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Noah Roos April 7, 2020

The Tundra and the Desert: An Analysis of Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1972

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An abstract of
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Abstract

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In the context of Cold War competition between great powers, the Soviet Union actively sought out allies in different regions of the world. These alliances served as a means for the Soviet Union to exert influence and secure its status as a great power of global reach and significance. The Middle East was one such area the Soviet Union wanted to play a role in. Initially, the Soviet Union focused on building ties with Egypt and Syria, but after the 1967 Six Day War, it turned its attention to Iraq. Iraq needed the material benefits that came with an alliance to the USSR, but its diplomatic isolation put it at-risk of transforming from a Soviet friend to a Soviet client or puppet.

Therefore, from 1968 to 1972, the ruling Iraqi Ba'athist regime focused on stabilizing its domestic position while maintaining ties with the USSR. This would make it harder for the Soviet Union to exert pressure on the Iraqi government's actions and simultaneously ensure economic and military aid from the USSR continued to arrive. With its rule secured, Ba'athist figures such as Saddam Hussein worked to build new diplomatic partners for Iraq, balancing out the position the USSR previously held and limiting the potential of future great power influence efforts. The thesis demonstrates that, rather than the local power Iraq being a tool of the great power Soviet Union, Iraq was actually the state with more control of this bilateral diplomatic interaction.

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I also want to thank the other members of my committee, Professors Brian Vick and Michael Berger. Professor Vick was a very helpful resource as I worked on turning my general topic for a thesis into a detailed and specific proposal. In our meetings, he acted as a sounding board for my ideas and arguments, helping to guide my progress and consistency. Professor Berger was a source of encouragement for me as I began writing the thesis itself. His knowledge about Israel and the Middle East reminded me to contextualize Soviet-Iraqi trends in the broader world within which it took place.

I want to thank my friends at Emory for their interest in my paper. They would constantly ask about my topic and conclusions and enjoyed hearing about my progress. Their excitement encouraged me to keep up the hard work and it made me glad to know there were others out there who wanted to know about the importance of Soviet-Iraqi relations. I especially enjoyed talking to others working on theses of their own as those shared experiences strengthened our friendships.

Finally, I want to thank my parents. They pushed me to keep working hard on the thesis, from start to finish. It is because of them that I had the privilege to attend Emory and write this thesis, a fitting capstone for a great four years. They were a regular source of help and encouragement. In many ways, this thesis would not have been possible without them.

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Introduction

"Moscow's relations with the authoritarian regimes of the Arab world…developed slowly and were far from easy to maintain." – Yevgeny Primakov

The history of the Cold War is one of competition. As the Soviet Union and United States struggled worldwide to spread their ideologies, the search for allies became essential. Having friends in different regions of the world was a sign of prestige, allowing the two great powers to more easily project their power and influence. At the height of the Cold War, US and Soviet eyes turned to the Middle East. Soviet leadership sought to foster ties with Arab republican and socialist states like Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. The United States responded by backing Israel and the traditionalist monarchies such as Saudi Arabia and Iran.

In the aftermath of the Six Day War, Egypt and Syria began to drift from their Soviet alliances. Wary of losing its position in the Middle East, the Soviet Union began to focus more on its relationship with Iraq, which up until that time was perceived as a regional ally of secondary importance. From 1968 to 1972, the Soviet-Iraqi alliance seemed to grow strong, culminating in a 1972 Treaty of Friendship between the two nations. Some scholars, such as Beth Dougherty and Edmund Ghareeb, see this general period as the peak of Soviet-Iraqi engagement, where a diplomatically isolated Iraq and a Soviet Union in need of a Middle Eastern ally drew closer together. In the Historical Dictionary of Iraq, they write how Soviet-Iraqi "relations [were] hitting their peak between 1969 and 1973,"[1]

The Soviet Union did need Iraq as a reliable Middle Eastern ally and Iraq needed the Soviet Union to help develop its military and economy. However, the Soviet Union hoped to

[1] Beth K. Dougherty and Edmund A. Ghareeb, *Historical Dictionary of Iraq* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 508-9

transform the alliance into what Oles Smolansky calls an "influence relationship," where one state attempts to influence the action another state takes, no matter how beneficial or hurtful it is to the state taking the action. Iraq could be a vehicle for the Soviet Union to spread its ideology and defend its practical interests in the Middle East. The Iraqi government was aware of (and feared) increasing Soviet influence over the country, but it still needed the benefits that alliance with nations like the Soviet Union brought such as infrastructure investments or military aid. Thus, the period 1968 to 1972 was not a peak of Soviet-Iraqi engagement. Instead, it was a period where the Soviet Union tried to lock down the alliance and Iraq began searching for new diplomatic relations to prevent Soviet influence domination while maintaining practical benefits of arms, training, and economic assistance. The Friendship Treaty allowed the USSR to claim Iraq as a formal ally. It also meant Iraq could keep open its channel to the Soviet Union for the previously mentioned material benefits while simultaneously searching for new diplomatic partners.

The Soviet Union and Iraq had diplomatic relations from 1942 to 1989. However, there is already a large body of scholarship on Soviet-Iraqi relations in the context of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). In addition, during the first two decades of Soviet-Iraqi diplomacy, the Soviet Union was arguably more focused about consolidating its position in (Eastern) Europe. Iraq remained closely aligned to Britain and the West until the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy in 1958. By focusing on the years 1967-1975, this paper can assess Soviet-Iraqi ties during the height of the Cold War, when global competition for allies was in full force, Iraq was under consolidated republican/Ba'athist rule, and the Soviet Union led by long-serving leader Leonid Brezhnev. This period also includes two major Middle East wars—the 1967 Six Day War and 1973 Yom Kippur War—which fundamentally altered dynamics in the region. Finally, the years

1967-1975 were indeed key years of engagement between the Soviet Union and Iraq, even if it was an engagement that consisted of Iraqi drifting versus Soviet attempts to secure the alliance.

This paper explores the unfolding of Soviet-Iraqi relations in the period 1968-1972 from a chronological standpoint. First, it is necessary to discuss Soviet involvement—as well as existing literature about it—in the Middle East generally, and up to that point. In the aftermath of World War II, the old imperial regimes collapsed and western influence over colonized and semi-colonized Middle Eastern states was gone. The Arab nations finally had full sovereignty and were in charge of their own destinies. Throughout the 1950s, upheavals rocked the Arab world as new regimes came to power. Notably, Primakov discusses how "in a succession of Arab countries throughout the 1950s and 1960s, new postcolonial powers announced they had chosen a socialist path."[2] Arab embrace of socialism made sense: as these Middle Eastern states became independent, they had to deal with what the economy might look like and how would the country be built up to operate successfully without colonial patronage. Socialism, with its rhetoric of sovereignty and national liberation, fit in with the Arab nationalist and anti-colonial movement.

The Soviet Union saw an opening to fill the void left behind by old colonial powers. Indeed, "support for the anticolonial pro-independence movements was one of the ideological pillars of Soviet foreign policy."[3] For the USSR, decolonization in the Arab world was a win-win. From a pragmatic standpoint, these were new nations for the Soviet Union to interact/ally with and influence, giving it a stronger position on the world stage and in organizations like the UN. Ideologically, the USSR was already inclined to support these nationalist movements. This

[2] Yevgeny Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2009), 8
[3] Primakov, 57

became even easier with the Arab turn to socialism, an economic movement more in line with Soviet communism as opposed to Western capitalism.

The Soviet Union's engagement with the Middle East began in earnest in the mid-1950s after Stalin died and Khrushchev took power. Stalin was arguably more focused on the late 1940s and early 1950s with rebuilding the Soviet Union after the devastation of World War II. He also wanted to consolidate Soviet control over eastern Europe and the satellite states. The national liberation movements still needed time to reach their full power and assume control of their countries. Once they did, the Soviet Union began to explore the possibilities of expanding ties with the Arab world.

Three Arab states would provide openings for Soviet diplomatic efforts in the region: Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. In 1955, Soviet foreign minister Dimitry Shepilov traveled to Cairo for the anniversary of Nasser's revolution. Shepilov clearly favored more Soviet-Egyptian engagement as during the anniversary celebrations, "he keenly joined the applause of the audience and before long was applauding virtually every passage in Nasser's speech."[4] Meanwhile, the Soviet Union welcomed the 1958 Iraqi revolution and overthrow of the monarchy as it weakened the pro-western Baghdad Pact and gave the Soviet Union yet another ideologically similar partner to engage with. While the Soviet Union developed its ties with Nasser's Egypt and the Arab republican regimes of Iraq throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, it soon found a breakthrough with Syria in the mid-1960s as "it had become clear that the forces now in power there were willing to develop close relations with the Soviet Union."[5] Egypt, Iraq, and Syria all seemed to be solidly Arab nationalist and socialist. These ideologies

[4] Primakov, 64
[5] Primakov, 72

had stabilized among the countries' ruling regimes, enabling them and the Soviet Union to draw closer together.

Chapter one focuses on the year 1967 to provide context for the developments of 1968-1972. In particular, it assesses the impact of the Six Day War. The defeat of the Soviet-trained and armed militaries of Syria and Egypt during the war led those countries to begin the process of searching for alternative allies and patrons. Iraq, as another Soviet-armed participant on the losing side of the Six Day War, shared in this disenchantment with the USSR. The Israeli Air Force (IAF) was able to completely wipe out Iraq's in the first 12 hours of the conflict and "IAF raids against the Iraqi 8th motorized brigade so paralyzed the unit that it never even made it to Amman."[6] It also contributed to the successful 1968 Iraqi Ba'athist coup against the ruling Arif brothers regime. The Ba'athists were known to be frostier to Communists and the Soviet Union based on their positions during their brief coup in 1963.

Chapter two analyzes the main period of 1968-1972. It looks at the aftermath of the Ba'athist coup, relations between the Ba'athists, Kurds, and Iraqi Communists, and the back-and-forth of alliance politics between the Soviet Union and Iraq. As the Ba'athist government consolidated power from 1968-1969, the Soviet Union attempted to have a say in what Iraq's new governance should look like. It hoped to have a national front government of Ba'athists, Kurds, and Iraqi Communists in order to prevent total Ba'ath domination of Iraq. By 1970, with the Ba'ath government in a more stable position, the Soviet Union began to more directly attempt to exert influence over Iraqi actions. With Britain's 1968 declaration that it would be withdrawing troops from the Persian Gulf—a task completed in 1971—there was a "perception

[6] Kenneth M. Pollack, "Air Power in the Six-Day War," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 3 (2005): 486

and reality of a power vacuum in the Gulf which the shah of Iran and Iraq's Ba'ath rulers were eager to fill."[7] The Soviet Union believed this would lead Iraq to continue its dependence on the USSR despite the Ba'athist regime's newfound stability. Instead, it led Iraq to begin the process of seeking out new diplomatic relations and the 1972 Soviet-Iraqi Treaty of Friendship was a last-ditch effort to keep Iraq tethered to the Soviet Union.

Chapter three serves as an afterwards, looking at the period from 1972 to 1975. In this period, Iraqi efforts to distance itself from the Soviet Union began coming to fruition. France emerged as a major arms supplier for Iraq. The opening up of western markets to Iraqi oil set the stage for more permanent economic and diplomatic relationships between Iraq and western powers, as "a series of bilateral deals…ensured that nationalized Iraqi oil had a broad backing and diverse markets."[8] Joining powerful oil organizations like OPEC and OAPEC, as well as the role of the 1973 oil embargo price shocks, gave Iraq even more leverage when it came to using its oil as a diplomatic tool. Iraq now had multiple sources from which to receive military and economic support, not just the Soviet Union. The 1975 Algiers Agreement between Iraq and its neighboring enemy Iran finalized the Iraqi drift from the Soviet Union.

The Cold War era was one of more internationalization and interdependent events. However, this thesis mainly seeks to explain the specific interactions between two countries during this time period: Iraq and the Soviet Union. The thesis will place these relations in the necessary context of the wider Middle East during this period. As a superpower, the Soviet Union often had general strategy for diplomacy in each key region of the world. Changing

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[7] Shaul Bakhash, "Iran and Iraq, 1930-80" in *Iran, Iraq, and the Legacies of War*, eds. Lawrence G. Potter and Gary G. Sick (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 12

[8] Christopher RW Dietrich, "Arab Oil Belongs to the Arabs: Raw Material Sovereignty, Cold War Boundaries, and the Nationalisation of the Iraq Petroleum Company, 1967-1973," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 22, no. 3 (2011): 471

dynamics in the Middle East such as Egypt's drift towards the West could force Soviet policy to adapt by increasing ties with Iraq. Thus, the specific Soviet-Iraqi relationship can be compared against bigger trends of the Soviet-Middle East interactions. Yevgeny Primakov was a premier Arabist at the USSR Academy of Sciences' Institute of World Economy and International Relations from 1970-1977, later getting involved in Russian politics in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In his writings on Russian-Arab relations, he notes that understanding the rise of Saddam Hussein "is key to any analysis of the situation in the Middle East in the final thirty years of the twentieth century."[9] Iraq played an important role in Soviet understanding of Arab and Middle Eastern politics. Soviet researchers such as Primakov understood the importance of approaching Soviet policy toward the Middle East in a general manner, recognizing how the events in one country could be tied to the situation in another.

This thesis draws on a wide variety of secondary sources from different perspectives and eras. Two monographs in particular focus directly on Soviet-Iraqi relations for the period in question. The first is *The USSR and Iraq: The Soviet Quest for Influence* by Oles and Bettie Smolansky. The Smolanskys describe the Iraqi-Soviet alliance through the concept of influence relationships, where "nations have sought to influence the policies and actions of other states in a variety of different ways."[10] In the context of Iraq and the Soviet Union, they argue it was back-and-forth influence relationship, where each side attempted to influence the other and to varying degrees of success. The book dovetails well with the thesis as both are historical case studies of a broader pattern of international relations and "chapter 1 integrates much of the available… 'measures of influence' for the period from 1958, when the modern era of Soviet-Iraqi relations

[9] Primakov, 301
[10] Oles M. Smolansky and Bettie M. Smolansky, *The USSR and Iraq: The Soviet Quest for Influence* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 1

begins, until 1980."[11] In addition to the book's summary of Iraqi-Soviet ties through this international relations scope, the authors also plays close attention to details important to Iraq and its interactions with the Soviet Union such as the Kurdish Question, Iraq's oil and groups such as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), its geographic position, and the role of the Iraqi Communist Party.

The other main monograph is Haim Shemesh's *Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988: In the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict*. An expansion of Shemesh's original thesis, the book argues that Iraqi-Soviet ties should be seen through the lens of Iraq's regional rivalry with Iran from the Ba'th Party's second (and final) seizure of power to the end of the Iran-Iraq War. The author's main argument is that "the intensity of Iraq's efforts to promote relations with the Soviets was related to the degree of severity of its disputes with the Kurds and Iran."[12] The book is notable for demonstrating the crucial role Soviet military aid played in relations with Iraq. Shemesh also shows another unique factor affecting the Iraqi-Soviet friendship: the importance of other regional powers. Iran was Iraq's main rival for Persian Gulf supremacy, and it had the support of the United States up until the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Iran's alliance with the United States was long and well-established, dating back to "Stalin's refusal to withdraw the Red Army from Iranian Azerbaijan in 1946."[13] The Iranians thus saw the United States as a power that could protect it from Soviet imperialism and interference. In this Cold War context of power-competition, it made sense for the Soviet Union to ally with a nation already competing against the US alliance.

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[11] Smolansky and Smolansky, 9

[12] Haim Shemesh, *Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1988: In the Shadow of the Iraq-Iran Conflict* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992), 46

[13] Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 10

Both these studies are useful in showing that the Iraqi-Soviet alliance was more complicated than the common misperception of the strong, great power USSR exerting unlimited influence over the weaker, local power Iraq. Indeed, Shemesh discusses how Iraq "defied Soviet interests and pursued its own goal of finding a comprehensive settlement to its dispute with Iran."[14] Both studies also provide useful and detailed analysis of the elements unique to Iraqi-Soviet interactions, namely the Kurds, Iraqi Communists, oil, and Iran/the Persian Gulf.

However, neither monograph truly focuses on Soviet weakness, especially during the 1968-1972 period. Shemesh overemphasizes the Soviet Union's power with his statement that the USSR "occupied the central place in Iraq's foreign ties," and that Iraq was "secondary in Soviet policy."[15] He runs the risk of falling into the misperception that the great power Soviet Union exerted total control over local power Iraq's actions. Other scholars such as John Turner realize how much influence the local power states can have on their great power patrons. In his assessment of current trends in the Middle East, he argues that "the clients themselves have become very adept at appealing to the fears and interests of their supposed benefactors."[16] It also contradicts with Shemesh's other ideas, such as the increasing role Iraq played in Soviet Middle East policy with the drift of Egypt under Sadat or his statement on the following page that Iraq had "a weighty place in Soviet policy."[17]

The Smolanskys are closer with their belief that Soviet-Iraqi ties were "a very complex, bi-directional relationship,"[18] However, they too fail to recognize sources of Soviet weakness in

[14] Shemesh, 137
[15] Shemesh, ix
[16] John Turner, "Great Powers as Client States in a Middle East Cold War," *Middle East Policy* 19, no. 3 (2012):124
[17] Shemesh, x
[18] Smolansky and Smolansky, 1

1968, such as the aftermath of the poor performance of Soviet-armed and trained Arab militaries (including Iraq) during the Six Day War. Scholars such as Fred Wehling highlight other factors such as the contradictory interests that Soviet leaders faced when dealing with crises such as the Six Day War. On a foreign policy level, "the objective of maintaining relations with and influence over Egypt and Syria began to clash with the need to avoid a Soviet-American confrontation."[19] The Soviet Union wanted to support its Arab allies and Arab victories in war would strengthen the standing of the USSR and its allies in the Middle East. However, too much support for the Arabs could open up the possibility of American intervention, an end to détente, and conflict with the United States. Soviet diplomacy was thus an impossible balancing act and it had to prioritize growing its influence in the Middle East or maintaining its general standing from US attack.

The argument emphasizes the significance of political decisions and political leaders in building diplomatic relationships. The actions of relevant leaders and government structures are most crucial when determining how and why the international relations were carried out the way they were. At the end of the day, it was the leaders and governments who decided what actions to take, what treaties to sign, and how to interact with other critical groups. This paper is thus primarily a diplomatic history. However, as economic and military issues often link with foreign affairs, these elements will also be studied and assessed. Domestic politics and situations can also impact what kind of foreign policy stances a government can take. For example, Iraq has a significant Kurdish minority population. It also had a well-organized and strong communist

[19] Fred Wehling, *Irresolute Princes: Kremlin Decision Making in Middle East Crises, 1967-1973* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 44

party.[20] Both these groups impacted the domestic stability of the Ba'ath regime and thus, how it interacted with the Soviet Union.

To understand diplomatic politics at the time, the thesis draws on a variety of primary sources. These include governmental memos and communications, research reports, news publications, and intelligence agency assessments. American documents in particular are especially critical in constructing the argument. As the superpower competing with the Soviet Union during this period, the USA had great interest in learning about Soviet interests and strategies. American documents are in English, often digitized, and easily accessible. It also provides an outsider's more objective viewpoint into how the Soviet-Iraqi alliance was functioning. For example, the CIA Electronic Reading Room contains a variety of intelligence reports from the Cold War and other relevant declassified documents and assessments.

The Wilson Center's Cold War International History Project's documents are also critical in shedding light on how and why these actions were taken. The archive is completely digitized and ever-expanding, with documents from all over the world relating to the formation and implementation of Cold War policy. Crucially, many of these documents are translated from their original languages. This means Russian and Arabic sources that otherwise would be difficult to access now have a role in the thesis, providing the Iraqi and Soviet viewpoints respectively on events important to the partnership. Some of these sources are also helpful for detailing Iraqi involvement with Warsaw Pact countries, demonstrating Iraqi attempts to foster alliances with the Soviet bloc as opposed to just the Soviet Union.

[20] Tareq Y. Ismael, and Andrej Kreutz, "Russian-Iraqi Relations: A Historical and Political Analysis," *Arab studies quarterly* (2001): 87

Translated memoirs from diplomats are also crucial to the thesis, giving a behind-the-scenes look at how these foreign policy decisions were made. Primakov's *Russia and the Arabs* offers a unique perspective on Soviet relations with Iraq and the Middle East. Primakov lived through the events and, as an academic, had an unparalleled opportunity to analyze the developments as they happened. However, Primakov was not a diplomat or politician during the Cold War, so he was not privy to the actual decision-making process of the Soviet Union's foreign ministry. In addition, while Primakov lived through the events, his account is not a primary source, but rather a memoir reflecting back on his time as a Soviet Arabist.

Victor Israelyan's *Inside the Kremlin During the Yom Kippur War* once again offers the Soviet perspective on relations towards the Middle East from someone who lived through the events. Unlike Primakov, Israelyan can provide an insider's look at Soviet foreign policy decisions, as he served in the foreign ministry from 1944 to 1980. During the Yom Kippur War, Israelyan was a senior ambassador, so he not only studied Soviet foreign policy actions, he played a role in shaping them. The major problem with Israelyan's book is its limit in scope: it only deals with Soviet foreign policy during the Yom Kippur War and fails to provide information on context or other important events happening in the wider Middle East region that may have played a role.

For the Iraqi perspective, Mohammed Fadhel Jamali's *Inside the Arab Nationalist Struggle* is a useful source. Jamali served as Iraq's Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1943 to 1958. Jamali's writings are critical in understanding the history of modern Iraqi foreign policy and how Iraqi foreign policy was decided and executed at a structural level. In particular, Jamali writes about Iraq's ever-important relations with other Arab states as Arab nationalism (an

ideology key to the Iraqi Ba'athists) was ascendant. Unfortunately, Jamali was not Iraqi foreign minister in the Ba'athist era so he cannot give a necessary inside look at the foreign policy of Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi government in the late 1960s/early 1970s. His writings do not detail (early) Iraqi relations with the Soviet Union, so even context-wise, the book is certainly limited.

This thesis can have an important impact for a few reasons. First, it gives a new lens through which to understand the current situation of the Middle East. Second, it acts as a case study for the international relations between powerful nations and their smaller allies in different regions. Third, it tells an interesting and unique story about the Middle East and the Cold War competitions. Finally, this thesis hopes to upend stereotypes. Countries like the United States and Russia, contrary to popular belief, often do not possess the ability to compel weaker nations, particularly in situations with competing great powers. Instead, these nations have been pragmatic in achieving their goals and forcing the superpowers to make concessions. Rather than be tied down in entangling alliances with great powers, nations like Iraq prefer a non-aligned status where they can reap the benefits of having multiple diplomatic partners.

Chapter 1: The Impact of 1967

Overview and Structure

Before assessing Soviet-Iraqi relations in the years 1968 to 1972, it is important to provide context. In June 1967, war broke out between Israel on one side and Iraq, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt on the other. At first glance, it appeared that this coalition of Arab states should have easily defeated Israel. Geographically, these countries had Israel surrounded. Numerically, they had the larger population and combined military strength. Most importantly, Primakov highlights how "they [the Arab states] had been equipped with state-of-the-art Soviet weaponry and, in the case of the Egyptian and Syrian armies, they had Soviet military advisors at their disposal."[21] Yet Israel had beaten these Arab armies before, during its 1948 War of Independence and again during the Suez Crisis with Egypt in 1956. In 1967, with this military prowess and the element of surprise on its side, Israel swiftly defeated the Arabs in a Six Day War.

Syria and Egypt, the Soviet Union's most important Middle Eastern allies, lost territory to Israel. More importantly, both countries suffered severe military losses and economic damage from consequences like the closing of the Suez Canal. These two countries began a long, complicated process of drifting away from the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the shattering defeat of the Six Day War. However, Fred Wehling notes how "the Politburo reacted to events rather than follow an opportunistic master plan."[22] Thus, in response to the Syrian-Egyptian drift, the Soviet Union began to focus more on Iraq, a Middle Eastern country once considered of secondary importance to the Soviets. Iraq would provide one last site for the USSR to maintain its influence in the Middle East as Syria and Egypt began to drift further from the Soviet Union.

[21] Primakov, 101
[22] Wehling, 163

Iraq also had reason to increase its engagement with the USSR. Iraq was rather isolated and needed Soviet assistance to further develop its military, economy, and diplomatic network. In particular, the Iraqi Kurds continued to be a thorn in the side of the government as they pressed for autonomy. The Arif regime had "initially persevered in efforts to subdue the Kurds but proved no more successful than its predecessors. A truce was signed in February 1964, only to be broken in April 1965 when the Iraqi army resumed the offensive. It, too, ended in failure."[23] The USSR could be the solution to Iraq's Kurdish problem. The Soviet Union had advanced weapons and military advisors. With their help, perhaps the Iraqi government would finally be able to bring the Kurdish territories in line and shore up their domestic position.

However, Iraq was simultaneously wary of Soviet overtures for the same reasons it needed alliance with the Soviet Union. Iraqi officials correctly believed the USSR would take advantage of Iraq's geopolitical situation to transform the country from a Middle Eastern ally to a Middle Eastern satellite. Like Syria and Egypt, Iraq had also lost the Six Day War despite having access to modern Soviet equipment and training, furthering their doubt as to the value of alliance with the USSR. This would set the pattern for Iraqi-Soviet interactions in the peak period of 1968-1972. The USSR would attempt to exert influence over the Iraqi government in an effort to transform it into a subservient ally. The Somlanskys argue that "given Soviet aspirations to become a leading actor in Gulf affairs, it has had more than a passing interest in Iraq's attempts to assume a central place in the regional network."[24] The Soviet Union would use Iraq as its tool to exert hegemony in the Gulf region and secure its standing as a superpower. Iraq recognized Soviet efforts to turn it into a puppet, and the country began seeking out new foreign

[23] Smolansky and Smolansky, 64
[24] Smonlansky and Smolansky, 10

partners while maintaining the material benefits of ties with the Soviets (military support, development of the oil infrastructure, etc.).

This chapter will start by examining Iraq's domestic political situation in the lead-up to the Six Day War with a focus on its governance and foreign policy. This includes a discussion of issues pertaining to the Iraqi Kurds and Iran when applicable. Next, the chapter will analyze immediate and important effects of the Six Day War, describing how it altered Soviet and Iraqi foreign policy respectively. The chapter ends by looking at Egypt & Syria's drift from the USSR and post-war Soviet-Iraqi interactions, culminating with the Ba'athist coup in 1968. Ultimately, this chapter serves to explain how the Six Day War led (and forced) the Soviet Union and Iraq to increase their engagement with each other.

Iraq's Government in the mid-1960s

Iraqi governance from 1958 to 1968 was very unstable. There were four separate coups during this decade: General Abd al-Karim Quasim's overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy in 1958, the Ba'athist coup of 1963, a military coup that same year, and the second Ba'athist coup in 1968. In the lead-up to the Six Day War, Iraq was under the leadership of the Abdul Salam Arif and his brother Abdul Rahman Arif, two senior officers in the Iraqi military. One of their chief goals was to quash Mustafa Barzani's Kurdish rebels who restarted their revolt against the Iraqi state in 1963. The regime organized paramilitary forces to launch a series of campaigns against these Kurd fighters. In addition, they attempted to increase the representation of their fellow military officers in the government. Phebe Ann Marr notes that "by the end of the regime of the Arif brothers in 1968, military men, or retired military men, held a third of all cabinet seats and,

at the upper levels, two-thirds."[25] The government was therefore military-centric and wanted a strong, modern Iraqi army. As a result, Iraq would want to engage more with the Soviet Union in order to get their newest equipment and training. From an ideological standpoint, it made sense for the Soviet Union to arm Iraq as "the foreign policy orientation shared by the Soviet Union and Egypt, Syria, and Iraq is 'an opposition to imperialism.'"[26] The Soviet Union also identified with Iraq on a power-dynamic level. Iraq was a revisionist power seeking to challenge Iranian standing in the Persian Gulf, just as the Soviet Union was contesting the United States for global hegemony.

In regard to domestic economic development, a series of "policies were introduced by Abd al-Salam Arif to introduce a thoroughgoing form of state-directed development… [in] 1964, a presidential decree nationalized a number of banks, industries, and insurance companies."[27] These socialist measures were critical to Iraqi hopes of shaking off any remaining vestiges of colonialism. It would ensure more money and profits would go to the Iraqi government, in theory allowing for more to be spent on modernizing the country. This could bring Iraq up to speed with the rest of the world and make it a beacon of progress for other Arab states. Another sign of Iraq's socialist direction in policy was the declining influence of businessmen and landowners in government. From a numerical standpoint, "under the old regime, they held 11 per cent of all posts and 16 per cent of the top posts. On both levels they are now reduced to one per cent."[28]

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[25] Phebe Ann Marr, "Iraq's Leadership Dilemma: A Study in Leadership Trends, 1948-1968," *Middle East Journal* 24, no. 3 (1970): 295

[26] David Kinsella, "Conflict in Context: Arms Transfers and Third World Rivalries During the Cold War," *American Journal of Political Science* 38, no. 3 (1994): 561

[27] Khalil Osman, *The Hissing Sectarian Snake: Sectarianism and the Making of State and Nation in Modern Iraq* (2012), 138

[28] Marr, 295

Ideologically, this shift brought Iraq and the Soviet Union closer together, opening the door for a new era in their relationship.

Iraqi Foreign Policy in the Arif Era

The Arif regime reversed the anti-Communist, anti-Kurdish stance of the 1963 Ba'athist coup. This paved the way for Iraq to thaw its ties with the Soviet Union, damaged by the events of 1963. For example, scholars Tareq Ismael and Andrej Kreutz noted how "The visit by Iraqi Prime Minister Abd-al-Rahman al-Bazzaz to Moscow in July-August 1966 was a 'milestone in the process of improving Soviet-Iraqi relations.'"[29] The Iraqi military leadership clearly recognized the benefits of having a superpower patron like the Soviet Union. Such a partnership would allow Iraq to continue its process of development (economically, militarily, etc.), destroy any lingering effects from British colonialism, and truly become a strong and autonomous player in the nation-state order. In fact, from as early as the 1950s, Iraq sought ways to achieve this full sovereignty. Mohammed Fadhel Jamali, an Iraqi foreign minister during the final years of the monarchy, wrote how Iraq had joined the Baghdad Pact in order "to terminate the 1930 Treaty with Britain, which gave Britain a special position in relation to Iraq not compatible with Iraq's full sovereignty."[30] Iraqi policymakers, regardless of their affiliation, had learned early that multiple diplomatic partners was essential in achieving full sovereignty and a respectably powerful position on the regional and world stage.

The Arif Brothers wanted to keep their options open when it came to securing great power patrons. Playing off Cold War rivalries for influence in regions around the world

[29] Ismael and Kreutz, 89
[30] Mohammed Fadhel Jamali, *Inside the Arab Nationalist Struggle* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 263

(including the Middle East), the pre-Six Day War Iraqi government also made efforts to attract American attention. In 1964, one of President Johnson's Assistant Secretaries of State, Philips Talbot, visited Baghdad to get a sense of the new Arif Brothers regime. He concluded that "ranking officials from Washington are welcome and will be treated with courtesy…the GOI [Government of Iraq] is a moderate regime and does not wish to let the Palestine issue destroy mutually advantageous relations with the US."[31] The new regime wanted a fresh start with the United States and was even willing to overlook disagreements such as the Israel-Palestine issue in order to secure American assistance.

The United States was also interested in improving relations with Iraq. American officials saw the Arif regime as a potential Middle East partner; it was more moderate than Arab nationalist governments like Nasser's in Egypt. Although Iraq's rulers were more socialist and nationalist, they were anti-Communist. The USA thus met Iraq's increased focus on the relationship, competing with the Soviets for this potential regional ally. The issue over Kurdish rights and demands gave US officials a weapon with which to attack Soviet influence in Iraq; in they pointed out to Iraqi leaders how the "USSR keeps stirring up Kurdish aspirations and so-called clandestine broadcasts hostile to GOI [Government of Iraq] from Eastern Europe."[32] American leaders attempted to make a connection between Soviet goals to establish influence in the Middle East with Soviet efforts to destabilize the Iraqi government using the Kurdish issue as a proxy. However, the Iraqis continued to pursue a policy of non-alignment: pursue diplomatic connections with as many partners as possible that could help Iraqi development and interests. At

[31] National Archives and Records Administration, Airgram (A-786) From the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State, 334 (Dated March 24, 1964)

[32] National Archives and Records Administration, Telegram From the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State, 364 (Dated August 19, 1964)

the same time, Iraq avoided being forced into a bloc or becoming a satellite. Instead, it continued "policies of nationalizing key industrial and manufacturing enterprises and expanding relations with the non-aligned movement."[33] This put Iraq on par with other Third World nations and provided an opening for it to find diplomatic support and solidarity from other non-aligneds if needed.

Throughout the Arif brothers' regime, this approach worked for Iraq. Its various diplomatic partners provided Iraq with certain benefits crucial to nation-building. The Soviet Union was a key supplier of military equipment and training. Western powers like the United States provided their expertise in infrastructure and development projects. Relations with the United Arab Republic consolidated Iraqi position as a regional Arab socialist power and ensured a united response against enemies such as Israel. The Six Day War upset this delicate balance.

Iraq and the Six Day War

The crisis that would culminate in the Six Day War began in May 1967, when Egypt announced it would close the Straits of Tiran. Israel—which had withdrawn from the Sinai Peninsula in 1957 on the condition that the Straits be treated as international waters—saw this as a hostile action and prepared for war. The United States convinced Israel to hold off on a military strike in the hopes that a peaceful solution could be found. For its part, Iraq sided with their Arab nationalist Egyptian allies against their common Israeli enemy. Iraqi foreign minister Pachachi argued to US officials that "Egypt's move was not an offensive act. He questioned whether desire to secure freedom of passage through Tiran Strait was based on legal principles because

[33] Hafizullah Emadi, "China and Iraq: Patterns of Interaction, 1960-1992," *Economic and Political Weekly* 29, no. 53 (1994): 3316

maritime nations had been silent on issue prior to 1956."[34] The regional crisis was forcing Iraq to choose between Egypt and the United States.

The United States was tied down with the Vietnam War and did not want to jeopardize relations with Arab states. However, it secretly backed the Israeli military operation as "U.S. military planners became increasingly convinced that an Israeli campaign could end the [Straits of Tiran] crisis effectively."[35] The USA and Israel both supported freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and Straits of Tiran and the USA wanted to wrap up the crisis quickly without having to spend too much attention or resources. From meetings with senior American officials (including President Johnson), the Israelis got the sense that the US would not necessarily oppose an Israeli pre-emptive strike on the Egyptians.[36]

For its part, Egypt was pursuing a policy of brinksmanship, bolstered by Arab solidarity, which threatened to devolve into war. Egypt likely felt it could win such a war if it was willing to pursue such forceful tactics, but the US officials in their conversation with Pachachi said they (and the UK) felt Israel would easily win such a war. The Soviet Union was also fearful about the consequences of a war. They viewed the rising tensions through the lens of competition with the USA for influence in the region, as well as the potential of direct USA-USSR conflict. Soviet decisionmakers recognized that the "'balance of interests' as well as the balance of conventional forces in the region did not favor the USSR."[37] The Soviet Union would thus not be able to give full aid and support to its Arab allies. When the crisis finally did escalate into war, the Iraqi

[34] National Archives and Records Administration, Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Iraq, 379 (Dated June 2, 1967)
[35] Warren Bass, "The Six Day War, 1967," in *A Surprise Out of Zion?: Case Studies in Israel's Decisions on Whether to Alert the United States to Preemptive and Preventive Strikes, from Suez to the Syrian Nuclear Reactor*, (RAND Corporation, 2015), 18
[36] Bass, 19
[37] Wehling, 44

government sided with Egypt, a decision that would have profound effects on Iraqi foreign policy for years to come.

Israel made the first move, hoping to gain the advantage of surprise that comes with a pre-emptive strike. Egypt was Israel's main opponent, as it was Nasser who closed the Straits of Tiran, but Israel faced the risk of other Arab countries joining with Egypt. This combined, hypothetical Arab force had a larger combined military strength, and Israel thus needed every advantage possible. On June 5th, the Israeli Air Force targeted the Egyptian Air Force while it was still on the ground. Mordechai Bar-On, a biographer of Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, notes how the "surprise had been complete. The IAF destroyed 204 Egyptian planes within the first thirty minutes of the attack."[38] Other Arab nations, including Iraq, were not spared from this devastation. Ken Pollack discusses how "at the end of the [first] day, Israeli planes flew 500 miles across the Syrian desert and attacked Iraq's H-3 airbase…destroying 31 Iraqi planes on the ground and in the air."[39] Following up on the success of this air attack. Israeli armored units began rolling into the Sinai Peninsula. With this crucial air supremacy secured, momentum was on Israel's side. It seemed the Anglo-American prediction given to the Iraqi foreign minister of a crushing Israeli military victory was correct.

While the United States subtly backed Israel, the Soviet Union supported Egypt and Syria, two of Israel's main foes in the Six Day War. In the immediate lead-up to the war, the Soviet Union recognized its precarious position. Soviet leaders tried take a balancing act of supporting Arab allies and ensuring they were prepared for conflict, but also pushing for a

[38] Mordechai Bar-On, "The Six Day War," in *Moshe Dayan: Israel's Controversial Hero* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 130
[39] Pollack, 474-5

peaceful resolution to the crisis. On May 26, 1967, Egyptian Minister of War Shams Badran met with Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin. Badran requested that the USSR airlift a massive number of weapons to Egypt immediately in order to assist with Egyptian brinksmanship and war preparation. After a long discussion, Kosygin only agreed to airlift some supplies and others would come later if needed.[40] Kosygin's middle-ground approach regarding the Egyptian weapons reflected the wider Soviet policy of balancing out its interests in the hope it emerged unscathed. Once the Six Day War broke out, it was clear that the center could not hold.

By the end of the first day, it was clear the conflict would be a disaster for the USSR, given the destruction of the Egyptian Air Force. Scholar Golia Golan describes how "Soviet leaders worried that continued conflict would only make matters worse, threatening the very existence of the pro-Soviet regimes in Egypt and Syria."[41] Continued losses for the Arab states would increase pressure on the Soviet Union to intervene in some way on behalf of its allies. In addition, the defeat of these Arab armies, trained and armed with the most up-to-date Soviet support, would be a symbolic and diplomatic humiliation for the USSR. Meanwhile, if the Arab states somehow turned the tide of the war, the USSR would have to deal with the threat of American intervention in the conflict. The Six Day War thus had the strong potential to permanently alter relations between the Soviet Union and the Middle East.

The other Arab countries bordering Israel—Jordan and Syria—were able to quickly come to Egypt's aid after the Israelis attacked. Iraq did not border Israel and therefore would not be able to contribute as many resources to the Arab alliance during the Six Day War, although it did

[40] Protocol of the Meetings Between Egyptian Minister of War, Shams Badran, and Soviet Premier, Alexei Kosygin, on the 25 and 26 of May 1967

[41] Galia Golan, "The Soviet Union and the Outbreak of the June 1967 Six-Day War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8, no. 1 (2006): 10

send what it could in the form of some troops and tanks. In addition, Iraqi military forces had to focus more on potential enemies closer to home: the Kurds in northern Iraq could always continue revolting and tensions remained high with Iran, the US-backed power competing with Iraq for hegemony in the Persian Gulf. Nonetheless, as the Straits of Tiran crisis was unfolding and Arab countries prepared themselves for conflict, Jordan's "King Hussein…allowed Iraqi troops to deploy in Jordan."[42] The Iraqi government now had the chance to give actionable backing to its anti-Israel and pro-Egypt rhetoric.

Iraqi participation in the Six Day War ended up being a more symbolic gesture than a true contribution. However, in the aftermath of the Israeli pre-emptive air strike on Egypt, "Israel then expanded the range of its attack and decimated the air forces of Jordan, Syria, and Iraq."[43] By associating with the Arab nations coalescing around Egypt and against Israel, Iraq opened itself up to Israeli attack and military damages during the Six Day War. In conjunction with the Jordanians (who, as mentioned earlier, allowed Iraqi units to station in the country), Iraq responded by launching airstrikes against the major Israeli cities of Haifa and Tel Aviv. Iraq could thus say it was fighting Israel in solidarity with Arab allies, but Egypt, Syria, and Jordan bore the brunt of the fighting against Israel (as well as the territory lost post-war).

Iraq's most important action of the Six-Day War was not a military one and it was not against Israel. Rather, it was a diplomatic move aimed at the western powers which Iraq had been improving relations with since the start of the Arif Brothers regime. In the middle of the Six Day War, as Israel made sweeping gains against the Egyptians and Jordanians, US Ambassador to Iraq Enoch Duncan noted in a telegram from the US Embassy in Iraq to the State Department

[42] Bar-On, 127
[43] History Channel, "Six-Day War" (A&E Television Networks: May 11, 2018)

that "Fon Min Under Sec Nuri Jamil called me in 0120 a.m. local time June 7 inform me Iraq has broken diplomatic relations with United States and Great Britain for alleged air and other aid to Israel."[44] This was an about-face from previous Iraqi pledges to the USA that disagreements over Israel would not affect the budding relationship. The Iraqi government thought the war would give it potential for rapid escalation of relations with the Soviet Union and the wider Arab world. It made sense that Iraq would ditch growing ties with one superpower if it meant the opportunity for quick, strong ties with another superpower and regional states. Overnight, Iraq cut itself off from the goods, services, and financial resources that diplomatic ties to the West had brought.

While the decision was rather pragmatic, it destroyed Iraq's stated foreign policy goal of non-alignment as Iraq's main ties now were with the Arab socialist states and the Soviet Union; Iraq would now be associated with the Soviet bloc and Soviet allies in the Middle East. Meanwhile, the United States, no longer having any reason to try and bring Iraq on as an ally, could shift its diplomatic resources and focus towards strengthening established alliances in the Middle East. This included relations with countries such as Israel and Iran, two of Iraq's main enemies in its quest for regional power. Iraq had cut off a key avenue out of diplomatic isolation.

Without needing to compete against the USA for Iraqi support, the Soviet Union would no longer feel a need to prioritize Iraqi desires in the name of alliance. The USSR could exert more pressure and influence over Iraqi actions. It was only after the Six Day War ended that the Iraqi government realized it made a long-term mistake by ending ties with the West, and not just due to the threat of Soviet influence efforts. The United States and Western nations felt they could restart or expand their operations to undermine the Iraqi government and bring about a

[44] National Archives and Records Administration, Telegram from the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State (Dated June 6, 1967)

friendlier regime. When Iraq's General Director of Security al-Ani met with the East Germans, he noted that "the United States, West Germany, Israel, and other imperialist and reactionary states have launched active diversionary activities against the new Iraqi regime. A large number of agents of Iraqi nationality was successfully arrested, but there exists a lack of experience, trained cadres and technological means to infiltrate imperialist centers."[45] In order to counter this Western espionage, Iraq had no choice but to turn to the Soviet Union and its allies. This only served to provide the Eastern bloc more ways to exert its influence and presence within Iraq.

The Six Day War would prove to be a resounding success for Israel. It shattered Egyptian forces, and later those of Jordan and Syria when they decided to intervene on Egypt's behalf. When the war ended, all three Arab states lost territory to Israel as "new cease-fire lines established Israeli control over all of Mandatory Palestine together with the conquest of Syria's Golan Heights and Egypt's Sinai, thereby more than quadrupling the territory under Israeli control."[46] Nasser's gamble in blockading the Straits of Tiran had backfired; rather than achieving a diplomatic victory over Israel, Egypt suffered a humiliating military and post-war diplomatic defeat. The Arab nations who joined in the Egyptian crusade also faced severe, negative repercussions. In Iraq's case, it was more Soviet meddling in the country's affairs and its military failures during the Six Day War could only serve to embolden domestic opponents such as the Kurds.

[45] Report About a Meeting With the General Director of the Iraqi Directorate for Security, Lieutenant General al-Ani (Dated September 18, 1969)
[46] Roland Popp, "Stumbling Decidedly into the Six-Day War," *Middle East Journal* 60, no. 2 (2006): 281

Meanwhile, with Israeli power in the region confirmed, "the hitherto informal alliance between the United States and Israel evolved into a 'special relationship.'"[47] In the international sphere, if the conflict was seen as a Cold War proxy conflict between the USA and USSR, the USA clearly emerged the victor. Countries around the world, including newly decolonized states considering which superpower to align with, watched as tiny Israel crushed Syria and Egypt in a lopsided, one-week conflict. Syria and Egypt were known Soviet allies, with militaries that had the latest Soviet equipment and training. This Soviet assistance prior to the war proved unhelpful and countries would clearly begin to wonder if Soviet military supply and doctrine were useful to have. Primakov discusses how "we in Moscow encouraged the Arab countries to opt for a socialist alternative, but it did not exist. The rallying cries of Arab socialism were losing their appeal, even as the noncapitalist model state that had been cobbled together since colonial days was starting to fall apart at the seams."[48] From an ideological standpoint, the Soviet Union was losing ground in Third World regions such as the Arab world. Defeat in the Six Day War only reinforced that and led Third World nations to seek out ties with the US. Primakov notes how the US seized on the results of the Six Day War and began using its economic strength to encourage states disenchanted with the USSR to seek out partnership with America instead.[49]

In addition, as the Six Day War raged and it was clear that Israel was winning, Syria and Egypt wanted their superpower Soviet patron to intervene, at least by resupplying their depleted militaries. Ultimately, "the Soviets even refused to supply their Arab allies with desperately needed weaponry and armaments,"[50] mainly out of fear of becoming directly involved in the war

[47] Popp, 281
[48] Primakov, 123
[49] Primakov, 129
[50] Popp, 290

and risking a confrontation with the US. Not only was Soviet equipment and training useless, but the Soviet Union was a bad ally, unwilling to come to the aid of its regional partners in their time of needed.

The USSR also appeared scared of its US rival superpower since one of its main rationales for not helping Syria and Egypt was the threat of American intervention. As stated earlier, Wehling demonstrated that the balance of interests and conventional forces in the region clearly favored the United States. Ultimately, this led many countries to conclude they would be better off building a relationship with the United States, and at the very least not pursuing alliance with the Soviets. Egypt and Syria soon became two countries that began thinking this way and the USSR's two main allies in the Middle East began to drift from the Soviet bloc post-Six Day War. Primakov believed that "thanks mainly to Kissinger, the United States started Egypt down the road to drawing up its separate peace agreement with Israel."[51] This process could not have happened without the Soviet-Arab failure in the Six Day War, the result of which clearly encouraged different thinking among Egypt's leaders.

Egypt and Syria Begin to Drift

In some respects, the Egyptian drift from the Soviet Union began even before the outbreak of the Six Day War. US officials believed that Egypt, even under the Nasser regime, could be a potential partner and ally. Harold Saunders, a Middle East specialist on the National Security Council, was one such proponent of American efforts to break Egypt away from the Soviet Union. In the wake of a visit to Egypt, "Saunders reported his impression that any firm understanding between Moscow and Cairo was lacking and that Nasser desired to avoid Soviet

[51] Primakov, 129

control."[52] American officials mistakenly believed there was no formal alliance between Egypt and the Soviet Union. In a 1966 report from the Hungarian Embassy in Cairo, it was noted that "friendship between the Soviet Union and the UAR has strengthened, economic relations have expanded and development has been steady."[53] Nonetheless, this erroneous belief led the Americans to think that dialogue could be initiated between the US and Egypt, potentially leading to an Egyptian realignment. Saunders even believed this was possible despite US-Israel ties.

Although the Eastern bloc was confident of its alliance with Egypt, Egypt's leaders also began to perceive of its alliance with the Soviet Union differently during and after the Six Day War. On June 9, 1967 (four days into the Six Day War), Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser sat down for an unedited interview with modern Egyptian historian Mohammed Hassanein Heikal. In the interview, Nasser discusses how he felt "the Soviets were likely to help Syria more than Egypt, how Moscow seemed to understand Baathism more than Arab Socialism."[54] Nasser was clearly losing faith in what he thought to be a strong, old, and loyal ally. The USSR had failed to intervene strongly on his behalf when the Six Day War began heading in the direction of a crushing defeat. He felt its loyalties were elsewhere, perhaps with Syria.

The Soviet Union and its Eastern allies tried to demonstrate their commitment to Nasser and the other Arab allies. To that end, the socialist countries organized a special conference in July 1967 with the purpose of responding to the latest developments in the Middle East. The Soviet Union's leader, Leonid Brezhnev, declared at the meeting that "at a time when the Arab

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[52] Popp, Pgs. 291-92

[53] Report From the Hungarian Embassy in Cairo on Kosygin's Visit in the UAR (Dated May 26, 1966)

[54] Youssef Aboul-Enein, "The Heikal Papers: A Discourse on Politics and the 1967 Arab-Israeli War with Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser," *Strategic Insights* 4, no. 4 (April 2005): 4

countries suffered a defeat it was important to show that they were still enjoying the confidence and support of the socialist countries."[55] Brezhnev also backed up his pronouncements by highlighting the new military and economic assistance the Soviets would be providing Egypt and other countries in order to make up for and improve on their losses in the Six Day War. Antonin Novotny, President of Czecholovakia, went so far as to declare that "everything should be done to support Nasser and give him support."[56] Nasser thus may have felt betrayed during and immediately after the Six Day War, but the Eastern bloc did everything possible to keep him as an ally. They saw Egypt as crucial to their efforts in the Middle East.

Nasser recognized this Soviet commitment, but he nonetheless began to view his alliance with the USSR in a different light. He realized the USSR's "need to preserve its gains in the Arab world at the expense of Washington. Nasser understood he could rely on using the Cold War to extract further military aid from Moscow."[57] Nasser finally realized how badly the USSR needed Egypt as a way to secure its influence in the Middle East. The support Nasser received after the war was not a superpower being generous and flexing its resources, but a superpower desperate to maintain an ally that felt abandoned and defeated.

Nasser thus altered his foreign policy to put Egyptian interests first and not be bound ideologically or idealistically to an alliance. He could play off the US-USSR Cold War rivalry to extract material concessions from both sides as they sought a secure alliance with potential Middle East partner Egypt. During a July 1968 meeting with fellow non-aligned leader Josip Tito of Yugoslavia, Nasser reflected on his views about the Middle East situation. He recognized

[55] Polish Record of Meeting of Soviet-Bloc Leaders (and Tito) in Budapest (Excerpts) (Dated July 11, 1967)
[56] Polish Record of Meeting of Soviet-Bloc Leaders (and Tito) in Budapest (Excerpts)
[57] Aboul-Enein, 4

and appreciated the assistance the Soviet Union was providing to help Egypt rebuild its capabilities. However, there were areas of disagreement: the USSR did not want Egypt to "abandon the idea of finding a peaceful solution… I [Nasser] responded by saying that what was taken by force must be returned by force."[58] If nothing else, the continued disagreement over approaches to the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict put a strain on Egypt's relations with the USSR and made Egypt question its alignment. This shift in attitude was not limited to the Egyptians.

Syria also began to perceive of its relationship with the Soviet Union differently after the Six Day War, but it was a bit longer of a process. As Rashid Khalidi explains, "the bipolar Cold War system occasionally allowed certain powerful Middle Eastern states like…Syria to play one superpower off against another, or to exploit the rivalry between them to obtain benefit."[59] In the aftermath of the Six Day War, certain Syrian figures like Hafez al-Assad, recognized that Syria was currently in such a position. Like Nasser, they realized that the USSR was desperate to maintain an alliance with nations that had been defeated and humiliated, especially in the wake of growing American efforts to sway these states. This could be leveraged to Syria's material advantage.

More immediately for Syria, defeat during the war triggered a leadership dispute between two faction heads of the ruling Ba'ath Party: Saleh Jadid, head of the party apparatus versus Hafez al-Assad, head of the military. With Egypt drifting, the Soviet Union wanted to lock down its alliance with Syria. The Soviets thus made the fateful decision to get directly involved in this

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[58] Minutes of Conversation Between Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito and UAR President Gamal Abdel Nasser in Brijuni, Croatia (Dated July 11, 1968)

[59] Rashid Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis: The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2009), 73

intra-party struggle, backing Jadid (seen as more pro-Soviet). In 1969, the Soviet ambassador to Syria "threatened Asad with a halt in arms shipments and a Soviet demand for immediate repayment of all loans unless he became more friendly to the USSR."[60] The Soviets hoped this ultimatum would strengthen their position in the country and within the Syrian leadership by giving Assad a choice: adopt a pro-Soviet stance or risk losing important military aid, especially necessary to rebuilding post-Six Day War. The latter choice could then become a useful political tool for Jadid to use in the leadership struggle.

It seemed like a win-win situation for the Soviet Union, but it backfired badly. Assad did not bow to Soviet pressure and he found a solution to the risk of losing Soviet military support. Just as Nasser had learned to play off the USA-USSR rivalry, Assad decided to use the Sino-Soviet split to his advantage. Assad initiated contacts with the Chinese, who agreed to sell arms to Syria. Assad thus showed that Syria had options when it came to securing aid and concessions from great power states. As Assad began to win the power struggle, the Soviet Union realized that continued involvement with the Syrian leadership struggle would only lead to the risk of being shut out of the country entirely. The Soviets decided to cut their losses and they pulled out of the factional struggles in Syria. With Egypt and Syria no longer committed to alliance with the Soviet Union, the Soviets had one final option to lock down an alliance and influence in the Middle East: Iraq, who simultaneously began a process of increased engagement with the Soviet Union.

[60] Galia Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East: From World War Two to Gorbachev* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), 54

Iraq After 1967: Enter the Soviets

In the wake of the Six Day War, Iraq found itself with few diplomatic options. The Iraqi leadership quickly realized the mistake it made during the conflict by cutting off relations with the US and UK. A telegram from the US Embassy in Belgium (which represented US interests in Iraq after the relations-cut off) to the State Department indicated that the "Iraqis would not be able to rescind entirely general boycott on US goods and services, even though they now recognize they committed mistake in breaking relations and want to restore them."[61] Restoring the ability of US economic goods and services to operate in Iraq was a necessary pre-condition to re-establishing US-Iraqi relations. Since this was not possible, the US had no desire at the moment to resume diplomatic ties with Iraq. For its part, Iraq no longer had access to the West's financial and economic expertise, an expertise that would have been crucial to continued Iraqi development and nation building.

In July 1968, a little over a year after the Six Day War, the Ba'athists re-took control of Iraq from the Arif regime in a coup. They took a stand-offish foreign policy towards their old Arab allies, entering into "a conflict with their fellow Ba'athists who rule in neighboring Syria…a continuing border dispute with Kuwait, strained relations with neighboring Saudi Arabia, and poor relations with Egypt."[62] Some of these Arab states, such as Egypt and Syria, were already pursuing a policy of non-alignment (as mentioned earlier) while maintaining a series of diplomatic connections. The new Iraqi government now ensured it would not be among

[61] National Archives and Records Administration, Telegram from the Embassy in Belgium to the Department of State (Dated June 7, 1968)
[62] Robert Freedman, "Soviet Policy Towards Ba'athist Iraq, 1968-1979," (June 10, 1980), 4-5

those foreign partners by its brash nature and willingness to enter into diplomatic conflicts, choosing supremacy in the Arab world over Arab unity. This left the Soviet Union as the main and only option for broad Iraqi foreign policy and interaction. Unlike Egypt and Syria, Iraq did not seem to have other options that they could play off the Soviet Union for concessions. Re-orientation towards the USSR was thus a necessity for Iraq, which still needed a foreign partner to help it militarily and economically. However, they were now seriously threatened with the prospect of massive Soviet pressure and influence descending on Iraq. The new Ba'athist government of Iraq would need to find a way to engage with the Soviet Union and avoid becoming a satellite state.

In summary, the Six Day War drove Iraq and the Soviet Union to focus on strengthening their existing ties. Arab defeat in the conflict was a blow to Soviet global and military prestige. It led Egypt and Syria, the two major Soviet allies in the Middle East, to perceive of their relationship to the USSR differently. The Soviet Union was changed from a major ally to a diplomatic partner, with interactions favoring Arab interests over Soviet ones. Iraq became a necessary last-ditch option for a Middle Eastern ally that the USSR could truly exert influence over. Meanwhile, as late as 1972, Iraq was also interested in increasing its ties with the Soviet Union. During his trip to Moscow, Saddam Hussein "stated that the Iraqi leadership has come to the conclusion that it is necessary to take Soviet-Iraqi political relations to a higher level: in his words, by entering into a "strategic union," on the basis of which we could successfully develop cooperation in all other areas."[63] Iraq and the Soviet Union saw their interests aligning for various, different reasons. The two countries were thus pushed to focus and engage with each other more as a result of the far-reaching consequences of the Six Day War.

[63] Report on the Visit of Saddam Hussein to the USSR (Dated February 24, 1972)

The Iraqi governments of Arif and the Ba'ath took the opposite course of Egypt and Syria, elevating the Soviet Union from a diplomatic power to its main foreign relation. Iraq had cut itself off from the west and its fellow Arab states but needed an ally to strengthen its military, assist its economic development, and shore up its regional diplomatic position against enemies like Iran. Without other options to offset the Soviet Union, the new Iraqi Ba'athist government would need to find another way to receive Soviet material support without becoming its client state. In his report for the US Air Force, Francis Fukuyama argued that "the Ba'thist radical ideology that has given Iraq such a reputation for extremism has for the most part been rhetorical. In practice, Baghdad has avoided involvement in local conflicts, so as not to become too dependent on Soviet armaments."[64] The years 1968 to 1972 demonstrate how Iraqi Ba'athist pragmatism allowed it to successfully shore up its domestic position and make the most out of alliance with the Soviet Union without becoming a puppet.

[64] Fukuyama, *The Soviet Union and Iraq Since 1968* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1980), 2

Chapter 2: Soviet-Iraqi Relations, 1968-1972

Overview and Structure

The period from 1968 to 1972 was a peak of engagement between Iraq and the Soviet Union. In 1968, the Ba'athist Party of Iraq seized control of the country from the Arif brothers in a successful coup d'état. The new regime had learned a valuable lesson since 1963, when the Ba'athists had previously seized control of the country in a short-lived regime: do not antagonize potential domestic opponents. In 1963, the Ba'athists took strong stances against the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) and Iraqi Kurds in order to consolidate power. Roham Alvandi writes of how "after Qasim's overthrow in a coup by the Ba'th Party in February 1963, the United States sought to improve relations with Iraq as part of the Kennedy administration's broader strategy of placating Arab nationalism in the Middle East as a bulwark against Soviet influence."[65] All of these combined developments during the 1963 regime angered the Soviet Union, who had obvious ideological affinity for the ICP and supported Kurdish rights as a nationality-minority. It also led the Kurds to continue their military revolt against the Iraqi state after a period of "unsuccessful negotiations and growing mutual suspicion"[66] with the new regime.

The Ba'athists decided to try a different and ultimately more successful tactic in 1968. They made overtures to the ICP and Kurds, inviting them to join the Ba'athists in a government coalition. This peaceful approach pleased the Soviet Union, but it also helped Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr and his Ba'athist regime consolidate power. By inviting these political opponents into the government, the Ba'ath regime could more closely monitor and subvert them, without taking a brash approach that could upset the Soviet Union and threaten Iraq's ability to acquire Soviet

[65] Alvandi, 73
[66] Smolansky and Smolansky, 64

military and economic aid. However, the ICP refused to join for fear of Ba'athist subversion. Instead, they wanted to join with the Kurdish and use their combined power to outweight the Ba'athists. For their part, the Kurdish did not feel as though the ICP deserved a place in a national government. The Kurds also initially had outstanding disagreements with the Iraqi state. The Iraqi Ba'athists were thus able to play off the ICP-Kurdish disunity and subvert the influence of both, shoring up their domestic standing.

Al-Bakr also leveraged relations with the Soviet Union to assist in Iraqi economic and military development. With the West and other Arab nations no longer diplomatic partners due to the events of 1967, Iraq had to rely much more on the USSR. This diplomatic isolation made the Iraqi regime feel insecure. In his report for the US Army, Robert Freedman writes how "Iraq has been rather paranoid about threats to its control over the country…out of this situation has arisen a dependency on the USSR."[67] The need for arms came with the risk of increased Soviet influence over Iraqi government actions, especially as the USSR needed to secure a new, main Middle Eastern ally.

However, al-Bakr and other Ba'ath leaders hoped that in the longer-term, this development of Iraq would make it strong and stable enough to risk Soviet pressure, as well as entice western and Arab leaders to restart relations with Iraq. In addition, the Iraqi Ba'athists were successfully able to secure their domestic position against Kurdish and ICP opponents in a process that the rise of Saddam Hussein and his faction in 1970 helped speed up. This allowed Iraq to lessen its need for Soviet arms, they key tool by which the USSR could exert influence. The 1972 Treaty of Friendship between Iraq and the Soviet Union was a Soviet last-ditch effort

[67] Freedman, 5

to lockdown the alliance and an Iraqi tool to keep the relationship with the Soviet Union formally open while it searched for other countries to become friendly with. Ultimately, Iraq was returning to its pre-1967 foreign policy: non-alignment, with the goal of foreign relations to be the securing of as many diplomatic partners as possible that could aid Iraqi relations.

The chapter will begin by looking at the aftermath of the Ba'athist coup in 1968, analyzing how the government went about consolidating its initially shaky hold over Iraq, focusing on the roles of the ICP and Kurds. Soviet-Ba'athist relations in this early period were performed indirectly via the Kurdish and ICP issues, as the Soviet Union was unsure if the Ba'athist government was viable. However, the Ba'athists demonstrated their ability to rule and act independently, resisting Soviet pressures to influence governmental policy. The Iraqi government recognized how badly the Soviet Union needed a Middle Eastern ally in order to maintain its prestige as a global power and thus, would back down during most disagreements in the sake of maintaining the alliance. Finally, the chapter will look at Iraqi foreign policy efforts in the early 1970s once its domestic position was secure, focusing on Iran, Arab nations, the West, and the Soviet Union (especially in the context of the Friendship Treaty).

Ba'athist Coup and Consolidating Power

The Ba'athist seizure of power unfolded in two stages over the course of July 1968. On July 17th, officers at the Presidential Palace overthrew the Arif regime in a bloodless coup. The Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) became the supreme authority of the new regime, headed by Ba'athist leader Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr. However, just 13 days later, "on July 30 another coup was carried out, with the Ba'th deposing its non-Ba'thist partners in the July 17

coup."[68] Al-Bakr wanted to secure his position as leader of Iraq. The best way to do this was ensuring Ba'athist domination of the government from the very start of its regime. From there, al-Bakr was willing to work with other political factions in Iraq so long as they realized who the senior party was. The Soviet Union, patron of the ICP, certainly recognized this as the USSR "traditionally favored the creation of 'united fronts' of 'progressive, national forces' in the developing countries whose indigenous Communist parties were not strong enough to seize and hold power."[69] In the late 1960s and early 1970s, this stance included states such as Iraq. If the Soviet Union recognized the Ba'ath were the ruling party, groups like the ICP had to as well.

The Ba'athists could not rule Iraq alone, at least during the early years of its regime. In a memo from Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research to the U.S. Secretary of State, Director Hughes noted how "the Ba'thi regime in Baghdad, which came to power through a coup d'etat, sees itself beset by plotters on every side. Its fears are no doubt justified because it has progressively alienated virtually every other significant political and ethnic grouping in Iraq."[70] Secondary literature also demonstrates the initial weakness of the Ba'athist Party. Karol Sorby notes that "the coup d'état on 30 July brought Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr to power, but the position of the Bac th Party was still fragile. Party support throughout the country was negligible; according to its own assessment, the party in 1968 had no more than five thousand members."[71] From its inception and given the nature of Iraqi politics up to that point, the Ba'ath regime faced

[68] Shemesh, 19
[69] Smolansky and Smolansky, 106
[70] Research Memorandum RNA-6 From the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hughes) to Secretary of State Rogers, 5 (Dated February 14, 1969)
[71] Karol R. Sorby, "The Two July 1968 Coups in Iraq: the Bac th is Returning to Power," *Asian & African Studies (13351257)* 26, no. 2 (2017): 315

constant threat of a counter-coup. If it wanted to rule for a long time, the regime needed to consolidate its power by making connections with other key political factions.

Early Ba'ath-Iraqi Communist Interactions

The Iraqi Communist Party was one such group the Ba'athists made overtures to. This was an about-face from the harsh anti-Communist actions of the short-lived 1963 Ba'athist regime. The main reason the Ba'athist regime wanted to establish a front with the ICP was because "the Ba'th regarded the ICP as a large political organization that enjoyed popular support among the intelligentsia, the workers, and the peasants."[72] The Ba'athist regime hoped that co-opting the ICP would increase the ruling regime's popularity among key social classes. In exchange for giving the ICP some limited political freedom and a role in government, the Ba'ath would be able to ride ICP coattails and get their support for a National Action Charter (a key part of Ba'athist ideology).

Relations with the ICP would also help al-Bakr and Hussein in their dealings with the Soviet Union. Securing material concessions from the USSR would be much easier as Soviet leaders would applaud al-Bakr's inclusion of Iraqi Communists in the government and thus be more willing to provide arms and monetary assistance. However, the ICP were also hostages in Soviet-Iraqi dealings. If the USSR ever tried to exert too much pressure on the Ba'ath regime or pushed for the ICP to be an equal partner (as opposed to a junior one), the Ba'athists could easily crack down on the ICP given their newfound proximity. The Smolanskys believe the Soviet Union recognized this dynamic, writing how "the Kremlin no doubt understood that exerting influence on behalf of the Iraqi Communists would not improve their position; it would,

[72] Shemesh, 20

however, increase the level of tension in Moscow-Baghdad relations."[73] The best the Soviets could do was push for closer ICP-Ba'ath ties and achieve a goal of a national unity government.

The ICP responded by Ba'athist overtures by calling for a coalition government instead of a front, pushing for democratization. It also pushed for the reinstatement of officers who had been forced out for Communist sympathies, which would enable the ICP to strengthen its position among the key military institution. "The ICP's democratic demands indicated that it was confident of being able to compete successfully with the Ba'th in an atmosphere of political freedom."[74] The ICP interpreted al-Bakr's overtures for what they were: a sign of political weakness. Thus, if the Ba'athists wanted Communist help, it would come with the risk of losing power in a democratic setting.

For the rest of the 1960s, the Ba'athist regime decided to take a two-faced approach to the ICP. Security services began to carry out a sporadic series of anti-Communist persecutions and measures. At the same time, the Ba'athist authorities denied involvement in the measures and continued calling for a front with the ICP. It seems "the Ba'th evidently used these tactics in order, on the one hand, to terrorize and cripple the ICP and, on the other hand, to soften the Communists' terms regarding the formation of the front."[75] The Ba'athists would not be able to gain the ICP as an immediate ally on favorable terms, so they were forced to take a long-term approach. The Communists would be weakened to the point where they had no choice but to either concede to Ba'athist wishes or risk being repressed into irrelevancy. In the meantime, the Ba'athist regime turned its attention to the ever-present Kurdish issue.

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[73] Smolansky and Smolansky, 108
[74] Shemesh, 20
[75] Shemesh, 21

The Ba'athists and the Kurds

Like it did with the ICP, the Ba'ath regime also made overtures to the Iraqi Kurds. American officials reported that "it entered into contacts with Kurdish rebel leader Mulla Mustapha Barzani, it called for a coalition of "progressive forces" under Ba'thi leadership."[76] The Ba'athist regime hoped that an agreement with the Kurds would help with power consolidation by allowing them to gain support from another key segment of the Iraqi's population. An Iraq-Kurd settlement would also mean an end (or at least halt) to continued tensions and conflict in the north of the country. This would free up Iraqi military forces for use in other purposes, such as speeding up the weakening of the ICP or strengthening Iraq's hand in its long standoff with Iran.

However, like the ICP, the Kurds had some backing from the Soviet Union. Howard Hansel notes that separatist rebel movements such as the Kurds can be a useful tool in Soviet influence efforts. When USSR ties with a country's central government are strained, "the Kremlin may feel that it is to its advantage to support the rebels and thereby use them as a lever against the central government."[77] With enough Soviet support, these separatist rebels could succeed and create a new USSR satellite state, given the rebels' heavy dependence on the USSR in creating that state in the first place. In the case of Iraq, the Soviet Union was also interested in establishing friendly ties with the Ba'athist regime, given the presence of some ideological and practical similarities. The Soviet Union thus found itself under pressure to support the Kurds or to assist the Iraqi government.

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[76] Research Memorandum RNA-6 From the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hughes) to Secretary of State Rogers, 6

[77] Howard M. Hansel, "Soviet Policy toward the Kurdish Question, 1970-75," *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 6, no. 1 (1979): 62

Soviet policymakers, like they had done in prior dilemmas, attempted to find a middle ground solution that would give them the best of both worlds. Rather than take sides in the dispute between the Kurds and the central Iraqi government, "the Kremlin usually prefers to strike the pose of a concerned observer counselling a peaceful solution."[78] This neutral approach allowed the Soviet Union to provide support to the Kurds and the government as opposed to the Kurds or the government. If a negotiated solution to the conflict was found, the Soviet Union would appear as mediators and peacemakers. The USSR did not want to lose the advantages of ties with Iraq or ties with the Kurds. Instead, they wanted an approach whereby neither side was abandoned, and they could be played off each other to Soviet advantage. For instance, if ties with the central government were strained, the Soviet Union could threaten to shift all of its support and resources to the Kurds until they fell in line.

The Ba'athist government thus tried negotiating with the Kurds and it had some success, mainly the splintering of the Kurds into two factions: the main faction led by Mulla Mustapha Barzani and a splinter group with Jalal Talbani at the helm. However, "as early as mid-August [1968], the negotiations between the government and DPK collapsed, and from the middle of the fall the authorities—assisted by the faction of Jalal Talbani—became engaged in a limited, gradually intensifying war against the forces of Barzani."[79] Ba'athist outreach efforts to the Kurds were a failure for the same reason outreach to the ICP failed. The Ba'athists were still negotiating from a point of weakness and making heavy concessions to the Kurds or ICP would weaken the Ba'athist position as senior partner in the regime. Power would have to be consolidated on the Ba'athist Party of Iraq's terms. Just as the Ba'athists hoped that a mix of

[78] Hansel, 63
[79] Shemesh, 22

outreach and repression would win over the ICP, they also believed a mix of outreach and repression could force the Kurds to concede to Ba'athist political desires. Shemesh notes how "the authorities—assisted by the faction of Jalal Talbani—became engaged in a limited, gradually intensifying war against the forces of Barzani."[80] Thus, the Iraqi government was using the military as a tool to oppress a domestic opponent. However, allying with the Kurdish forces of Jalal Talbani gave the operation more credence, for the Iraqi government was seen as having reached out to and allying with a Kurdish figure.

The resumption of war against the Kurds gave Moscow an opportunity to exert influence over Iraqi actions. On its own, Iraq's military did not have the resources needed to crush the Kurdish revolt. Iraqi army brigades were spread thin: three were stationed in Jordan, one in Syria, four on the border with Iran, and three in Baghdad to defend the regime. This left Iraq with four or five brigades to use against the Kurds, when "the winter before, a 12-brigade offensive had failed to attain any of its objectives."[81] The Iraqis had no choice it seemed but to turn to the Soviet Union for vast quantities of military assistance. Despite Soviet opposition to the Iraqi government's war against the Kurds, they did not suspend arms deliveries to Iraq. Shemesh argues that "Moscow considered that upholding the military balance of Iraq vis-à-vis Iran had priority over preventing a military solution to the Kurdish problem."[82] Therefore, the Soviet Union could not realistically end its military support for the Iraqi government without running the risk of a US-ally, Iran, strengthening its position in the region. However, the USSR could use its arm deliveries as a tool by which to push Iraq to carry out pro-Soviet policies, such as better treatment of the.

[80] Shemesh, 22
[81] Fukuyama, 30
[82] Shemesh, 34

The Iraqi Ba'athist regime did not want to succumb to Soviet pressure. It proved willing to change its domestic policy and power consolidation plans in order to prioritize an independent Iraqi foreign policy. Despite the seemingly brash nature of the Ba'athist regime up to that point, "the Iraqis did not want to allow the conflicts with Israel or Iran to develop into hot wars, and they hoped to bring an end to the war in Kurdistan."[83] The Iraqi government wanted to return to a foreign policy focused on building relationships with a variety of diplomatic partners that could be leveraged in Iraqi interests. Continued tensions and conflict would only increase Iraqi military dependence on the Soviet Union and thus, increased Soviet influence on Iraqi policy. However, the military-wing of the Ba'athist regime was dominant, and they continued advocating hawkish positions. The rise of the civilian wing, under the leadership of Saddam Hussein, allowed for a shift in attitudes towards the Kurdish situation.

In November 1969, the Revolutionary Command Council was expanded from five to 15 members, resulting in an influx of civilians such as Saddam Hussein. The military wing of the Ba'athist Party was suddenly a minority when it came to governing Iraq. Upset at this change in power dynamics, the army launched a coup in January 1970. However, the party's intelligence apparatus was aware of the plot and successfully quashed it. With the purging of 300 officers from the military, it was clear that "the failure of the coup strengthened Saddam Hussein and his followers sufficiently for them to go ahead with their plans for détente [with the Kurds]."[84] With the civilian wing now firmly in control of the Ba'athist Party and RCC, Iraq could begin the process of easing tensions, beginning with the Kurds.

[83] Fukuyama, 30-1
[84] Fukuyama, 32

Saddam Hussein personally negotiated the agreement with Kurdish leader Barzani, and it took effect in March 1970. The settlement "provided limited autonomy for the Kurds. It also offered amnesty for all insurgents and assured that the Kurdish language would have equal status…Kurdish areas would be administered by Kurds and that the national government would include a Kurdish vice president."[85] The Iraqi government was negotiating from a position of weakness, given the failures of military action up until the settlement. The Kurds succeeded in acquiring major concessions from the Iraqi government in exchange for an end to the revolt. However, it was also a necessary evil if the Iraqi government wanted to consolidate its position.

The Iraqi-Kurdish settlement in 1970 showed that the Ba'athist government, despite its unstable position, did not always need to rely on Soviet aid. The Iraqis could have asked for Soviet military aid against the Kurds, but they understood it would have led to Soviet pressure for Iraq to take policy positions it disagreed with. They opted instead for peace with the Kurds, an easier option given the genuine desire of Ba'athists like Saddam Hussein to try and make amends. The American government recognized Iraq made this decision independently and unilaterally, without much influence from the USSR. In a telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Iran, American officials noted that "we agree Soviets have been encouraging Iraqi/Kurdish settlement but it less clear what effect this actually had in bringing about current settlement."[86] The Soviets would certainly have rationale to support a peace agreement. They believed it would mean concessions to the Kurds and their inclusion in the national front government, limiting Ba'athist power. It could also lead the government to similarly make peace

[85] Christopher Paul, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, and Molly Dunigan, "Iraqi Kurdistan: 1961-1975 Case Outcome: COIN Win" in *Paths to Victory: Detailed Insurgency Case Studies* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2013), 217
[86] Telegram 37806 From the Department of State to the Embassy in Iran, 2 (Dated March 14, 1970)

and concessions with the ICP, giving them a chance to join government and eventually seize power.

Yet the Soviet Union had no role in the agreement; another US telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel stated that "we realize Israelis have good sources on Kurdish matters but believe Rafael [Israeli Foreign Ministry Director-General] has exaggerated Soviet role in recent Iraqi-Kurdish agreement."[87] Thus, the US at the very least recognized that Soviet influence on both the Kurds and the Ba'athists was at least somewhat limited. The Ba'athist government demonstrated that if aid from the Soviet Union came with pre-conditions such as policy changes, they would simply go their own way and find a satisfactory alternative. The Iraqi Ba'athists did indeed re-engage with the ICP after the Kurdish issue was settled and more resources could be spared, but not in the way the Soviet Union hoped for. Shemesh argues that "by resolving, if only temporarily, its principal internal problem, Baghdad had reduced its need for…backing from the patron of the local Communists, the Soviets, and freed itself to some degree from exercising restraint toward the ICP."[88] Al-Bakr and the Ba'athists would be able to interact with the ICP on more advantageous terms as they sought to bring them into government as controlled, junior partners.

Later Ba'athist-Iraqi Communist Interactions

The Iraqi-Kurdish agreement destroyed the potential for a Kurdish-ICP alliance, a combined force that could have jeopardized the Ba'athist regime and its position. For the time being, the Kurds no longer had any grievances against the Iraqi government. This left the ICP

[87] Telegram 54598 From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel, 3 (Dated April 14, 1970)
[88] Shemesh, 37

domestically isolated in its dealings with the Ba'athists, who resumed their strategy of forcing the ICP to become junior partners in the national front government. To that end, "the repressive measures became particularly severe after the settlement of the Kurdish war in March 1970."[89] With the Kurdish problem settled, Iraq had the resources and attention required to deal with the ICP. Iraq was also less worried about antagonizing the Soviet Union, as the peace agreement demonstrated that the government was not reliant on Soviet aid, and with Iraq at peace, there was not even a need for the aid.

The Iraqi Communist Party was in a tough position. It could renew ties with the Kurds, but the Kurds had no interest in antagonizing the central government due to the agreement. They would thus be unlikely to come to the ICP's aid in fighting back against the Ba'athist repression. Historically, the ICP and Kurds also had turbulent relations that got in the way of securing an alliance. The ICP viewed Mullah Mustafa Barzani, head of the main Kurdish faction—the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP)—in an ambivalent manner. They saw him as "a representative of the 'Kurdish bourgeoisie'" while Barzani had previously "threatened to demolish the ICP's branch and hunt down and kill all communists in Iraqi Kurdistan,"[90] when the ICP failed to take a strong enough stance against Barzani's rival factions.

Like their Soviet backers, the ICP was pleased to see the 1970 agreement between the Ba'ath and KDP. It also provided the ICP one last chance to ally with the Kurds and put historical tensions aside. The ICP hoped to get the Kurds on board with the Ba'ath idea for a national front government, believing their combined strength could check the Ba'athists. The

[89] Fukuyama, 28
[90] Johan Franzen, "From Ally to Foe: The Iraqi Communist Party and the Kurdish Question, 1958–1975," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 2 (2011): 177

Ba'athists likely appeared weak given the attempted military coup and their willingness to make major concessions to the Kurds during the agreement, so a KDP-ICP alliance could effectively rule the country. Despite several high-ranking ICP missions to the Kurds, Barzani's stance could not be swayed: "he would only enter a front between the KDP and the Ba'ath—the forces representing the two main ethnicities."[91] Barzani saw no need for Communists in the government as they only represented the working class, a subset of the Iraqi population. It is also possible that Barzani was inherently mistrustful of Communists. After all, Barzani's rival for Iraqi Kurdish leadership, Jalal Talabani, was "Marxist in its orientation and politically militant…distanced itself from Mulla Mustafa's 'rightist tribalist command.'"[92] Barzani felt that the KDP obviously stood for the Kurds and the Ba'athists, with their Arab socialist and nationalist stances, represented Iraq's Sunni and Shia populations. Between the KDP and Ba'ath, all of Iraq would be represented in this hypothetical national front government. The ICP with its niche political base was not required.

Resuming alliance with the Kurds was therefore not an option for the ICP. If the ICP wanted to maintain some political relevancy, end their domestically isolated position, and not be repressed out of existence, they would need to join the national front government on Ba'athist terms. In the early 1970s, "the ICP moved closer to the Ba'ath and eventually entered an alliance with it, this led to a sharp deterioration in its relations with the KDP."[93] The KDP would no longer be able to join the government as it opposed being in a front that included the ICP. As mentioned earlier, Barzani was suspicious of Communists and he felt they did not represent ethnic groups the way the KDP and Ba'athists could claim to. The ICP's move and acceptance of

[91] Franzen, 179
[92] Smolansky and Smolansky, 91
[93] Franzen, 179

subservient status was necessary if it wanted to exercise a minimal level of influence on the Ba'ath-led government (as opposed to none at all). Meanwhile, having the ICP as its partner made the most sense for the Ba'ath as it could now acquire the ICP's popularity with working class Iraqis and shore up domestic support. While the Ba'athists would have preferred tue subservient support of both the Kurds and the Communists, the peace agreement with the Kurds was most necessary. But the Ba'ath's greatest success came in isolating the ICP and KDP from each other. These potential domestic opponents had been neutralized, one by peace treaty and another by necessity-based political coalition. They would no longer have the possibility to team up against the Ba'athists, who thus secured their domestic position. It was now clear to the Soviet Union that if they wanted to ally with Iraq, they would need to increase their direct engagement with the Ba'athists instead of getting involved in Iraqi domestic politics. Primakov himself wrote that "the Soviet embassy in Baghdad and later the Kremlin undoubtedly took a gamble when it threw its support behind Saddam,"[94] but it appeared at first that this direct engagement would pay off.

Early Soviet-Ba'ath Interactions: The Shatt-al-Arab and East Germany

Soviet-Ba'ath interactions increased and became more direct after 1970, when it was clear the Ba'athist regime was secure, and the Soviets would not be able to bring about an ICP-Kurdish dominated government. However, there were some Soviet-Ba'ath interactions in the late 1960s as well. In 1969, tensions between Iraq and Iran flared up over the Shatt-al-Arab border river. After weeks of rising action, in mid-April the Iranian government unilaterally abrogated the 1937 treaty regulating the status of the river. Iraq began a propaganda campaign against Iran

[94] Primakov, 304

but stopped short of military action due to "Iran's military superiority over Iraq coupled with the weakness of the Ba'th regime, which was engaged in the conflict with the Kurds."[95] Propaganda alone would not let Iraq win this dispute and a military escalation as Iraq would not be able to bring all its forces to bear until conflict against the Kurds was done.

If Iraq wanted to hold its ground on the Shatt-al-Arab, it needed diplomatic support from other countries. Richard Schofield notes how "the 1937 protocol had specified that until a convention was signed, Iraq would remain responsible for all the concerns that would likely be regulated by such a treaty."[96] The Arab world would prove unwilling to assist as "neither the conservative Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia, which feared a radical Iraq, nor the UAR, which had no interest in deflecting world attention from the Arab-Israeli conflict, supported Iraq's position."[97] Iraq was still isolated from the Arab world post-1967 and the standoffish policy of the Iraqi Ba'ath regime until 1970 prevented a restoration of relations. Iraqi Ba'ath persecution of domestic opponents and its quickness to go for the military option, whether against the Kurds or very nearly against Iran, reinforced the views of conservative Arab monarchies like Saudi Arabia that Iraq was too radical and could not be a diplomatic partner. Other states like Egypt were ideologically closer to Iraq and had certainly engaged in their own radical standoffs, but Egypt saw itself as the leader of the Arab world and that its requests would have to come first. The only state that supported Iraq was Syria, but this would not be enough support. Iraq would need to look elsewhere for support in the dispute.

[95] Shemesh, 27
[96] Schofield, 52-53
[97] Shemesh, 27

East Germany would prove to be the answer. It was a member of the Soviet bloc and had one of the strongest militaries, economies, and intelligence apparatuses relative to the rest of the Warsaw Pact. Iraq hoped "to secure the support of the Soviet bloc in return for recognizing East Germany."[98] To the Iraqis, this diplomatic trade was a win-win scenario. At best, Iraq would be able to greatly strengthen its position in the Shatt-al-Arab dispute, bringing the diplomatic pressure of the entire Soviet bloc to bear against Iran. However, Moscow proved hesitant to wade into the dispute on Iraq's side. The Soviet Union wanted to maintain its relationship with Iraq, but it also had some pre-existing ties with Iran that could hopefully be maintained and expanded in the coming years. Thus, it (and the rest of the bloc) remained neutral, although East Germany was allowed to quickly side with the Iraqis and Iraq reciprocated with recognition of East Germany.

Iraq's hoped-for diplomatic trade ended on the worst-case scenario: Iraq recognized East Germany (and all the potential diplomatic repercussions that entailed) without securing the support of the whole Soviet bloc in its dispute with Iran. Nonetheless, the situation was still a win for Iraq. With ties to the West already non-existent, Iraq did not feel that it needed to worry about antagonizing anyone with its decision to recognize East Germany. More importantly, starting relations with East Germany came with other benefits that would be useful in developing Iraqi capabilities.

For example, in September 1969, after the dispute with Iran had died down, Iraq's General Director for Security, Lieutenant General al-Ani, visited East Germany. While there, he met with a Colonel Wagner of the infamous Ministry for State Security (Stasi). Wagner took

[98] Shemesh, 28

notes on the meeting, highlighting how the General Directorate for Security had previously only monitored domestic dissent in Iraq, but "there was no department within the security directorate concerned with espionage and diversionary activities by imperialist countries against Iraq."[99] If the Ba'ath regime wanted to truly secure its position, it needed a functional counterintelligence program that could prevent information from being leaked and halt subversionary activities orchestrated by agents from enemy countries.

The purpose of al-Ani's visit was to get assistance from Iraq's new East German ally in strengthening the General Directorate for Security's capabilities through a variety of means such as training Iraqi officers in East Germany and securing new equipment. Al-Ani's trip was rather successful; Colonel Wagner noted that "during the meeting he left a solid impression. He acted modestly and reserved. He did not make any straight demands but raised his wishes and requests in an acceptable manner."[100] This cooperation over training Iraqi counterintelligence was a good first step in strengthening Iraqi-East German relations and securing the dictatorial powers of the Ba'ath regime. It was also a first step in Iraq's rebuilding of a network of diplomatic partners. East Germany was under heavy Soviet influence, but it was a formally independent country and thus critical to rebuilding Iraq's diplomatic capabilities. Iraq was now moving in the direction of acquiring multiple diplomatic partners and undoing Soviet predominance in Iraq's foreign policy. The next logical step for Iraq was to reach out to rival Iran and restore relations with fellow Arab states.

Iraq in the Middle East: Iran and the Arab States

[99] Report About A Meeting With The General Director of the Iraqi Directorate for State Security, Lieutenant General Al-Ani

[100] Report About A Meeting With The General Director of the Iraqi Directorate for State Security, Lieutenant General Al-Ani

Despite the historical complicated relationshiop between Iraq and Iran, as well as flare-ups and animosity such as the one that occurred in the Shatt-al-Arab, Iraq genuinely sought to make agreement with Iran as part of its strategy of regional détente. In an interview with Iranian newspaper Kayhan International, Iraqi Ba'athist leader al-Tikriti stated that "we want far better and far more purposeful relations with your country."[101] Iraq had a new government in the Ba'athist regime which seemed willing to make a new effort to put aside old tensions and have functional, good relations with Iran. The process would be difficult and come with its share of crises and tensions, but Iraq seemed finally willing to make a real push for peace.

For its part, Iran was also willing to stabilize its relations with Iraq. In a conversation between senior American and Iranian diplomats, Iran's foreign minister "Mr. Zahedi added that Iran has tried to maintain good relations with Iraq. There have been reciprocal visits and talks between Foreign Ministers, etc. Iran is interested in Iraq's remaining independent."[102] This was the necessary starting point for a warming in Iraqi-Iranian relations: exchanging of diplomats and a mutual desire to work towards peace however arduous the process might be. It could also help both countries lessen their reliance on superpower patrons. As Zahedi's remarks demonstrated, Iran did not want Iraq to become a Soviet puppet and preferred interacting with a sovereign Iraqi regime. Meanwhile, Iraq would be able to focus its military resources on other matters, such as the Kurdish issue or the Arab-Israeli conflict. Without needing to worry about Iran, the Iraqis would not need as much military aid from the Soviet Union and could more easily resist their pressure efforts. The same could also be said for Iran vis-à-vis its alliance with the United States.

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[101] Taheri, *Kayhan International Interviews Al-Tikriti* (*Kayhan International*: December 9, 1968), 1
[102] Memorandum of Conversation (Dated October 23, 1968)

There were still many disagreements and quite a bit of tension between Iraq and Iran, but the 1970s showed promise where the previous two decades had not.

Iran also began the long process of healing its relations with other Arab states in the Middle East. One way in which Iraq tried to appease the conservative Arab monarchies was by clamping down on radical Palestinian activities. For example, "the three Iraqi brigades stationed in Jordan failed to intervene on behalf of the PLO when the latter was being crushed by King Hussein's army during the 1970 civil war."[103] This shows how by the 1970s, Saddam Hussein and his détente-civilian faction truly controlled the Ba'ath Party and Iraqi government. They were able to tell the military to stand down and not assist the Palestinians, standing instead with more conservative groups and states like Jordan. This would be critical in Iraq's attempts to rebuild relations with countries such as Saudi Arabia, an autocratic and deeply conservative monarchy that supported pre-existing Arab states first.

The two superpowers were certainly aware of Iraqi attempts to improve relations with Iran and other Arab states. In February 1971, Michel Sassine, the Deputy Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, accompanied Prime Minister Saeb Salem on an official visit to Iraq. Afterwards, Sassine spoke with American foreign policy officials and made comments on the general situation in Iraq. US notes on the conversation showed that "Sassine believes the GOI [Government of Iraq] is anxious to improve relations with Syria, Lebanon, and the UAR in order to end its relative isolation from these "natural allies"… Sassine also anticipates an improvement in Lebanese-Iraqi relations and that Iraqi tourists will return to Lebanon in large numbers this

[103] Fukuyama, 33

summer."[104] Iraq recognized that it made more sense to be allied with states such as Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon instead of opposed to them. All the states were predominantly Arab and had similar histories, governments, cultures, and geographic positions. The return of Iraqi tourists to Lebanon is a sign of Hussein-style détente and important first steps at restarting high-level diplomacy. Lebanon in turn could then mediate between Iraq and other countries such as Egypt and Syria, rebuilding for Iraq a network of regional allies.

Iraq was hoping to end the isolated position it put itself in during and after the Six Day War. Historical animosities and continued disagreements would be tough to overcome, but the Hussein faction was committed to securing peaceful relations with hostile neighbors. This would prevent them from undermining Iraq's domestic position and allow Iraq to resume a foreign policy based on non-alignment and a leveraging of many diplomatic networks to aid Iraqi growth and development. Regional stability would also lessen Iraqi dependence on the Soviet Union for aid. Instead, material support could come from a range of states and balance out each country's ability to influence Iraqi government actions.

The Soviet Union was slow in its response to Iraqi outreach efforts to the Arab world. In late 1971, Iran seized control of three islands in the Strait of Hormuz after the anticipated withdrawal of British forces from the region. Iraq immediately cut off diplomatic relations with Iran and condemned the move as an occupation. The Arab world sided with Iraq in this new dispute: radical states like South Yemen, Syria, Algeria, and Libya all condemned the move and demanded Iran withdrawal from the islands. Egypt wanted the situation resolved peacefully, but it still called on Iran to remove its forces. Even conservative regimes like Saudi Arabi expressed

[104] Airgram A-82 From the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State, 3 (Dated March 16, 1971)

their displeasure with Iran's move.[105] Rather than side with Iraq, the Soviet Union took a pro-Iranian stance, believing "there was nothing wrong with the islands coming into the possession of Iran."[106] When the Soviet Union finally realized the extent of Arab opposition to Iran's move, the USSR did not change its stance, but simply "balanced its predilection for Iran with a pro-Arab tendency."[107] The USSR's failure to give Iraq diplomatic support contrbitued to the decline of its monopoly in Iraq's foreign relations. Iraq began eyeing two new great powers to offset the USSR on a more global scale: France and China.

Alternatives to the Soviet Union: France and China

While the Soviet Union was busy interfering in Iraqi domestic politics to no avail, France was successfully building a functional bilateral partnership with Iraq. The Soviet Union's rationale for relations with Iraq was to lock down an ally in the Middle East that was conducive to Soviet pressure tactics and willing to be a staging post for Soviet efforts to expand its influence across the Middle East. By contrast, French motives for partnership with Iraq were purely based on mutual benefits. France had two main goals in their general Middle East policy: "expand the sources of France's oil supplies and… increase French commercial penetration of Arab markets for both civilian and military goods."[108] Influencing a country's politics could fail or backfire, but securing material trade was more solidified and unchanging.

Iraq was a clear example of a country that could satisfy both of France's desires. Iraq had large oil reserves and continued to develop them by any means necessary; for example, "Soviet

[105] Shemesh, 61
[106] Shemesh, 62
[107] Shemesh, 62
[108] David A. Styan (1999), 128

economic aid to Iraq in 1969-1971 was directed primarily to the profitable oil sector."[109] In addition to its oil strength, Iraq was also an open market for goods. Civilian goods would be crucial in developing Iraq's (consumer) economy and military goods would help Iraq's position in domestic and regional standoffs. Iraq would also benefit from France's desires in such a partnership. Cash from oil exports to France could be used to continue developing the oil sector, the military, or other Iraqi infrastructure. Meanwhile, securing modern military goods from France would help Iraq limit Soviet influence in the country, which was largely predicated on military supplies. Iraq's increasingly close ties with France signaled to the Soviet Union that Iraq had other options for great power patrons. It also showed that the Soviet-desired model of relations with Iraq—aid in exchange for influence over policy—was not feasible.

France was not the only great power that Iraq reached out. During the same period, China emerged as a willing partner for Iraq to do business with. Like with France, China was not trying to exert pressure on the policies of Middle Eastern nations such as Iraq. On the contrary, "China actively encouraged governments and liberation movements in the region to resist intervention by the US and the Soviet Union."[110] In the wake of China's split from its fellow Communist nation, the Soviet Union, China presented itself as a non-aligned third-party opposed to what it saw as both US and USSR imperialism and influence competition. Thus, its main goal in seeking ties with Middle Eastern states was to help them resist these pressure campaigns and weaken Soviet and American power worldwide. A major way Iraq sought to undermine the USA and USSR was dismantling their alliance systems, reaching out to disaffected countries like Iraq when there appeared to be an opportunity for realignment.

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[109] Shemesh, 45
[110] Emadi, 3315

China's approach to a relationship with Iraq mirrored that of France. It sought mutually beneficial economic ties as a solid starting point for higher-level diplomacy. However, whereas France was interested in Iraq's oil and military market, China was focused on other elements of Iraq's infrastructure. The first Sino-Iraqi agreement of the Ba'athist era occurred "in June 1971 [when] China signed a protocol on economic and technical co-operation with Iraq and began to export sulphur to and buy chemical fertilisers from Iraq. China also assisted Iraq in its development projects by providing $40 million in the form of a interest-free loan."[111] China had secured its place among Iraq's diplomatic partners by providing assistance to Iraq's non-oil, non-military development. It seemed all Iraq had to do in return was grow closer to China, a process that would have likely occurred anyways given Iraq's general foreign policy desires.

Iraq was now in the process of securing a new network of various diplomatic partners which it could leverage for assistance. France and China were beginning to shut out the Soviet Union as great power patrons of Iraq. If the Soviet Union wanted to salvage its alliance with Iraq—and by extension its position in the Middle East—it would need to remember the lessons it learned in Syria after the Six Day War when it meddled in the Ba'athist Party leadership dispute: stop getting involved in domestic political struggles and focus on building bilateral ties, regardless of who is in charge.

Later Soviet-Ba'ath Interactions: Iraq Begins to Distance

By 1970, it was clear that if the Soviet Union wanted any influence or alliance with Iraq, it would need to do so on a nation-nation level, accepting the fact that it would be with the Ba'athist regime and not an ICP or ICP-Kurdish one. The Soviet Union's rival superpower had

[111] Emadi, 3317

already come to terms with this fact. A report from the CIA dated August 24, 1970 noted that "the Ba'th regime obviously is in better control of the country than ever before."[112] The Kurdish situation had been solved, the army brought in line after its failed coup against Hussein and his faction, and the ICP sidelined as junior partners in the government. The Ba'athists had learned important lessons from their failed, short-lived government in 1963 and they did a better job this time in consolidating power against potential opponents.

Meanwhile, Egypt's distancing from the Soviet Union became more apparent in the post-1970 period. With Nasser's recent death, power passed in Egypt to Anwar Sadat. A new ruler meant a new vision for Egypt and "Moscow resented Sadat's policy of de-Nasserization and his readiness to weaken ties with the Soviets in return for US pressure on Israel to withdraw from the Sinai."[113] The pressure on the Soviet Union to alter its relationship with Iraq was now increasingly urgent. Egypt's drift, beginning in the Six Day War, was now escalating. As mentioned in chapter 1, Syria also had a new government in the early 1970s under Hafez al Assad. Assad certainly did not appreciate Soviet efforts to intervene in Syrian Ba'ath Party[114] struggles and it led him to distance Syria from the USSR after he gained power.

The Soviet Union hoped it was not too late to increase ties with Iraq, its last hope for an ally in the Middle East. In 1971, "a prominent Soviet economic delegation…paid a visit to Iraq, resulting in a comprehensive economic agreement between Moscow and Baghdad."[115] In order to offset the decline in Soviet-Egyptian relations, the USSR was playing catch up against states like France and China which had established, mutualistic relations with Iraq. The Soviet Union

[112] Central Intelligence Agency Information Cable, 3
[113] Shemesh, 46
[114] Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East: From World War Two to Gorbachev,* 54
[115] Shemesh, 45

had once largely ignored Iraq in favor of pursuing relations with other Arab states. The military and economic aid it provided was predicated on Iraqi acceptance of Soviet-desired policies and actions by the Iraqi government. Now, the USSR would need to find mutually beneficial deals in the style of France, or agreements that benefitted Iraq with no real strings attached as China did. The Soviet Union had to accept that it could no longer use aid to pressure Iraqi policy.

The dynamics of Soviet-Iraqi relations had shifted in Iraq's favor. Iraq used to be the isolated state, with no choice but to turn to the USSR for help at the risk of increased pressure over policy. The relationship was now flipped in the post-1970 period, with American officials reporting that "as investment increases, Soviets may become even less inclined to jeopardize relationship with Iraq and therefore less able to resist Iraqi pressures for even more military and economic assistance."[116] The Soviet Union was isolated in the Middle East and as it became increasingly dependent on Iraq to serve as its Middle East ally (for Soviet global prestige if nothing else), Iraq—realizing the desperate position of the USSR—could push for more concessions.

The Soviet Union proved unable or unwilling to change its stance, despite lessons from the past and necessity in the moment. It continued to believe that, despite its isolated position, it could bring its superpower status and vast resources to bear against Iraq in their diplomatic relationship. American sources believed that while the Soviet Union was attempting to build new agreements with Iraq for the sake of restarting the relationship on more acceptable terms, it could not help but to put "heavy pressure on the GOI to pay the overdue installments on past Soviet

[116] Telegram 12737 from the Department of State to the Embassies in Iran, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, 2 (Dated January 22, 1972)

loans for the construction of various industrial projects."[117] If the Iraqi government bowed to Soviet demands, the Soviet Union would continue to exert influence on Iraqi actions and undermine the consolidated power of the Ba'athist regime.

This time, with other diplomatic options to turn to, Iraq was able to stand up to Soviet pressure tactics. Unlike the pre-1968 period, Iraq did not need to choose between two evils (in that case Soviet pressure or settlement with the Kurds). Instead, Iraq could focus more on ties with China, France, and the Arab states at the expense of the Soviet Union. A prominent example of Iraqi resistance to Soviet influence came after Saddam Hussein's visit to Moscow. Post-trip analysis by American foreign policy officials was as follows: "Joint Soviet-Iraq communique, issued following August 4–12 visit to USSR of Iraqi delegation headed by Saddam Hussein Tikriti, indicates Soviets failed to persuade Iraqis to modify their tough anti-Nasser stand, and that two sides continue to disagree over how to deal with ME [Middle East] situation."[118] Iraq was no longer as vulnerable to influence efforts. This only served to diminish the Soviet Union's standing among Iraq's diplomatic partners and pushed Iraq to find even more countries with which to dilute the Soviet role in Iraq.

France would prove to be a steppingstone to the restoration of Iraq's ties to other countries in the West. With Egypt's drift, other Arab states formerly allied to the Soviet Union began to attract the attention of the United States. Iraq was one such country, with the US Interests Section in Baghdad reporting to the State Department that "Iraq will be of increasing interest to the U.S. in the years ahead," and anticipating "opportunities to respond to the Iraqi

[117] Airgram 295 from the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State, 1 (Dated July 2, 1970)
[118] Telegram 4546 from the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State, 1 (Dated August 13, 1970)

requests that are bound to come."[119] The Soviet Union's self-inflicted damage in regards to relations with Iraq could not get any worse. The entirety of its Middle Eastern network was beginning to drift towards its Cold War enemy, the United States. Soviet efforts to increase its influence in the Middle East ended up decreasing its position in the region, undermining its claims to be a world power. Iraq was looking east to China, west to France and the United States, and south to the Arab world. It was no longer solely looking north to the Soviet Union.

The Soviet-Iraqi Friendship Treaty, signed in 1972, was thus a last-ditch effort for the Soviet Union to secure its relationship with Iraq. The first article of the treaty mentioned the Soviet terminology of "unbreakable friendship," which in the Soviet view "implied that the state concluding a treaty would be unable to release itself from Moscow's "friendship.""[120] Even in its last efforts to keep Iraq in the fold, the Soviet Union could not help but try and keep the door open for its self-defeating influence attempts. Iraq was nonetheless able to nullify this terminology later in the first article, which also "referred to respect for sovereignty and noninterference in internal affairs…violation, or even one-sided abrogation of the Soviet treaty, did not entail the threat of Soviet military action against that state."[121] In practice, this meant the treaty of friendship would be one between two equal powers, respectful of the sovereignty and independence of each. At this point, it was a necessary sacrifice for the Soviet Union to give up its influence efforts. The treaty was a victory as it allowed the USSR to save face and claim it had a friend in the Middle East. Its prestige was intact but its actual ability to play a role and exert influence in the region was disappearing.

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[119] Memorandum From the U.S. Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, 1 (Dated October 21, 1972)
[120] Shemesh, 71
[121] Shemesh, 71

For Iraq, the treaty was less significant in its foreign policy and global standing. The agreement was indeed symbolic as it "contains no explicit guarantees, it pledges [only] consultation."[122] Iraq was not tied down to anything that would have undermined its ability to interact with a variety of diplomatic partners. The vagueness of the treaty allowed Iraq to keep its linkages to the Soviet Union open if they were necessary in the future. It continued to pursue and increase relations with its other diplomatic partners and from 1972 to 1975, the Iraqi drift from the Soviet Union became more visible. The CIA's 1969 assessment of Soviet-Iraqi relation patterns proved to be correct and enduring for the 1968-1972 period: "Moscow has made a heavy investment in Syria and Iraq, so far without gaining the influence it wants."[123] This would continue to be true for the remainder of the 1970s, with Soviet influence not just stagnating, but declining. The Yom Kippur War in 1973 (the consequences of which will be explained in chapter three) was a major factor in Soviet influence decline in the Arab world. While the 1979 Iranian Revolution and subsequent Iran-Iraq War gave the Soviet Union one more chance to regain lost ground in the Persian Gulf, by then it was tied down with its invasion of Afghanistan, a move which had already angered Muslim countries across the world.

[122] Fukuyama, 36
[123] Soviet Relations with the Baathists in Iraq and Syria, 1

Chapter 3: Afterwards and Iraqi Drift, 1972-1975

Overview and Structure

From 1972 to 1975, Iraq escalated its process of distancing itself from alliance with the Soviet Union. The first step was reducing economic dependence on the Soviet Union as Saddam Hussein and his civilian Ba'athist allies began to more fully appreciate the power of Iraqi oil. In 1972, the Iraq Petroleum Company was nationalized[124], but Iraq succeeded in keeping and even expanding its access to Western markets. Hussein shored up his relations with France, one of its main Western buyers of Iraqi oil and this would set the stage for expanded ties a few years down the line. From there, Iraq was able to make deals with other nations such as Italy, Brazil, Spain, and Japan. Iraq was finally growing its network of diplomatic partners in the West, offsetting the monopoly the Soviet Union once had in Iraqi oil politics.

The year 1973 gave Iraq more impetus to shift its attention away from the Soviet Union. In October of that year, the Yom Kippur War broke out as Egypt and Syria launched a surprise invasion of Israel. The Israelis managed to halt the invasion and even launched counterattacks towards Cairo and Damascus. At this point, Iraq got directly involved in the war on Syria's behalf and to a greater extent than its involvement in the Six Day War was. The war ended in an Israeli victory and Iraq was once again on the losing side. In the aftermath of the conflict, Soviet (military) prestige was again called into question. Egypt, Syria, and Iraq were already drifting from the USSR, but the loss reinforced for them the idea that they would be better off seeking a more non-aligned policy. The Soviets were aware of the drift; in his reflections on the Yom Kippur War, former Soviet diplomat Viktor Israelyan writes how "we knew that relations with

[124] Shemesh, 78

Egypt and Syria had not improved. In fact, they had deteriorated during the war."[125] What this meant in practice was more opportunities for Western and Chinese involvement with the Middle East at the Soviet Union's expense.

During the Yom Kippur War, Arab countries in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) announced an oil embargo on certain Western nations they accused of backing Israel. Iraq was a member of OPEC but "refused to cut down its own production and sales, the only Arab country to do so."[126] Iraq was able to benefit from the vastly increased oil demand and prices the embargo brought about. It allowed Iraq to expand its economic ties to the West and appeared as a more stable and trustworthy oil-producing Arab nation with which to do business. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union shrank further in the eyes of the Arab world, as it sold Arab oil to the West during the embargo period.[127]

The rest of 1973 and 1974 saw Iraq and its newfound diplomatic partners expand their economic ties outside of oil. Western nations and China continued to invest in Iraqi infrastructure and development at a pace and scale that soon outmatched what the Soviets could do. Iraq also made serious efforts to end the standoff with its neighboring rival Iran. With the Yom Kippur War as a perfect rationale, Iraq was able to normalize relations with Iran. This allowed the two countries to truly reach a diplomatic agreement. It also undermined the resources and power of Iraq's Kurdish population. In April 1975, Iraq finally succeeded in crushing Kurdish resistance.[128] From there, it also proceeded to make a formal treaty with Iran ending the conflict and solving previous disputes over issues like the Shatt-al-Arab. With no

[125] Viktor Israelyan, *Inside the Kremlin During the Yom Kippur War* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 213
[126] Smolansky and Smolansky, 21
[127] Smolansky and Smolansky, 21
[128] Shemesh, 127

domestic or foreign threat and a network of Western diplomatic partners to do business with, Iraq no longer needed to rely solely on a Soviet ally that was already diminished on the world stage.

Iraqi Oil Nationalization and More Ties to the West

For a long period, the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC) dominated control of Iraq's oil resources. The IPC was a consortium of foreign oil groups, representing in particular "British, French, American, and Dutch interests."[129] However, the Soviet Union provided Iraq with the assistance it needed to seriously pursue control over its own oil resources. This aid ultimately served to help Iraq become more economically self-sufficient and thus, distance itself from the Soviet Union. In 1969, the USSR provided "$140 million in assistance toward the development of the expropriated fields and the Iraqi National Oil Company (INOC)."[130] The creation of INOC under Iraqi government control created a viable, alternative source for the management and expansion of Iraq's oil fields. If and when the IPC was nationalized, the transition would be smoother and throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, Iraq increased its demands on the IPC as it moved towards nationalization.

At this point in the Soviet-Iraqi relationship, Iraq was still willing to accept Soviet economic and military assistance, as seen by Saddam Hussein's prominent 1972 trip to Moscow. The two countries had recently signed a friendship treaty and Iraq leveraged this Soviet desire for a lockdown of the alliance. It would prove extremely useful in the early days of Iraq's development of the nationalized oil industry. Initially, the Western world boycotted Iraqi oil as a protest to nationalization, a move the West would have perceived as socialist and diminishing to

[129] Michael E. Brown, "The Nationalization of the Iraqi Petroleum Company," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 10, no. 1 (1979): 108
[130] Brown, 110

Western influence on oil (both of which were true). The Soviet Union thus played a crucial role in marketing and moving Iraqi oil, as "Soviet tankers started transporting Iraqi oil, transferred through a pipeline to the Syrian port of Banias, for marketing in East European states."[131] With the risk of losing an important source of oil to their eastern bloc enemies, the Western world realized they would need to be pragmatic and engage with Iraq on its terms. Iraq simultaneously moved to gain the support of capitalist nations for its newly nationalized oil industry. Continuing its foreign policy of pragmatic agreements and a network of diplomatic partners, "in the early 1970s economic and technical cooperation in exchange for petroleum was also sought (and received) from France, Spain, Italy, and Brazil."[132] By placating Western interests that were negatively affected by IPC's nationalization, Iraq hoped to limit its dependence on a singular nation, in this case the Soviet Union.

Iraq's success in rebuilding oil ties with the West on more favorable conditions speaks to Saddam Hussein's pragmatism and political skill. He eschewed the more standoffish approaches of earlier, military-dominated Iraqi Ba'athist governments and saw what could be achieved with a diplomacy-first approach. During the post-nationalization period, Hussein weakened the Western boycott by creating a split among the national interests represented in the IPC. For example, "from June 14 to 18, 1972, Saddam Hussein paid his first visit to France, reaching a long-term accord for providing Iraqi oil to the French company affected by nationalization."[133] Hussein's willingness to cooperate with Iraqi partners allowed disputes over issues like Iraqi oil nationalization to be settled on mutually satisfactory terms.

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[131] Shemesh, 79
[132] Smolansky and Smolansky, 50
[133] Shemesh, 79

It also led the West to view Iraq as a nation that could be at least somewhat trusted and cooperated with. Even the United States recognized this prospect; a 1976 CIA report reflecting on Iraq under Ba'ath rule noted "Iraq prefers, has followed, and will adhere to an independent, nonaligned foreign policy."[134] New economic and oil ties to the West were a necessary step in Iraq's drift from the Soviets and towards the West in a rebalancing act that would better allow it to remain nonaligned, with multiple partners. The West was also willing to pay for Iraqi oil in hard currency, the method that Iraq preferred, while the USSR insisted on barter agreements.[135] The Soviet Union from an economic standpoint was a decreasingly attractive partner. In 1973, with the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, the Soviet Union would also prove less desirable as a military supplier.

The Yom Kippur War and its Political-Military Impact

Since Egypt's defeat in the Six Day War and the subsequent major territorial loss to Israel, it had been planning ways to recover the territory and put Israel on the defensive, both diplomatically and militarily. The Soviet Union was hesitant to see another major Arab-Israeli war and it pressured Nasser to follow a strategy of "putting mounting pressure on Israel through a war of attrition which might, if successful, culminate in a massive crossing to seize and hold a bridgehead."[136] The Soviet Union had multiple countries it needed to arm and otherwise financially support. Another Egyptian offensive would drain more Soviet resources and run the risk of further tarnishing Soviet military prowess in international eyes should the attack fail. The Soviet Union had to balance keeping its allies satisfied, ensuring resources were not over

[134] CIA, *Research Study: Iraq Under Baath Rule, 1968-1976,* 1
[135] Shemesh, 80
[136] Nadav Safran, "Trial by Ordeal: The Yom Kippur War, October 1973," *International Security* 2, no. 2 (1977): 134

drained, and prevent the outbreak of conflicts which could escalate and create a superpower standoff.

The attrition strategy proved unsuccessful as Israel adopted a strategy of large-scale retaliation to deter even small-scale attacks.[137] With Sadat's rise to power, Soviet influence in the country diminished significantly and plans were drawn up for a surprise Egyptian attack on Israel. On October 6, 1973, Egypt (with the help of Syria) launched a full-scale offensive, taking the Israelis by surprise. The Egyptian "invaders rapidly increased their strength and consolidated and extended the bridgeheads they gained,"[138] securing their line in preparation for an eventual Israeli counterattack. While the situation stalled in the south, on the northern front the Israelis were better able to blunt the Syrians as "Israeli high command had expected a Syrian offensive to make its main breakthrough effort, and Northern Command had deployed its forces accordingly."[139] After about four days of fighting, a stalemate ensued between the exhausted Israeli, Syrian, and Egyptian forces. At this point, Iraq saw an opportunity to better its diplomatic standing.

One of the main attractions for Iraq of maintaining relations or alliance with the Soviet Union was to assist in its long-standing competition with Iran for hegemony in the Gulf region. Iran had the backing of a superpower, the United States. Acquiring military and economic assistance from the other superpower, the Soviet Union, would be critical in offsetting this Iranian advantage. However, with the rise of Saddam Hussein, Iraqi foreign policy towards Iran shifted in a way that mirrored its general stance of diplomacy and creating ties with various

[137] Safran, 134
[138] Safran, 145
[139] Safran, 146

nations. If Iraq and Iran could put aside their differences, Iraq would be less reliant on the Soviet Union for (military) assistance.

Therefore, "on October 7, 1973, a day after the outbreak of the October war, Baghdad announced its decision to restore diplomatic ties with Tehran."[140] The decision allowed Iraq to accomplish four simultaneous goals: First, it was a necessary beginning step at ending conflict with Iran. Second, it would free Iraq up to dispatch troops to assist potential Arab allies fighting against Israel in the Yom Kippur War. Third, Iran would be incentivized to end its support for the Iraqi Kurds. Finally, the combination of the first three goals would allow Iraq to finalize its drift from the Soviet Union as Iraq could turn to Arab allies, Iran, and the Western states it began oil contacts with in the leadup to the Six Day War.

When Egypt and Syria needed resupply and reinforcements to resume the offensive, Iraqi forces moved as quick as they could towards the frontlines. On October 12th, 1973, advance elements of an Iraqi tank group caught an Israeli general by surprise with a flank attack from the south.[141] The Iraqi tank force was defeated, but the presence of large-scale Iraqi forces was enough to impact the overall military situation. Although the Israeli counteroffensive had managed to reach the outskirts of Damascus, "Syrian forces were not destroyed, Iraqi and Jordanian forces were able to join the battle in time…and Syria was not taken out of the war decisively enough to permit the transfer of substantial ground forces to the southern front."[142] The war was becoming one of attrition, which had a more significant impact on Israel given its smaller population and resources, as well as the success of Egyptian forces up to that point.

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[140] Shemesh, 115
[141] Safran, 156
[142] Safran, 157

The Yom Kippur War not only allowed Iraq to expand its cooperation with fellow Arab states, it also gave Iraq an opportunity to demonstrate how much it had drifted from the Soviet Union. Iraqi military doctrine "tended toward eclecticism—despite the Soviet origin of much of their arms—adding Soviet, French, American, and indigenous Iraqi touches to their mostly British tactics."[143] In many respects, Iraqi military practices reflected the country's general foreign policy: nonalignment, avoid dependence on one power, and leverage benefits from a multitude of diplomatic partners. Iraq's rejection of Soviet doctrine demonstrated how, in the wake of the Six Day War, many in the Arab world no longer saw the USSR as militarily strong as it once was. For example, certain Egyptian writers like "Anwar Abdel-Malek and Mahmoud Hussein have argued that from the late 1950s onwards, 'reliance on Russian weapons systems and the tactics which such systems necessarily implied,' hindered Egyptian military operations."[144] The Yom Kippur War of 1973 was therefore a second (and last) chance for the USSR to prove its military was capable and Arab states could rely on the Soviets. The Soviets took a big gamble with the Yom Kippur War. They believed that arms, propaganda, and threatened military intervention if needed, coupled with the Arab element of surprise, would restore the balance of power in the Middle East and bring aloof Arab allies back into the Soviet fold. Soviet involvement was to such an extent that "some would go so far as to argue that the Russians planned and instigated the October war."[145] However, the Soviet Union also recognized that, like in the Six Day War, involvement with any future Arab-Israeli conflict came with risks no matter the outcome.

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[143] Michael Eisenstadt and Kenneth M. Pollack, "Armies of Snow and Armies of Sand: The Impact of Soviet Military Doctrine on Arab Armies," *Middle East Journal* 55, no. 4 (2001): 550

[144] Eisenstadt and Pollack, 550

[145] William B. Quandt, "Soviet Policy in the October Middle East War - I," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 53, no. 3 (1977): 377

The Soviets were primarily concerned about the worst-case scenario, because "if the Arabs did poorly, Soviet prestige and credibility as an ally would be in jeopardy; pressures could rise for direct Soviet involvement to save the situation."[146] Soviet prestige and credibility were already at critically-low levels after the disaster of the Six Day War. If it were to happen again only six years later, the Arab world would get serious about its search for new great power patrons. Even an Arab victory came with risks, namely American intervention or Israeli use of nuclear weapons. Given this lose-lose scenario, the Soviet Union pushed its Arab allies to find a diplomatic solution for Israel.[147]

By 1973, such an agreement had not been found yet. The Soviet Union's refusal to take on the risks of war and its continued push for a peace undermined its position among important states like Egypt. Sadat ultimately decided that "if the Russians could not guarantee Egypt against military defeat, then their presence there was more of a problem than it was worth."[148] He thus made the decision in 1972 to expel Soviet military advisors from Egypt[149], allowing him the option to pursue diplomatic relations with the United States and its allied powers in the Middle East such as Saudi Arabia. The Soviets were in an extremely difficult position: they could continue pushing for a peaceful resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and speed up Egypt's drift away from Soviet alliance, or they could assist the Arabs in planning another war, knowing the negative consequences that could come with victory or defeat. The USSR gambled on war, realizing "a super-power can only deny arms to a client so many times without damaging its

[146] Quandt, 379
[147] Israelyan, *Inside the Kremlin During the Yom Kippur War,* 3
[148] Quandt, 380
[149] Shemesh, 80

reputation and influence."[150] It would prove to be a costly error, as by the end of the war, "the Israelis regained the upper hand, bringing the Egyptian and Syrian armies to the verge of defeat."[151]

In order for Soviet Union ceasefire proposals at the UN to be effective in maintaining initial Arab gains, the Arab states had to support it. However, once the Soviets had thrown their lot in with the war option, they found that "Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat's bravado could not mislead them…an immediate ceasefire with the cooperation of Sadat was hopeless."[152] With surprise and resources on its side, Egypt felt it could settle for more than just its limited, initial gains. As the war dragged on, Israel's position recovered. It continued to break through in the Suez Canal and Soviet military leaders believed this would lead to the Egyptian army being surrounded and defeated, with the war lost.[153] The USSR had no way to compel Egypt to accept an earlier ceasefire plan that could have included withdrawal of Israeli forces to pre-1967 lines. Now, they would be lucky to secure an immediate ceasefire and save face in the midst of a decisive defeat. All of this demonstrated the limited control that the Soviet Union had over its allies.

In the West, the US-Soviet agreement to end the Yom Kippur War was seen as a major Soviet concession. President Nixon wrote in his memoir that "these terms were especially notable because they were the first in which the Soviets had agreed to a resolution that called for direct negotiation between the parties without any conditions or qualifications."[154] It seemed the United States and Israel were one step closer to achieving their desired settlement of the Arab-

[150] Quandt, 381
[151] Primakov, 145
[152] Israelyan, "The October 1973 War: Kissinger in Moscow," *Middle East Journal* 49, no. 2 (1995): 249
[153] Israelyan, "The October 1973 War: Kissinger in Moscow," 257
[154] Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York, NY: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), 936

Israeli settlement. Soviet officials perceived it differently; although Israel ended the Yom Kippur still occupying Arab lands gained during the Six Day War, "the Arabs were in a stronger bargaining position than at any time since 1948."[155] The Yom Kippur War caught Israel off-guard and showed that Israel's military was not invincible. It also proved a successful testing ground for a useful tool in Arab diplomacy: oil. The OPEC oil embargo in response to Western support for Israel during the Yom Kippur War showed Arab nations had a bigger diplomatic arsenal than just military support. Iraq in particular took advantage of the embargo to continue strengthening and expanding its oil industry, drifting away from the USSR.

OPEC Embargo and Expansion of Iraqi Oil Power

In the middle of the Yom Kippur War, on October 19, 1973, President Nixon requested that Congress make $2.2 billion in emergency aid available for Israel.[156] In response to this news, the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) placed an oil embargo on the United States. The Arab world hoped that oil could be wielded as an economic and diplomatic weapon to reduce or cease US support for Israel against its Arab foes. There were two parts to the OAPEC blockade: First, OAPEC countries stopped importing oil from the United States. Second, OAPEC countries cut oil production in order to drastically increase barrel prices. Ultimately, "these cuts nearly quadrupled the price of oil from $2.90 a barrel before the embargo to $11.65 a barrel by January 1974."[157] Two months later, OAPEC ended the embargo but the increased oil prices remained, permanently altering global market dynamics and showing the world a powerful new weapon in the Arab world's diplomatic arsenal.

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[155] Israelyan, 267
[156] Corbett, "Oil Shock of 1973-74," *Federal Reserve History* (Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, November 22, 2013)
[157] Corbett

Under the shrewd leadership of Saddam Hussein, Iraq found a way to use all the advantages of the oil embargo while avoiding the negative consequences. While other OAPEC countries cut their production to raise prices, "Iraq refused to cut down its own production and sales, the only Arab country to do so."[158] Iraq paid lip service to Arab solidarity by its membership in OAPEC and "participation" in the embargo. However, Iraq simultaneously took advantage of raised prices from other countries' production cuts to expand its sales to previous Western diplomatic partners, growing its oil industry and economy. Israel did not neighbor Iraq, so it chose to put practical interests first without necessarily sacrificing the ideological affinity needed with other countries in the Arab world.

The Soviet Union also found ways to expand its interests during the oil embargo, but unlike Iraq, this decision came with diplomatic repercussions. As the Soviets were supportive of the Arabs in their conflict with Israel, the oil embargo did not target them. In fact, "after 1973 the USSR continued to receive Iraqi petroleum at the pre-increase price of below $3.00 per barrel."[159] In order to boost their economy, the Soviets then sold this oil to Western countries for much higher prices. In other cases, the USSR would willingly undersell OPEC producers to expand old markets or create new ones.[160] The Soviet economy thus received a massive increase in strength thanks to the western world's need for oil and a willingness to pay large amounts for it.

The USSR's decision to sell Arab oil to the West was an economically sensible move, but when this ploy was discovered, the Soviet Union "was accused by the Arab press of making

[158] Smolansky, 21
[159] Smolansky, 21
[160] Smolansky, 21

'massive profits' on the sale of Iraqi petroleum and of helping to 'destroy the Arab oil weapon.'"[161] This political development was humiliating for Middle Eastern countries. The Soviet leadership appeared extremely hypocritical as these Soviet oil moves happened "at a time when 'some Soviet officials actively sought to induce the Arab countries to withhold oil from the West.'"[162] Soviet prestige and reliability as an ally had already been thrown into doubt after the Arab defeat in the Six Day War and stalemate/loss in the Yom Kippur War. Now, the Arab world could not trust the Soviet Union in general matters of economy or diplomatic positioning. This helps explain why countries such as Egypt, Syria, and Iraq began to speed up their diplomatic distancing from the Soviet Union after 1973. The Soviet Union only acted in its own self-interest, so Arab countries such as Iraq adopted the same strategy. It was increasingly clear that in this era of pragmatic politics, it made more sense for countries such as Iraq to expand ties with the west and not with a tarnished, weaker Soviet Union.

Expanding New Ties, 1973-1974

Iraq's drift towards the West was a clear demonstration of how much influence Saddam Hussein now had over the Iraqi Ba'ath Party and thus, the Iraqi government. In July 1973, during an interview with Western journalists, Hussein "clearly announced Iraq's willingness to deviate from its pro-Soviet orientation and improve relations with the west."[163] In many respects, Saddam Hussein can be compared with Hafez al-Assad (who is discussed further in chapter 1): both were Ba'athist, both seized *de facto* control of their national governments in the early 1970s, and both followed a pragmatic foreign policy which involved freeing themselves from

[161] Somlansky, 21
[162] Somlansky, 21
[163] Shemesh, 111

Soviet influence. It was better for Iraq and Syria to pursue the West, with its multitude of countries, economic strength, and advanced militaries. Unlike the West, the Warsaw Pact and eastern bloc countries were satellites to their superpower patron, the USSR. The economies and militaries were also beginning to fall behind the West, seen by the Soviet Union's unwillingness and inability to accept Iraq and other third world countries into Comecon.[164]

The Soviet Union pinned its Iraq hopes on President Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr, realizing that "as a sixty-year old statesman in poor health, Bakr opted for conducting a more cautious policy on a variety of issues – among them the weakening of relations with the Soviets."[165] Yet Bakr's older age and bad health prevented him from reining in Hussein, who was young, ambitious, and gradually solidifying his position. In addition, as president, Bakr still had final say on key decisions. Although he did not initiate Iraq's drift from the USSR, he gave it his approval. In January 1974, Iraq convened the Eighth Regional Iraqi Congress of the Ba'ath to update the Iraqi government's vision and long-term goals. Saddam Hussein used the congress to his advantage, officially cementing a drift from the Soviet Union as Iraq's foreign policy. The representatives approved an expansion with Iraqi-US economic relations, as well as increased ties with fellow Arabs, Western Europe, Japan, and even China.[166] Iraq's pragmatic approach to international relations was now confirmed at a government level and was no longer just Saddam Hussein's will.

In the wake of this development, Western countries scrambled to get involved with Iraq's economy. Japan especially proved an enticing new partner as "Iraq's imports from Japan

[164] Shemesh, 79
[165] Shemesh, 111
[166] Shemesh, 112

increased from $61 million in 1973 to $264 million in 1974… Japan's share of Iraq's total imports rose from 7 percent in 1973 to 11 percent in 1974."[167] Other nations like West Germany and the United States also saw their role in the Iraqi economy grow. Western gains came at the East's expense: The Soviet Union's import share dropped from 9 percent to 5 percent and the total Soviet bloc share dropped from 21 percent to 13 percent. Karen Dawisha summarizes the shift best in her statement that "the changes brought about by the increase in OAPEC power have not all worked in Moscow's favour."[168] Iraq was no longer economically dependent on Soviet aid. Using the money acquired from oil sales, Iraq preferred to buy the higher quality goods and services of the West in a mutually beneficial, capitalist, pragmatic interaction.

China was another great power that Iraq could turn to. Initially, China did not put too much attention into its relationship with Iraq. The Chinese desired to reduce Soviet and American influence in Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq, but this was difficult considering the geographic distance and "because Beijing could not compete with Western technology. At the political level, Beijing still considered Baghdad pro-Soviet."[169] China's foreign policy was ideological: it wanted to ally with states interested in joining its project of resisting imperial, superpower intervention in the third world. China knew it could not hope to compete with the resources that alliance with the West or the USSR brought.

Hafizullah demonstrates in his article that the Chinese were patient and willing to act when the opportunity was right. When a third world country began to pursue non-alignment, China inserted itself into the situation, established a relationship or alliance with the country, and

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[167] Shemesh, 112
[168] Karen Dawisha, "Sphinx and Commissar: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence in the Arab World," *Third World Quarterly, Vol. 1, No. 3* (Jul., 1979): 142
[169] Shemesh, 112

pushed it to join China's ideology, as well as the mission of limiting superpower intervention across the world. The 1970s proved to be China's time with Iraq, as "with normalization of relations with the US in the mid-1970s China came to regard the Soviet Union as the chief imperialist aggressor in the Middle East."[170] With its focus now solely on blocking Soviet influence efforts, China looked to countries in the process of drifting from the Soviet Union, such as Iraq. China wanted to help those countries drift even further so that Soviet influence and ideology in the region would disappear.

To that end, China continued developing economic relations with Iraq. "In 1973 China's aid to Iraq included the construction of a 666-metre bridge over the Tigris river and linking the Baghdad-Mosul highway with the express road to Turkey. By agreeing to purchase over 1,000,000 tons of Iraqi dates, China became Iraq's biggest customer for this product."[171] Iraq could now turn to the West or to China for the aid it needed, surpassing what could be acquired from dependence on the USSR. Just like Assad played the Chinese off the Soviet Union during Syria's Ba'ath factional struggles in the early 1970s, so Iraq could play China off the Soviet Union to acquire more economic concessions or force the USSR to reduce its influence efforts. With its foreign affairs secure and strong diplomatic partners in both the West and China, Iraq next moved to a final resolution with the Kurdish issue, a move that would allow them to reduce their need for Soviet military aid.

[170] Emadi, 3315
[171] Emadi, 3317

The Suppression of the Iraqi Kurds

The Iraqi Kurds, with their advantageous geographical position, effective defense forces, and nationalistic aspirations, could prove to be a thorn in the side of any Iraqi government if not handled properly. Earlier during the Ba'ath regime post-1968, Iraq halted its military operations to bring the Kurdish under control. It instead focused on outmaneuvering the Iraqi Communists and building new diplomatic networks to distance Iraq from the Soviet Union. This stronger foreign policy position would actually prove useful in allowing the Ba'athist government to finally resolve the Kurdish issue on more favorable terms.

The first step in moving to defeat the Kurds once and for all was the resumption of Iraq-Iranian relations. American State Department officials noted that "Baath leaders have recognized necessity of rapprochement with Iran as prerequisite for dealing with Kurds."[172] In previous diplomatic flare-ups with Iraq, Iran could send arms to the Iraqi Kurds and encourage them to rise up in insurgency, weakening Iraq's overall position. However, Iraq was now taking a more diplomatic approach. Iran did not want to jeopardize newly normalized relations and it would be a bad look for Iran if it continued arming the Kurds despite Iraqi overtures.

By March 1974, Iraqi-Iranian relations were rapidly improving. The Iraqi military was no longer bogged down with the Arab-Israeli conflict (Yom Kippur War) and for the moment did not need to worry about clashes with Iran. Thus, the entirety of Iraq's military strength could be brought to bear against the Kurds, in a way not possible in the late 1960s. The Iraqi government carried out a series of moves to make life harder for the Kurds as they prepared for military action. First, "on 11 March the Ba'ath Government in Baghdad unilaterally promulgated a decree

[172] Telegram from the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, 670 (Dated November 4, 1973)

giving limited autonomy to the Kurdish areas of Iraq."[173] This provided Iraq some diplomatic cover to carry out a unilateral offensive against the Kurds: Iraq appeared to want a peaceful solution and gave the Kurds at least some of what they desired (autonomy/self-rule), but could argue that the Kurds' obstinancy and continued insurgency left Iraq no choice.

Next, Iraq destabilized the Kurdish territories. State Department officials described how "Turkish military forces were sealing the border to the north of Barzani's forces and that Iraq has imposed an economic blockade."[174] Kurds moving *en masse* to the north to escape the Iraqi offensive or prepare to fight it found themselves in a territory that was now cut off and did not have the proper amount of necessary supplies. Furthermore, the support from Turkey and professed noninterference from Iran were new elements to Iraq's planned offensive: diplomatic cover in the eyes of the world and even a few nearby powers playing a part in it.

After a few more months of standoff, in September 1974, the Iraqis finally launched their attack. Recognizing the potential for Iran to intervene on behalf of the Kurds despite normalized relations, the Iraqi battle plan consisted of advancing "along a route roughly parallel to the Iranian border until they reach the Turkish border and then fortify this line to prevent the inflow of Iranian supplies and the outflow of Kurdish civilians."[175] This strategy would continue to put the squeeze on the Kurdish; without military or humanitarian supplies, they would be forced to surrender.

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[173] Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Colby to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), 680 (Dated March 21, 1974)
[174] Backchannel Message From the Ambassador to Iran (Helms) to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Scowcroft), 679 (Dated March 18, 1974)
[175] Telegram from the Consulate in Tabriz to the Department of State, 711 (Dated September 4, 1974)

The success of this plan led Iran to intervene on a massive and direct scale to assist the Kurds. However, Iran's ally in the United States disapproved of such a move. In a telegram from the State Department's interest section in Iraq, American diplomats argued that it was "time for U.S. to make strongest possible demarche to Shah to end this intervention."[176] The war would only serve to weaken Iran's economy and military, as well as setback the large progress made at peaceful, regular relations between Iraq and Iran. It risked spiraling into a large-scale regional conflict and in American eyes, the Kurds were fighting a hopeless battle anyways.[177] Thus, the Kurds should be left to their fate and Iran should end its rivalry with Iraq. This would give Iraq more opportunities to drift towards the US and away from the USSR.

(Temporary) End to the Iraqi-Iranian Rivalry

Iraq was in a strong position with its offensive into the Kurdish areas. The offensive was going well, to the point that Iran felt a need to intervene more directly. Iran's entrance into the conflict risked its support from the two superpowers: the USA (which was already a solidly established ally) and the USSR, which "beginning in 1972, on the matters of the Gulf…was more supportive of Tehran than of Baghdad."[178] Both superpowers saw Iran as the aggressor, with an unnecessary intervention that could lead to a regional conflict and another USA-USSR standoff as happened in the previous Arab-Israeli wars. It was clear the Kurds could never have won, and Iran was only seeking to destabilize Iraq, in an effort that had gone too far.

The USSR wanted the situation resolved quickly. It also wanted Iran to realize that continued support for the Kurds was futile and would be outmatched by Soviet support for Iraq.

[176] Telegram From the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, 731 (Dated December 23, 1974)
[177] Telegram From the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State, 731
[178] Smolansky, 167

In the summer of 1974, Iran gave artillery support and antiaircraft weapons to the Kurds. Responding to that, the Soviets provided Iraq with new Mig-23 fighter-bombers.[179] If Iran continued escalating its involvement on behalf of the Kurds, it would only suffer more military losses while its rival Iraq would strengthen from the combat experience and Soviet aid. Iraq had already conquered most of Kurdistan anyways, believing that "it would be able to complete the occupation of the Kurdish region not only by military means…but by diplomatic means as well."[180] Iran would have to decide if resisting this militarily was worth more losses and the threat of a regional war spiraling out of control. It could also accept Iraqi control over Kurdish areas and try to exert concessions with the momentum its intervention had achieved.

The Shah ultimately chose the second option, declaring "his willingness to terminate his aid to the Kurds in return for Iraq's assent to rescind the 1937 treaty,"[181] that gave Iraq dominance in the Shatt-al-Arab between the two countries. During an OPEC meeting in March 1975 in Algiers, the Shah and Saddam Hussein held talks and, with the aid of the Algerian president, came to an agreement. It essentially met the Shah's terms: Iran finally ended its support for the Kurds and Iraq agreed that the Shatt-al-Arab should have a new demarcation line.[182] The Kurds no longer had foreign support and tensions with Iran had cooled significantly, meaning Iraq no longer required Soviet military aid, the last thread keeping Iraq and the USSR tied together.

Iraq and Iran both desired for Iraq to loosen its ties with the Soviet Union and the Algiers agreement would allow that to happen. The Iranians likely felt that Iraq would be in a weaker

[179] Shemesh, 123
[180] Shemesh, 123
[181] Shemesh, 124
[182] Shemesh, 125

position without Soviet support to counter the US patronage of Iran. Iraq was still pursuing a foreign policy of nonalignment and multiple diplomatic partners, so new ties with Iran lessened Iraqi need for a Soviet ally and added Iran into the network of Iraqi diplomatic connections. Iraq and Iran wanted the Gulf region that they dominated "safeguarded against foreign aggression."[183] Any remaining influence the Soviet Union had in Iraq (and the Gulf Region in general) seemed to be gone. Iraq had successfully achieved a nonaligned status and a stable Ba'athist regime while the Soviet Union's influence efforts failed, with its position in the region severely depleted.

[183] Shemesh, 125

Conclusion: Looking at the Big Picture

"I believe politicians should always remain realistic." – Eduard Shevardnadze

The dynamics of the Soviet-Iraqi relationship in the late 1960s and early 1970s are complex yet fascinating to study. Within the context and pressures of the Cold War, the Soviet Union made a push for alliance with Iraq to cement its position in the region. The USSR entered the relationship with Iraq with all the advantages of its superpower status, such as a network of allies or its renowned military and economic strength. Iraq's diplomatic isolation also played into Soviet hands as the USSR sought to meddle in Iraqi affairs and exert influence in order to bring Iraq into its fold. This was a process the Soviet Union was already replicating in other Arab states with similar regimes to Iraq, such as Egypt and Syria. At a glance, it appeared that Soviet Union had a network of client states in the Middle East.

However, Iraq under the Ba'athist rule of Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein successfully resisted Soviet pressure. By shoring up its domestic stability, the Ba'athist regime was less dependent on the USSR for economic and military aid, the main tools by which the Soviet Union could exert influence. With its position secure, the Iraqi government felt comfortable enough to seek out relations with new diplomatic partners, offsetting the role the Soviet Union previously played in Iraqi foreign policy. The Soviet Union was worried about the prospect of losing Iraq as an ally. For reasons of prestige and to reinforce its status as a superpower, the USSR needed Iraq so it could claim to be influential in Middle Eastern affairs. Iraq recognized this and was thus able to demand the Soviet Union to provide major concessions in order to maintain a relationship. Primakov notes the Soviet Union "could not take its military and economic relations with Baghdad for granted, especially as it had started to lose its foothold

in Sadat's Egypt…it was still the time of the cold war."[184] As a result, the USSR had little choice but to give concessions to Iraq or risk losing it as a partner.

Like every diplomatic interaction, the Soviet-Iraqi relationship has elements which make it unique. Some of these factors that determined the course of their relationship include the role of oil, Kurds, the Iraqi Communist Party, and Iran. However, the general progression and results of Soviet-Iraqi relations mirrored the USSR's influence efforts with Syria, Egypt, and perhaps even Yemen. The Smolanskys argue that "the Soviets had learned the hard way that most of the leading neutralist (later nonaligned) states were using the USSR for their own purposes and refused to pursue policies which contradicted their perceived vital interests."[185] Indeed, in each of these cases, the USSR tried to exert influence over the Arab country through military and economic aid. The Arab country responded by strengthening its domestic position, seeking out new foreign partners, and taking other steps to reduce dependence on the USSR. The case study of Soviet-Iraqi relations provides three important conclusions indicative of Cold War trends and great power-local power relations more broadly.

First, the Soviet-Iraqi relationship demonstrates that the great power does not control the actions of its local ally or the terms of alliance. Instead, the balance of power in the relationship is tipped towards the local state. As Iraq shows, the client has the ability to influence its great power patron and acquire many concessions. This is mainly due to the asymmetry in great power concerns versus local power concerns. The great power wanted to maintain this "great" status. It is an important symbol of position, general diplomatic standing/influence, and national prestige. Having a large network of allies and diplomatic partners to interact with is crucial in maintaining

[184] Primakov, 308
[185] Smolanksy and Smolansky, x

this great power status. In order to maintain these worldwide connections, the great power is willing to make concessions to its smaller allies if it maintains the formality of the relationship or keeps the smaller nation from joining a rival great power's camp. For example, the Soviet Union was willing to accept Ba'athist domination of Iraq (and the subversion of its Communist allies) in exchange for Iraq signing a treaty of friendship with the USSR.

By contrast, the local power cares about interests more relevant to its smaller size and diplomatic standing. This may include issues like national security, regime survival, economic development, and general stability/well-being. While the local power may be interested in rising to a level of regional prominence, this status is arguably easier to achieve and maintain than a world/great power status. Whereas the great power state has to balance out the desires and demands of various diplomatic partners, a local power state is primarily interacting with regional partners. For example, Iraq during the period examined wanted better relations with its Arab neighbors. These Arab states were easier to interact with as they shared regional, cultural, and political similarities with Iraq. During Iraq's decision to nationalize its oil industry, its "position was reinforced by Syria, which had simultaneously nationalized all IPC holdings on Syrian territory and had reached an agreement with Iraq on the transportation of Iraqi oil to the Mediterranean."[186]

In addition, those countries were also local powers, meaning their relations with Iraq were not based on influence efforts and status maintenance, but on mutual benefits to ensure national stability and development. The local power also often has multiple great powers competing for its friendship as each desires an ally in the region to maintain great power status.

[186] Primakov, 306

The local power can then play the great powers off each other for material benefits. Iraq did this in the early 1970s, playing France and the Soviet Union against each other. The asymmetry of interests between the great and local powers is clear. With fewer and smaller-scale interests to worry about, a local power is ultimately able to secure major concessions from great powers. In turn, the great powers are forced to abandon or lessen their influence efforts on a potential local ally, as competition with other great powers and the drawbacks of its large status manifest.

Second, the Soviet-Iraqi relationship shows that domestic policies and situations are often the driving forces behind foreign policy decisions. Domestic policy certainly has an impact on a great power's foreign policy actions. In the case of the Soviet Union and Iraq, domestic concerns actually proved so important that they led the USSR to make foreign policy decisions with long-term negative consequences. During the Yom Kippur War and concurrent oil embargo, the Soviet Union still had the opportunity to buy Arab oil at pre-embargo prices. The Soviet Union would buy the oil from Arab states and sell it to Western powers under embargo at profit, but for lower than the price of Arab oil. This undercut the effectiveness of the embargo and led many Arab nations to question the loyalty and necessity of relationship with the Soviet Union. France was another great power in this time period that allowed domestic concerns to affect foreign policy. One of the main reasons why France increased its engagement with Iraq in the early and mid-1970s was to acquire Iraqi oil and open a new market for French exports. These great powers thus demonstrate the influence of domestic policy—especially economic concerns—have on foreign decisions.

Domestic policy has even more of an impact on a local power's foreign affairs. When a local power has a new or domestically unstable regime, it is limited in its ability to act on the

foreign affairs stage. In this weakened position, an opposition group or a coalition of anti-regime forces could overthrow the government given the right opportunity. It is during this time that a great power has the best chance at exerting influence in the country and creating a client regime. The great power often has the ability to simultaneously make ties with the ruling regime and an opposition group or two. If the government does not take actions in line with the great power's desires, it can shift more support to the opposition group until the ruling regime falls in line or is overthrown by the opposition group. The opposition group would acknowledge the role the great power played in bringing it to power and thus, would be willing to act in line with the great power's interests. This was certainly the case with the Soviet Union in Iraq. In 1968, the Ba'athist regime took over, but it was in an unstable position and had yet to solidify its influence. To that end, the USSR allied with the Iraqi Communist Party and the Iraqi Kurds, two strong, domestic opposition forces.

Rather than become a client of the great power, the local power does what it can to stabilize its domestic position and the strength of the ruling regime. In the case of Iraq, the Ba'athists proved willing to negotiate an agreement with the Iraqi Kurds. By themselves, the Iraqi Communists were not strong enough to take on the Ba'athists. They could either be repressed into irrelevance or join the Ba'athists as controlled, junior partners. The Communists ultimately chose the second option, preferring to have some influence than none at all. With domestic position secure, the local power is less reliant on the great power for economic and military aid, tools by which the ruling regime otherwise secures its position and the great power cements its influence. Through effective political maneuvering, the Iraqi Ba'athists broke this cycle and created a position of domestic stability for the local power.

This leads to the third general conclusion: as a regime becomes stronger and more secure in its domestic position, it pursues a more multilateral and non-aligned foreign policy. Once again, the case study of Iraq and the Soviet Union highlights this trend. With the rise of Saddam Hussein and his civilian faction of the Ba'athist Party, Iraq's ruling regime proved more willing to take the realistic measures necessary to stabilize control, such as peace agreement with the Kurds. This pragmatism then allowed Hussein and the Iraqi Ba'athists to reach out to new diplomatic partners and balance out the formerly unilateral relationship with the Soviet Union. France and China in particular were two countries interested in cultivating ties with Iraq, the former for economic reasons and the later for ideological ones. Iraq now had three great powers it was regularly interacting with, meaning its foreign policy was more non-aligned. It reduced the effectiveness of great power influence efforts as the local power Iraq could play the three nations off each other. In a demonstration that Iraq had options, Saddam Hussein traveled to France only a few months after his 1972 visit to the Soviet Union.

The local power also cultivates ties with other states in the region and attempts to create its own bloc. These nations can exercise significant influence on the world stage as was the case with the Arab oil embargo in 1973. Good relations with neighbors are also important in improving a local power's national security, reducing its dependence on military aid from a great power seeking ways to increase its influence. For example, during the Yom Kippur War, the Iraqi Ba'athists saw an opportunity to grow its ties with Egypt and Syria. Iraq sent troops to fight against Israel during the war, allowing it to truly express solidarity with Egypt and Syria as they sought an edge in the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict.

At the same time, Iraq normalized relations with its neighbor and rival for hegemony in the Persian Gulf, Iran. The resumption of Iraqi-Iranian diplomacy culminated in the 1975 Algiers Agreement, an ostensibly permanent treaty to resolve differences between the two countries. The potential for conflict with Iran was averted and Iraq no longer needed as much assistance from the USSR. By seeking out relations with new great powers and other nearby states, the local power successfully created a multilateral and nonaligned foreign policy. This had the long-term effect of ending or significantly reducing the chances for a great power to exert influence or meddle in the local power's domestic affairs.

Later events overshadowed Iraqi history in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Iran-Iraq War, invasion of Kuwait, and fall of Saddam Hussein all receive much more scholarly and media attention. However, would all of those events have happened if the USSR-Iraqi alliance held? Or if the Soviet Union had succeeded in exerting more influence on Iraqi governmental actions? It is rather unlikely, because the USSR wanted to keep the Cold War cold and not risk an open, devastating conflict with the United States. This would mean that the USSR would keep Iraq in-line if it could, preserving the balance and preventing escalation of conflicts when it could. As USSR alliances with Arab states like Iraq broke down, their newly found nonaligned status led states like Iraq to believe they could act as they pleased. In other words, multilateral foreign policy led the local power states to pursue unilateral or "rogue" actions, as they knew or felt they had other options if one of the great powers objected to this unilateralism. The failure to truly study Soviet-Iraqi relations in the 1960s and 1970s means important knowledge about how diplomacy works has been overlooked. It seems the general conclusions drawn from Soviet-Iraqi relations were not just indicative of Cold War trends, but rather a foreshadowing of today's current global order. Even today, the government of Iraq is moving away from US patronage

towards a more multilateral diplomacy, as evidence by increasing Iranian influence in the country.

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