and his associates) for the various acts committed while in power, these party officials were now bound to be loyal to Saddam by fear--not of the government, but rather of a retribution oriented coup. By this extremely clever act, Saddam ensured that the party leadership remaining would be loyal to him in a way that neither money, threats or even village and kinship ties could ensure. Saddam made sure, with only a month in office as president, that the senior leadership of the party knew that if he went, they would go with him. Therefore, the converse was also true: Whatever Saddam's faults may be, the best chance for survival would be to remain loyal to him.

To ensure that the new, purged party remained loyal to him, Saddam employed methods similar to those which were used with the security apparatus. Relatives and Tikritis were used in key

positions⁴⁰, and the various measures which were taken to emulate popular government, such as the expansion of the Regional Command to include more Shi'i and the establishment of a national assembly, were emasculated at formation by a lack of any real power. Power is allowed to rest only with those whom Saddam knows to have the same communal interests as himself, and who would therefore be wary of any move which could be seen to diminish this power.

A third measure which was taken to validate Saddam Hussein's control of the Ba'th was the convening of a Regional Congress in 1982. There had not been one since 1973, and while it is plausible that the war with Iran justified holding one, there is no denying that the congress served as a sort of coronation ceremony for Saddam Hussein.

The contrast between the Eighth Congress report and the Ninth Congress report is striking. Whereas there is very little mention of any personalities in the Eighth report (with Hassan al-Bakr mentioned in the account of the address which he gave the congress only in a footnote)⁴¹ the Ninth Congress reads like a eulogy, and describes in no uncertain terms (five pages)⁴² the virtues and singlehanded accomplishments of the President. This honor roll of achievements culminates with Saddam being honored unanimously as the recipient of a unique title, that of the

⁴⁰noted in Farouk Sluglett et al, p. 23; Marr p. 230

⁴¹Eighth Congress p. 8.

⁴²Ninth Regional Congress[sic], pp. 34-39.

"Leader-Necessity." This position is explained together with the ramifications of the office:

The Leader-Necessity is the man who at a certain stage represents the aspirations and basic interests of the Party and the people. Therefore, it is in the interest of the Party and the people to preserve this (Necessity) and adhere to it in a sincere and genuine manner...⁴³

The logical implications of this policy and philosophy are obvious. If the "Leader-Necessity" represents the interests and aspirations of the people, then opposition to him represents an affront to these interests and aspirations. Opposition or dissent becomes treason. As the report of the congress continues:

Rejecting such a (Necessity) or leaving its strategic line is not a individual stance or a special interpretation. Rather, it is an act aiming at inflicting direct and deliberate damage on the basic aspirations and interests of the Party and people.⁴⁴

What this showed was that, by the time the Ninth congress was convened, Saddam was able to get the party to accept him not only as its unconditional leader, but also as a unique man in history. All of the major initiatives of the party were attributed to him, and the dogma of the party was converted from one based on socialist and pan-Arabist ideals to one based on explicit trust in the Leader-Necessity to know what the party and the country

⁴³ibid p. 39.

⁴⁴ibid p. 40.

need. By announcing Saddam's ascension to Leader-Necessity in the medium of a regional congress, Saddam has bound the members of the party organization to him inextricably, whether through acceptance of party dogma, or fear of implication with Saddam should there be a change of regime.

The ideological argument enunciated in the Ninth Congress report, combined with the clever execution of the 1979 purge and the selection of top party officials based on their confessional, regional and even familial links to Saddam has ensured that the Ba`th party is no longer an independent force, with an overriding ideology to which Saddam may fear being called to account to. Rather, the party now, both because of ideology and functional oversight, serves as a movement to allow social recruitment into *and mobilization in support of the ideas of Saddam Hussein*. The party has gone, since 1979, from an independent force to a dependent one.

THE SECURITY APPARATUS

There are at least three secret security organizations functioning in Iraq in addition to the normal complement of police and army. These were all restructured and put more firmly under the control of the leadership since the head of the Secret Service, a Shi'a, attempted a coup in 1973. Since 1979, they have been firmly brought under the control of either Saddam Hussein or the Revolutionary Command Council, the highest governing body in the country, which in turn is dominated by Saddam Hussein. All three

of the organizations report independently, and therefore they can be assumed to spend some time covering the activities of not just the target population, but also of the other services⁴⁵

The nature of these services naturally promotes competition. One is the old state security bureau, one is the military intelligence agency, and the most powerful is the party intelligence. These three organizations pursue dissent and subversion in a manner which is both ruthless and efficient, and ensures that there is little deviance from the party line in Iraq. The number of people employed in security is huge: accounts talk of a block organization similar to that seen in Cuba and (former) East Germany, and one source estimates the intelligence community exclusive of the military component as being 346,000 people in 1980⁴⁶.

The effect of this large body in a state of some 15 million has been important. In any regime, a collection of organizations so large and powerful could be expected to pose something of a threat to the government. Saddam has managed to keep his security apparatus under control through two measures: the first is by having them overlap, and thus report on each other. In this way, Saddam ensures that agencies, competing for recognition, power and respectability, will be concerned with their status relative to the other agencies. From a bureaucratic point of view,

⁴⁵Samir al-Khalil, Republic of Fear, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁶ibid, p. 37. These figures have a substantial element of guesswork in them, but it is noteworthy that they are extrapolated from peacetime figures in the 1970s. If anything, one could argue that, with the attack on Tariq Aziz and the onset of the war in 1980, the domestic intelligence community could have been expected to increase geometrically rather than arithmetically.

nothing is better for one agency than to see its rival exposed as inefficient or even subversive. Therefore, it is only logical to expect that the various intelligence agencies will spend quite a bit of time checking up on each other, and will utilize their direct lines of communication to the Revolutionary Command Council and its leader, Saddam Hussein. In an atmosphere like this, it is inevitable that the measure of success for an agency will become loyalty to the ruler.

But in order to ensure that there is a backup should this system fail, Saddam took the cautious step of appointing his half brother, Barzan, head of the intelligence services rather soon after taking power in 1979⁴⁷. When it appeared as though Barzan supported a move to have Saddam step aside as President in order to secure an Iranian cease fire, Saddam had him eventually replaced with a bureaucrat who, as a fellow Tikriti from Saddam's own village, could be seen as a reliable and malleable factotum⁴⁸. Two other half brothers who worked in the security apparatus were also removed, and all three of the half brothers were reported to be under house arrest⁴⁹. Saddam's actions here show that he is a cautious ruler who will leave no contingency uncovered in his efforts to prevent the subversion of his rule.

⁴⁷Ofra Bengio, "Saddam Husayn's Quest for Power and Survival," in Asian and African Studies, volume 15, p. 337.

⁴⁸Marion Farouk-Sluglett, Peter Sluglett and Joe Stork, "Not Quite Armageddon: Impact of the War on Iraq," in Merip Reports, July-Sept. 1984, p. 25. Also recounted in al-Khalil, pp. 16-21, which contains a lengthy analysis of the character of the new head, Fadhil al-Barak.

⁴⁹Isam al-Khafaji, p. 39.

Even more elaborate steps have been taken to ensure that the Army remains pliant and obedient. Rotations and shuffles of key leaders in the Army have ensured that no one officer is able to stay in one place long enough to build up a loyal company of fellow conspirators, although granted with a loss of organization operational effectiveness. The fact that this continual reorganization was allowed to go on in spite of the operational degradation which occurred in the war shows the premium which Saddam places on control- his leadership of the Ba`th and the country must not be allowed to be threatened even if it would give an advantage to the enemy.

Again in the armed forces, the key leaders are all apparently chosen with loyalty in mind rather than any technical or organization qualifications. Tikritis are again heavily represented, with Saddam's cousin the defense minister `Adnan Khayrallah Talfah being one of the few members of the pre-1979 cabinet allowed to stay in his job⁵⁰. Saddam's distrust of others remaining in power for long periods was again seen, however, when Khairallah died in a mysterious helicopter accident reportedly after criticizing Saddam's mistress. One account describes the nepotistic method of control succinctly "At one point in 1979, all senior posts were restricted to officers related to Saddam Husayn or to other individuals from Tikrit."⁵¹

Indeed, there is a long precedent in Saddam Hussein's rule of relying on people who are either related to him, or are from

⁵⁰Bengio, p. 334.

⁵¹Department of the Army(U.S.).Iraq: A Country Study, p. 242.

backgrounds similar to him. In 1982, for example, 25% of the ruling RCC were from his small village of Tikrit⁵² The career officers who had been the majority of the RCC and also controlled all of the security apparatus in 1968 had been replaced by civilians, with Sunni Arabs in control and most key office holders of a social background similar to Saddam Hussein.⁵³ This system also has political advantages for Saddam. While he is able to mouth platitudes about democracy to the public, he is able to point out to his trusted relatives and co religionists--those most likely to have the opportunity to overthrow him--the priveleged position which they occupy in Saddam's government and the unlikely prospects of them occupying a similar position in any government which would come to power after a coup or a revolution. In this way, Saddam is able to ensure yet again that his closest advisors remain loyal to him, not only through fear of him but even more effectively through fear of the public.

In addition to this nepotistic system of control, there is also a system in place to ensure that failure or retreat is not tolerated in battle. A system of "punishment battalions" function in second echelon positions in a manner reminiscent of Frederick the Great's sergeant with a bayonet--they exist not to fight the enemy, but rather to insure that the Iraqi Army moves only forward . At least one commentator has attributed the imbalance in the numbers of Iraqi prisoners taken in the war vis the Iranians

⁵²Amazia Baram, "The Ruling Political Elite in Ba'thi Iraq 1968-1986: The Changing Features of a Collective Profile." p. 472.

⁵³ibid p. 448. This article has as in depth a study of the backgrounds and experiences of the power holders in Iraq as is possible given the closed nature of that state.

to the fact that any retreat or withdrawal not authorized by Baghdad will lead to a confrontation with these punishment battalions⁵⁴.

Yet another measure in place to keep the army in check is the development of a second army, known as the popular army, or people's militia. A military organization which owes allegiance to the Ba'th alone, its numbers under Saddam's presidency exploded from 50,000 to 650,000 in 1987⁵⁵. The people's army had been used as a regular military forces in the Iran war, and it is noteworthy that it was also used to guard all positions in the Iraqi interior, thus freeing up less ideologically motivated troops to fight at the frontier, where there is no danger of a coup. It is also interesting to note the comment of one foreign observer that the people's army training seemed to consist of defending Baghdad from an attack which would come not from the direction of the Iranians, but rather from the major military bases around Baghdad⁵⁶. It is a time honored method of insecure regimes to have organizations such as a private army, which can serve as a watchdog over the regular army and can, by denying the army the exclusive "honor of the battlefield" prevent the army from being seen by the public as an institution which might compete for legitimacy with the political leadership. While some observers have pointed to the undermanned and undertrained nature of the popular army, the fact remains that they are a force employed not

⁵⁴al-Khafaji, p. 36. This article also documents Saddam's personal involvement in the tactics of the war, notwithstanding his lack of military experience, and attributes the aimlessness of Iraqi strategy to him.

⁵⁵Department of the Army, P. 224.

⁵⁶Bengio, p. 336.

exclusively at the front, but also to a major degree in a position to repel a coup. This task does not require the same level of training that fighting on an open plain does: rather, it only requires that the forces be numerous enough to block a rebellious Army unit in the close quarters of Baghdad until a loyal unit arrives.

Under Saddam another measure which ensured that the army stayed loyal was the passing of laws which called for the death penalty for any soldier who belongs to a party other than the Ba`th. It is also illegal for a former soldier to belong to another party (presumably because of the possibility of recall to colors), and any former political associations must be declared by the soldier⁵⁷. In addition to the sanitizing effect which these laws must have on the army, it has not gone unnoticed that the country has universal military conscription in effect, so these laws effectively preclude all males from any political activity other than the Ba`th from the age of 17.

Finally, Saddam has moved to ensure the loyalty of the Army in ways which would not be unfamiliar to any Western general or politician. Immediately after assuming the presidency, Saddam raised the pay of the soldiers⁵⁸. One would find it hard to believe that the soldiers were not told who was responsible for this raise. A second method employed during the war with Iran was publicizing visits by Saddam Hussein to the front, thereby

⁵⁷Farouk-Sluglett et al, p. 24; al-Khalil, p. 27.

⁵⁸Amazia Baram, "Saddam Hussein: A Political Profile," p. 124.

showing the soldiers that their danger and suffering were shared by the political leadership⁵⁹.

CONCLUSION

In seeking to govern a state which many consider to be ungovernable, Saddam Hussein has left no stone unturned. In his efforts to stay in power, he has established a system of government in which no organization is allowed to go unchecked, and all are accountable to and controlled by him. Those organizations which he can't watch himself are put under the command of people who are either related to him, or are members of his communal grouping. To ensure that these people remain reliable and do not gain enough power to become a threat, he has managed to implicate them in some of the decisions of his rule which would be most damning to a new government, and has used the time-honored method of frequent job changes and government shake ups.

To counter the traditional power of the security apparatus, he has restricted advancement and accession to loyal members of his party. To ensure that the Army or the intelligence agency does not become too powerful he has formed shadow organizations, such as the People's Army, which must then compete with the established agencies to demonstrate their loyalty to the regime.

To keep any opposition from forming in the Ba`th party, he initiated a purge almost immediately upon taking office. He then

⁵⁹Bengio, p. 334.

made co-conspirators out of the entire party leadership down to the chapter level by making them take part in the trials and executions of those purged, thus ensuring that they would be treated the same as Saddam were there to be a coup. By methods such as this, and by a set of shakeups similar to those in the security apparatus, he was able to transform the party from an ideologically based movement to the organ of the Saddam cult of personality as typified by his installation in the Ninth Regional Congress Report as the "Leader-Necessity."

He has used his control over all means of dissemination to propagate a cult of personality which has allowed him to prevent potential rivals from rising to prominence, and has allowed his subordinates (those most likely to plan a coup) to be blamed for most of the problems with the regime. In this way he has not only been able to mobilize the large numbers of Iraqis seen at public demonstrations for support, but he has probably been able to convince his subordinates that the people genuinely support him. Thus, he has introduced into the minds of those who would plan a coup the possibility of massive public resistance against the deposeders of a leader who seems to be massively popular.

Finally, he has cleverly used his stance on international issues and developed the idea of a separate Iraqi nationality based on a Mesopotamian heritage to again strengthen his rule. By adopting a hard line against Israel and being in the forefront of the non-accommodationist movement, he has bolstered his credibility at home with minimal domestic expense. Even when his actions and rhetoric have provoked Israel to strike, this has

served to increase Saddam's prestige amongst his own people as the leader of a frontline nation, and has provided a convenient excuse for strengthening security measures.

His efforts to establish a common Iraqi nationality based on the Mesopotamian heritage have also had a political payoff. Promoting Iraqism allows him the flexibility to be pragmatic where traditional Pan-Arab Ba`thism would demand action. Indeed, the development of the concept of an Iraqi nationality has allowed Saddam to postpone the requirements of Ba`thism indefinitely in the name of firming up the base in Iraq first. Thus, Saddam, who has no man making demands upon him, has also freed himself from the demands of ideology, and is free as a national leader to truly rule by decree.

It is not an easy task to assess the impact of the various measures which Saddam has taken to stay in power, and to try to assign factors of relative effectiveness would be nothing other than guesswork. One can, however, postulate three points.

The first is that without the repressive measures such as control of the security apparatus and of all forms of communications, the development of the Saddam cult of personality and the development of the Mesopotamian identity would be severely limited. The various ideas behind the cult of personality and the forming of an Iraqi nationality do not stand up to a harsh logical examination, but they do make a prima facie case. If one can control the organs of public communication, one can ensure that this prima facie case is never challenged. Therefore, the ideological facets of Saddam Hussein's rule, while

not in themselves strong enough to sustain his rule, do work when they are viewed in the environment of total state control which is modern Iraq.

The second is that a regime based on merely the repressive features of Saddam's rule would also be unlikely to survive for long. Without some attempt to mobilize people in favor of a regime, the regime will either exhaust itself policing dissent when it inevitably arises or, as is much more likely, the security organs of the state will realize that since all the security in the government comes from themselves they might as well take over the government. With this postulate in mind, we see that the most important function served by the Saddam Hussein cult of personality in Iraq is not to impress or enslave the people, but rather to impress those who feel that they might take over from Saddam.

The third point rises out of the other two. In viewing the measures which Saddam has taken to ensure that his rule is not challenged, it is essential to note that there are two audiences. One is obviously the people of Iraq, who are in effect powerless, but could be incited to rebel against their government. The second, and perhaps more important, audience is made up of those officials who hold some power and could be a threat to Saddam. To this group, Saddam's message is simple. He is the only thing between the people and the despised officials. The subordinate's only chance of survival is with Saddam Hussein. Thus loyalty is ensured by fear: not fear of the ruler, but of the alternative to the ruler.

In looking at the various measures discussed here, it is important to note that there is a definite synergism at work. Some of the measures taken, such as the distributing of photographs of Saddam in Kurdish dress, seem almost comic in isolation. But such things are not taken in isolation in Iraq. The man who has made the political system now governing Iraq has devised it with a shrewdness which has enabled him to effectively govern a country once considered ungovernable.

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