

STUDIES IN INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT SERIES

Series Editor: Manus I. Midlarsky

Studies in International Conflict is a book series designed to disseminate widely the findings of systematic research in international conflict. Each accessible written volume presents rigorous analyses of various types of international conflict, including obvious instances of international warfare as well as lower-level conflict behavior. Each book in the series contains cutting edge research that appeals to students and scholars in the fields of international relations, foreign policy and political science.

Published

The Onset of World War
Manus I. Midlarsky

War and State Making
Karen A. Rasler and William R. Thompson

Paradoxes of War
Zeev Maoz

The Price of Power
Alan Lamborn

Territorial Change and International Conflict
Gary Goertz and Paul F. Diehl

The Challenge of Japan Before World War II and After
A Study of National Growth and Expansion
Nazli Choucri, Robert C. North and Susumu Yamakage

THE
INTERNATIONALIZATION
OF COMMUNAL STRIFE

Edited by

Manus I. Midlarsky



London and New York

CONTENTS

First published 1992
by Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE
Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
a division of Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc.
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

© 1993 Manus I. Midlarsky

Phototypeset in 10/12pt Baskerville by Intype, London
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Mackays of Chatham PLC, Chatham, Kent

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted
or reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic,
mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter
invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any
information storage or retrieval system, without permission
in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the
British Library
0-415-08408-3

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data
Has been applied for

List of figure and tables
List of contributors
Introduction

vi
vii
x

Part I World-wide Perspectives

- 1 THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF
PROTRACTED COMMUNAL CONFLICTS SINCE
1945: WHICH GROUPS, WHERE, AND HOW
Ted R. Gurr
- 2 INTERNATIONALIZATION OF COMMUNAL
STRIFE: TEMPTATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES
OF TRIANGULATION
I. William Zartman

2

Part II A Focus on the State

- 3 RELIGION, IDEOLOGY, AND ETHNIC IDENTITY
IN THE SRI LANKAN CONFLICT
James T. Johnson
- 4 STATE-BUILDING IN IRAQ DURING THE
IRAN-IRAQ WAR AND THE GULF CRISIS
Eric Davis
- 5 INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES ON THE ORIGINS
AND OUTCOMES OF INTERNAL WAR: A
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE 1958 AND
1975-6 LEBANESE CIVIL WARS
Karen Rasler

4

6

9

2 Peebles (1990) concentrates, for example, on the adverse social effects of the Greater Mahaweli Development Project; Amunagama (1990) reduces the question of religious influence to the role of the Buddhist Sangha (order of monks). These are clearly elements of a larger picture, not that picture in its entirety.

REFERENCES

- Amunagama, S. (1990) "Buddhaputra and Bhumiputra? Dilemmas of Modern Sinhala Buddhist Monks in Relation to Ethnic and Political Conflict," Unpublished paper prepared for United States Institute of Peace Conference on "Religion, Ideology and Peace: Intolerance and Conflict in Sri Lanka," Washington, D.C., September 4-5.
- Conze, E. (1959) *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development*, New York: Harper & Brothers.
- De Silva, K. M. (1981) *A History of Sri Lanka*, Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras: Oxford University Press.
- (ed.) (1977) *Sri Lanka: A Survey*, Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii.
- Europa Yearbook* (1989) London: Europa Publications, Ltd.
- Hutchinson, J. A. (1981) *Paths of Faith*, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Irschick, E. (1969) *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Jupp, J. (1978) *Sri Lanka Third World Democracy*, London: Frank Cass.
- Kearney, R. M. (1973) *The Politics of Ceylon (Sri Lanka)*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Malinowski, B. (1984) *Magic, Science, and Religion and Other Essays*, Reprint of the 1948 edition, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Manor, J. (ed.) (1984) *Sri Lanka in Change and Crisis*, New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Meyer, E. (1984) "Seeking the Roots of the Tragedy," pp. 137-74 in Manor, J. (ed.) *Sri Lanka in Change and Crisis*, New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Obeyesekere, G. (1979) "The Vicissitudes of the Sinhala-Buddhist Identity Through Time and Change," pp. 279-313 in Roberts, M. (ed.) *Collective Identities, Nationalisms and Protest in Sri Lanka*, Colombo, Sri Lanka: Colombo Catholic Press.
- (1984) "The Origins and Institutionalisation of Political Violence," pp. 153-74 in Manor, J. (ed.) *Sri Lanka in Change and Crisis*, New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Peebles, P. (1990) "Colonization and Ethnic Conflict in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 49/1 (February): 30-55.
- Seneviratne, H. L. (1990) "South Indian Cultural Nationalism and Separatism in Sri Lanka," Unpublished paper prepared for United States Institute of Peace Conference on "Religion, Ideology and Peace: Intolerance and Conflict in Sri Lanka," Washington, D.C., September 4-5.
- Singer, M. R. (1990) "Prospects for Conflict Management in the Sri Lankan Crisis," pp. 259-86 in Montville, J. V. (ed.) *Conflict and Peacemaking in Multiethnic Societies*, Lexington, MA, and Toronto: Lexington Books.

STATE-BUILDING IN IRAQ DURING THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR AND THE GULF CRISIS

Eric Davis

INTRODUCTION

Having initiated two of the most costly and dangerous military confrontations during the present century, an eight-year war with Iran and the invasion and seizure of Kuwait, Iraq has become the focus of international attention. Strategically situated at the head of the Persian Gulf, and bordering on Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and what was until recently the Soviet Union, Iraq is one of the world's largest oil producers. Prior to the 1991 Gulf War, Iraq's army was the world's fourth largest; it had developed chemical and biological weapons and was in the process of acquiring a nuclear capability. Hostile relations exist between Iraq and a number of regional powers including Israel, Iran and Syria. Despite its significance in geopolitical and political economic terms, Iraq remains an enigmatic society both in the West and the Arab world. What factors motivated Iraq to become engaged in the space of little over a decade in two highly risky military actions that have threatened global energy supplies and have involved the Middle East in two major wars?

Although definitive analyses of the factors that led Iraq to seize Kuwait are still premature, a spate of studies already exists regarding its war with Iran. Unfortunately, most of these studies are either descriptive or offer conflicting explanations for the origins and progression of the war. In attempting to make theoretical sense of Iraq's actions and to offer an alternative explanation that would help understand both the invasion of Iran and Kuwait, it is necessary to first explore some of the conceptual underpinnings of these arguments as well as to point out their weaknesses. The central question raised here then is: what type of explanation best explains Iraq's motivations in initiating these two conflicts? What status does the approach offered in this essay have in relation to existing approaches? What types of differences separate the two?

Briefly stated, the thesis proffered here is that Iraq's resort to military force needs to be understood within the context of its domestic politics.

Specifically, the use of war needs to be seen as part of the process of state-building and the state's efforts to create a cohesive national identity. Contextualized historically, this process of state-building is particularly significant given the lack of agreement among the constituent elements of Iraqi society as to the nature of the nation-state after Iraq became a national entity following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I. The continuous instability that has plagued Iraq since the Iraqi Revolution of 1920 can thus be seen as a struggle over the definition of the nature of political community.

This argument is not meant to deny the contributions of a variety of theories that have already been advanced. However, it is curious that theories proffered to explain Iraq's war with Iran and its invasion of Kuwait neglect the impact of state-building. Consequently, most of these theories are flawed. In neglecting to link the Iran-Iraq war and the invasion of Kuwait to the history of political struggle in Iraq and the impact of oil production on Iraqi society, these approaches offer only partial explanations.

MODELS OF THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR: THE ETHNO-CONFESSIONAL MODEL

A number of models have been advanced to explain the origins and genesis of the Iran-Iraq War. Perhaps the most prominent may be called the "ethno-confessional" model. This model argues that the Iran-Iraq War is merely an extension of historical ethnic and confessional cleavages that have pitted Arabs living in the Tigris-Euphrates river basin - ancient Mesopotamia - against Persian speaking peoples inhabiting present-day Iran. In this model, the core conflict pits sunni Muslim Arabs of the northern portion of modern Iraq against Persians who adhere to shi'i Islam.¹

This model is based on a number of assumptions. First, it assumes an undifferentiated history comprised of isomorphic stages characterized by similar forms of cultural and political consciousness. In other words, inhabitants of modern-day Iran and Iraq purportedly maintain the same forms of mutual antagonism as they did in ancient times. This first assumption is based on yet another unspoken assumption, namely that a notion of Iraqi and Persian political identity and citizenship existed during periods of ancient history much as these concepts are understood today.

The "ethno-confessional" model derives its legitimacy from a number of sources. First, the long established Orientalist tradition in Middle Eastern studies argues that the main conceptual prism through which Middle East politics should be viewed is one that emphasizes sectarianism and confessionalism.² In this view, a Middle Easterner's religion and/or ethnicity is key to understanding his or her politics. In North Africa, the

primary source of conflict is between Berbers and Arabs, in Lebanon between Muslims and Christians, in Syria between 'Alawis and sunni Muslims and in Iraq between sunni Arabs, on the one hand, and shi'i Arabs and Kurds, on the other. This framework applies to the international sphere as well. In the Orientalist model, the Arab-Israeli conflict is seen as fundamentally a religious conflict as is the conflict between Iraq and Iran.

It is ironic that the Iraqi state, its president, Saddam Husayn, and the ruling Ba'ath party have themselves promoted a vision of the Iran-Iraq war that is based on the same mode of thought embodied in Western Orientalism or its more modern variant, modernization theory. The most prominent example is the appellation given to the war by the Iraqi state, namely "qadisiyat Saddam" or Saddam's Qadisiya. This refers to the battle that occurred on the fields of Qadisiya in southern Iraq in AD 637 in which invading Arab armies from the Arabian Peninsula drove Sasanian forces that were guarding the Euphrates River out of present-day Iraq. Thus the ruling Arab Socialist Ba'ath party parallels Orientalist and neo-Orientalist thinking in presenting a conceptualization of the war that finds its roots in an inherent conflict between Arab and Persian culture.

This conceptualization accords with the Iraqi government's own assessment of the conflict that accused Khomeyni of trying to "export his revolution to Iraq and the Arab Gulf region . . . Khomeini's scheme through the so-called Islamic revolution was to destabilize the region through inciting sectarian strife."³

In Iraq, this conceptualization has been promoted in government pronouncements, in the mass media and in numerous state-sponsored publications. Indeed, after the war began, the Iraqi government incorporated its anti-Iranian campaign into its officially designated, "Project for the Rewriting of History," headed by President Saddam Husayn himself.⁴ The Iraqi state's views on the Iraqi-Iranian conflict (or Iraqi-Persian as the government prefers) are most prominently stated in a volume on the history of Iraqi-Iranian relations that is part of a series of books that presents an official view of Iraq's history.⁵ Entitled, *al-sira' al-iraqi al-farisi [The Iraqi-Persian Struggle]*, this work contains a compilation of eighteen essays written by Iraqi scholars specializing in various periods of Iraqi history.⁶ The political analysis is of less interest for our concerns than the volume's cultural focus which attempts to demonstrate that the continual efforts of the Persians are to undermine the social solidarity of Iraqi society. In no instance was this more pronounced than in the *al-shu'ubiya* movement where Persian and pro-Persian elements sought to destroy the Arab character of the 'Abbasid Empire whose capital was Baghdad.⁷ The volume in turn is complemented by numerous studies by individual scholars sponsored by the state and published by state-owned publishing houses.⁸ The names given to Iraq's modified Soviet SCUD missiles, al-Husayn and

al-'Abbas, which are derived from shi'i religious martyrs killed in the seventh century AD, and the dubbing of the 1988 military campaign to retake the Faw Peninsula on the Gulf, "tawakalna alla Allah" (we place our trust in God), have only added to the religious and confessional aura surrounding the war.⁹

Both in its Western and Iraqi variants, the ethno-confessional model suffers from a number of shortcomings. First and foremost is the myth of continuous hostility between Arabs and Persians across historical time. While there have certainly been periods of hostility between Arabs and Persians, there have also been extensive periods of accommodation and even good relations. During the twentieth century, relations between Iraq and Iran have for the most part been cordial. It was only during the 1970s when the Shah's regime, encouraged by the Nixon Doctrine, sought to make Iran the dominant power in the Gulf and became actively involved in supporting Mustafa Barzani's uprising among Iraq's Kurds that relations began to deteriorate. In a telling aside in the introduction to a prominent study of the purported history of Iraqi-Iranian conflict in ancient times, Dr. Sami Sa' id al-Ahmad – a professor of ancient history at Baghdad University – commends the author, Shakir Sabri al-Dabit, for having produced in an earlier volume published in 1966 the first scholarly study of the border disputes between the two countries.¹⁰ In other words, prior to 1966 no Iraqis had seen fit to examine this issue in any detail indicating that it held little significance for either the state or intellectuals.¹¹

Indeed, it is possible to argue that, far from representing hostility between the two populaces, conflict between Iraqis and Iranians has reflected more the attitudes and opinions of respective elites in the two countries. Despite assertions that Iraqis have never been able to achieve a rapprochement with Iran, during the fall of 1990 Saddam Husayn ordered the withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Iranian territory and virtually ceded to Iran all its wartime demands. Shortly thereafter, Foreign Minister Tariq 'Aziz flew to Tehran where he met with Iranian officials who subsequently issued a blistering attack on the presence of American forces stationed in Saudi Arabia. The Iraqi populace's response to these developments was one of bewilderment and confusion. Nevertheless, given the ferocity of the war, including the high number of Iraqi casualties, serious material deprivation, and the maltreatment of Iraqi prisoners of war, the lack of any negative backlash, particularly any ideological response, to the state's concessions to Iran is noteworthy. Put differently, at no time before, during or after the war did the Iraqi populace demonstrate any hostility towards Iranians based on racist attitudes.

At the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war, a number of Western commentators asserted that large numbers of Iraqi infantrymen, who are primarily drawn from Iraq's shi'i majority, would defect to the Iranian side just as it was predicted that ethnic Arabs in Iran's Khuzistan province would

defect to the oncoming Iraqi army. These predictions, which were based upon the ethno-confessional model, failed to materialize. While it is true that the radical shi'i organization, *al-Da'wa al-Islamiya* [The Islamic Call], proselytized with Iranian backing among the Iraqi shi'a calling for an "Islamic Republic of Iraq," the organization found only limited support primarily among prominent clerical families in the shi'i holy cities of Najaf and Karbala'. The organization gained little support from the bulk of the peasantry in the shi'i dominated south.¹²

Situating the ethno-confessional model in a larger historical perspective demonstrates even more problems. An analysis of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) and the National Democratic Party indicates that radical reform parties of the left attracted all segments of Iraqi society. The ICP in particular counted among its membership prominent sunnis, shi'is, Christians, Jews, Kurds, Armenians and representatives of virtually all of Iraq's minorities. While relations among these groups within the party were often less than harmonious, the fact that the ICP could recruit from all segments of society undermines the notion of Iraqi politics as driven by ethno-confessional considerations. In fact, the ICP maintained close ties with leftist organizations inside Iran, particularly those representing oil workers.

THE GREAT LEADER IN HISTORY MODEL

A second model that competes with the first is that which links the onset of the war to the personality of Iraqi president, Saddam Husayn. This approach acquired added currency during the 1990-1 Gulf crisis where virtually all Iraqi actions were attributed to Saddam. The assumption underlying this mode of thinking is best captured by one analyst's assertion that, "I think the whole question of how the war began resolves itself into what was passing through Saddam Husain's mind . . . the content of the decision . . . was the action of the only free man in Iraq."¹³

In other words, all decision-making in Iraq has devolved into the hands of the Iraqi president. Iraq is a society in which "the public is atomized and broken up" to the point where "the public has lost all sense of self; it exists only in the form artificially imparted to it by 'its' regime." The concomitant "dissolution of Iraqi identity" means that "Fear is the cement that holds together this strange body politic in Iraq."¹⁴ Saddam thereby becomes the only Iraqi who is not full of fear and the only citizen willing and able to make autonomous decisions.

This model is as problematic as that which attributed the onset of World War II or the Soviet terror of the 1930s to the respective personalities of Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin. While no one would deny that both of these men had a dramatic impact on the development of modern Europe and what was until recently the Soviet Union, their decisions required an

elaborate bureaucratic and military apparatus in order to be implemented. Further, this apparatus would not have been effective had not its members been willing agents of higher political authority. In discussing the concept of charisma within the context of the role of the leader in history, Weber (1978) argues that it entails a *relationship* between ruler and ruled. Charismatic authority (or perhaps, more accurately in Saddam's case, limited charismatic authority) is not the result of a linear process in which authority devolves from the top. Saddam Husayn is a product of Iraqi society and while he, like most political leaders, has his idiosyncrasies, he could not have invaded Iran and Kuwait without the backing of the political class that provides the social base for his rule.

As an example of this model, one author who advocates what I would call "Saddamism," argues that the reason that the Iraqi army fought so ineffectively during the early phases of the war was fear, particularly fear of the ubiquitous security apparatus controlled by Saddam and the Ba'ath.¹⁵ The model underlying this thinking is once again the role of Saddam's personality in the conduct of the war. While not downplaying the key role that fear plays in Iraqi politics, this model cannot explain why, when Saddam yielded control of the army to his generals once Iraq was on the verge of defeat in 1986, the army later performed with great skill and efficiency repelling Iranian forces from Basra and recapturing the Faw Peninsula in 1988. Thus the poor performance of Iraqi troops at the beginning of the war was not so much a result of fear — that is, fear of Saddam and the Ba'ath — but rather the result of a political decision to reign in control of the military and an overly cautious military strategy. In a larger sense, the Great Leader model provides an unsatisfactory explanation of why a large portion of the Iraqi body politic continues to support Saddam to the extent of following him into two wars within a decade and not ousting him after the disastrous Gulf War.

THE GEOPOLITICAL MODEL

A third model that has been offered to explain the Iran-Iraq war is the geopolitical approach. As with the ethno-confessional and great leader models, this approach has attracted strong advocates such as one analyst who has gone as far as to conceptualize the war in terms of "geopolitical determinism."¹⁶ Actually this approach should be divided into two sub-variants, the "minimalist" and the "maximalist" approaches. The minimalist approach argues that the war resulted from Iraq's fear that Iran sought to subjugate it as well as the rest of the states of the Arab Gulf. In this model, the war represented a preemptive strike designed to destroy Iran's ability to destabilize or even militarily dominate Iraq.

Viewed historically, this approach argues that ever since the establishment of the modern Iraqi state in 1921, Iran has sought to gain greater

control over the Shatt al-Arab waterway that links the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to the Persian Gulf. Having only thirteen miles of coastline compared to 1,600 miles controlled by Iran and facing hostile neighbors to the north and east, Iraq has historically sought to avoid "encirclement." This situation was exacerbated after 1966 when a rival wing of the Ba'ath party took control in Syria thereby adding yet another hostile state to Iraq's neighbors. However, between 1921 and the early 1970s it is argued, a "balance of weakness" existed between Iraq and Iran as the latter was never powerful enough, despite its much larger population and size, to subordinate Iraq.¹⁷ It was only when the Shah began to develop a powerful army and air force and began to support the Kurdish uprising in northern Iraq under Mustafa Barzani that the balance of power began to shift decisively in Iran's favor.

Once the Ayat-Allah Khomeini came to power in 1979 and it became clear that Iranian hostility towards Iraq would only increase rather than decrease, Iraq launched its attack to prevent the formation of an "Islamic Republic" in Iraq. Put differently, "the war began because the weaker state, Iraq, attempted to resist hegemonic aspirations of its stronger neighbor, Iran, to reshape the regional status quo according to its own image."¹⁸

The "maximalist" variant of the geopolitical model argues that Iraq exploited the turmoil that afflicted Iran after the overthrow of the Shah's regime to assert its power as the new hegemon in the Gulf region. Iraq calculated (wrongly) that the Iranian armed forces would collapse following its invasion since much of the senior officer corps had been executed or imprisoned after Khomeini came to power. It was neither ethnic or confessional hatred nor fear that motivated Iraq's attack but rather an attempt to exploit Iranian weakness to replace it as the dominant power in the Gulf.

Both variants of the geopolitical model maintain much greater credence than the ethno-confessional approach to the war. Nevertheless, this approach also suffers from a number of shortcomings. First, it assumes a high level of rationality on the part of Saddam Husayn and the Ba'athist leadership in Baghdad at the onset of the war. However, the actions of the Iraqi army early in the war illustrate considerable confusion about Iraqi goals.¹⁹ At the war's outset, the Iraqi air force was dispersed to airbases far from the front or in other Arab Gulf states. It was argued that this policy reflected the Ba'athist regime's desire to protect Iraqi aircraft from what had been a far superior air force under the Shah. However, it quickly became clear that the Iranian airforce under the Islamic Republic was only a shadow of its former self. Despite the fact that the Iranians were only able to place a limited number of aircraft into the air, the Iraqi airforce was used extremely sparingly during the war. Thus the Iraqi army completely ignored one of the maxims of post-World

War II military doctrine, namely that air cover is an essential element in any effective infantry assault.

The activities of the Iraqi army were no less curious. After moving across the international border and facing only token opposition, Iraq's armed forces dug in and seemed at a loss as to what to do next. Iraqi actions on the battlefield hardly demonstrated a well thought through plan of action both in the geopolitical as well as the military sense. In retrospect, it is still unclear to most analysts what Iraq hoped to accomplish through its initial attack. Certainly it passed up numerous military options that would have allowed it to deal Iran a serious if not decisive military defeat. Thus the assumption of rationality that is central to the geopolitical or, in the more formal sense, realist model is difficult to locate in Iraqi military behavior. It is not difficult to agree with the assertion that, "Apparently, no specific Iraqi military objectives existed that fitted into some broader military conception of how to fight this war."²⁰ This is not to argue that Iraq had no objectives in attacking Iran. Rather it is to argue that the objectives were more domestically oriented and only secondarily concerned with bringing Iran to its knees and strengthening Iraq's role as a Gulf power.

Before turning to this latter point, it may be useful to point out some broader theoretical problems with the geopolitical model. The notion of geopolitical determinism approximates what Keohane has referred to as the "structural realist" model.²¹ This model seeks to derive hypotheses about state behavior in the international arena based upon a priori assumptions that are derived from a larger structure. The problem with geopolitical determinism is that it is both too broad and too narrow. Since "states seek power . . . and they calculate their interests in terms of power, whether as end or necessary means to a variety of ends,"²² this assumption is too broad as almost all state actions can be subsumed in one form or another under it. A model that explains everything ultimately explains nothing. It is too narrow in that the notion of a "structure of international politics" does not adequately explain all state behavior in the international sphere as I hope to demonstrate regarding the Iraqi invasion of Iran and Kuwait. Equally important is the criticism that geopolitical determinism or structural realism cannot adequately account for change. While it can help explain "reactions to change," it cannot explain "sources of change."²³

THE STATE-BUILDING MODEL

The state-building model is not meant to deny the validity of many of the assertions of approaches mentioned earlier. Rather I would argue that its advantages lie in its greater explanatory power, its ability to explain more of the variance as it were. This model builds upon a methodology grounded in comparative historical analysis. Meticulously constructed case studies

provide its core. Through cross-national comparison of a variety of cases, a more general theory of why states go to war may then be possible. The state-building model seems especially applicable to Third World societies where the state is frequently a product of the post-colonial era and thus relatively weak.²⁴ While the present case study does not, by definition encompass a comparative dimension, the ultimate objective would entail a comparison of Iraqi to other Third World states engaged in war making Egypt's threats to Israel in 1967, Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, Argentina's efforts to seize the Malvinas/Falkland Islands in 1982, and North Korea's frequent armed incursions into South Korea and threats to go to war against it might provide fruitful avenues for research into the relationship between state-building and war making or the threat to make war.

To assert that the state-building model being employed here is grounded in comparative history still does not make the theoretical dimensions of this model explicit. A comparative historical approach seems to suggest an inductive approach to theory as opposed to the deductive model derived from an approach such as structural realism. However, the state-building model deployed here draws extensively upon the principles of Gramscian political economy, particularly the notion of hegemony.

Of the multiple assumptions that underlie Gramsci's approach, the most basic is that it is state-centric. Second, his approach assumes that the most fundamental concern of any state is its ability to reproduce itself over time. A further assumption is that, in analysing the state, the key unit of analysis is the ruling political class. This class is privileged in a variety of ways the most important of which is its access to political and economic power that offers it and its offspring better life chances than those sectors of society that Gramsci (1971) refers to as the "subaltern classes." The ability of a ruling class to reproduce itself over time is, in turn, directly related to its ability to achieve hegemony. Hegemony is defined as the ability of the ruling class to generalize its interests to society at large, i.e., to the subaltern classes. Thus the type of comparative historical model proffered here represents a "dialectic" between inductive and deductive reasoning. While we begin with a number of assumptions derived from Gramscian political economy, these assumptions by themselves constitute the necessary but not sufficient conditions to explain Iraqi political behavior. A comprehensive theory requires the development of an historical model of the internal dynamics of Iraqi society.

STATE-BUILDING AND HISTORY

As with many other Middle Eastern states, the creation of the modern state of Iraq in 1921 was an artificial process imposed by Great Britain. This is true in at least two senses. First, the Iraqi nation-state was not

formed around what I have referred to elsewhere as an "organic social formation."²⁵ Put differently, the social groups that were conjoined by the British to form modern Iraq did not share a common sense of political community. The sunni Arabs of central and northern Iraq, who comprise between 25 and 30 per cent of the population and who dominated the state under Ottoman rule, traditionally looked to Turkey and the Levant for cultural and economic sustenance. The Kurds of northern Iraq, who make up roughly 15 to 20 per cent of the populace and who were traditionally viewed as backward by their Turkish and Arab overlords, were inward looking given a largely autarkic economy and tribal fragmentation. The shi'i majority in the south, comprising between 55 and 60 per cent of the populace, traditionally looked to Persia (later Iran) with which it maintained strong trading ties and cultural bonds given the shi'i holy cities of Najaf and Karbala' in southern Iraq.

As the Iran-Iraq War and Gulf crisis so vividly demonstrated, the problems of the modern Iraqi state find their roots in the arbitrary manner in which British colonial officials, especially Sir Percy Cox and Sir Arnold Wilson, drew its boundaries. Kuwait and portions of southwestern Iran that had been part of Iraq when it was a province of the Ottoman Empire were not included in the state when it was placed under a League of Nations mandate in 1921.

A second manner in which the Iraqi state was saddled with built-in instability was the imposition by the British of a member of the Hashimite family from the Hijaz region of present-day Saudi Arabia, Faysal ibn Husayn, as ruler of Iraq. The creation of a Hashimite monarchy in Iraq was the method by which the British hoped to circumvent the broken promises it had made to the Arab forces under Faysal's father, Sharif Husayn of Mecca; Sir Henry MacMahon had offered an independent Arab state including the Hijaz and the Levant in return for an Arab revolt against the Ottoman Turks.²⁶

A weak sense of national identity, arbitrary boundaries, and an alien monarchy that was dominated by the British from behind the scenes set the stage for constant political and social turmoil during the period between 1920 and the 1958 Revolution. In providing an analytic framework that helps explain the unstable development of the state over time, history becomes a dynamic element that is missing from the ethno-confessional, great leader and geopolitical models. History thus entails elaborating a structure within which to interpret the conflict among various groups within Iraqi society to define a sense of national identity since the state's founding. These struggles have been much more complex than viewing them as simple zero-sum games among various ethnic and confessional groups. Prior to the 1958 Revolution, the primary struggles pitted the monarchy against the British and the parliamentary elites drawn from the landowning and mercantile bourgeoisie. At other times the monarchy and parliamen-

tary elites coalesced against the rising Arab nationalist and communist movements. Ultimately the Arab nationalists and communists came to compete amongst themselves for supporters from the mass populace.

While ethno-linguistic and ethno-confessional considerations often played an important role in these struggles, they always involved a complex interplay of a multiplicity of factors. Thus these struggles require qualification if we are to avoid an Orientalist interpretation of them, i.e., one based upon a reified and ahistorical understanding. While there has been strife between sunnis and shi'is, I would argue that this conflict has tended to be class based. In other words, this strife has been largely characteristic of struggles among elites and has tended to diminish as one proceeds down the social stratification hierarchy. More often than not, confessional appeals were intended to rally support among fellow confessionalists. Nevertheless, in both the Ba'ath Party and the ICP, sunnis and shi'is have cooperated for common ends. Arab-Kurdish strife has also been a characteristic of Iraqi society. As for the Kurds, they have by no means shared a single ideology but rather have been deeply split along tribal lines. Further, many Kurds have become Arabized and thus have not supported the notion of a separate Kurdistan carved out of northern Iraq. Indeed in 1936, an Arabized Kurd, Bakr Sidqi, became one of the most significant figures in modern Iraqi history by establishing a tradition of Iraqi army involvement in politics through a *coup d'état*.

This conflict among Iraq's ethno-linguistic groups has to be qualified still further. In 1920, when it had become obvious that Great Britain was not going to withdraw from Iraq and the country found itself suffering from a post-war economic decline, a massive uprising occurred that included all segments of Iraqi society. This is yet another indicator that ethno-linguistic strife in Iraq has to be understood as a dynamic — that is, historical phenomenon. In other words, it is by no means a static given. The 1920 Revolution must also be understood in socioeconomic terms and not limited to ethnic categories alone. Much of the rhetoric of the revolution expressed dissatisfaction with the deterioration of the agricultural sector, a fact that presaged the massive migration from rural to urban areas that was to characterize Iraq during the 1930s and 1940s. The revolution demonstrated that anti colonial sentiment and economic concerns could transcend ethnic differences.

Given the complex intersection of ethnicity, confessionalism and social class in twentieth-century Iraq, it is not surprising that the 1930s saw many sectors of Iraqi society drawn to the Iraqi Communist Party that was founded in 1934. Recruiting Muslims, Christians and Jews, Arabs, Kurds and Armenians, sunnis and shi'is, the ICP built its organizational strength on a radical working class movement that united traditional urban artisans, workers in the expanding oil industry, workers in the Iraqi state railways, the port of Basra and British military bases as well as leftist

intellectuals and students. Most important for our present concerns, the Iraqi Communist Party argued that, while Iraq was an Arab society, real democracy could only be achieved by recognizing its ethnic, linguistic and confessional diversity. Further, the party asserted that only through a cross-class alliance that united workers, peasants, progressive intellectuals and other sympathetic groups could the pernicious aspects of these social cleavages, particularly as they were exploited by the British and the Iraqi ruling class, be overcome.

During the 1940s, support for Pan-Arabism intensified, stimulated in part by a pro-Axis uprising in 1941 under the leadership of Rashid 'Ali al-Kaylani. Although the British suppressed the uprising, they could not contain Pan-Arabism. Its most ardent proponent was the Ba'ath (Renaissance) Party founded in the Levant and in Iraq during the 1940s. The founders of the Ba'ath Party, Michel 'Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar, were strongly influenced by the corporatism of European fascist ideology during their education in France. The party recruited largely from the economically vulnerable middle classes and can be seen in large measure as a reaction against the social fragmentation of Arab society under the impact of colonial rule and weak states controlled by a landowning and mercantile oligarchy. Emphasizing the need for unity at all levels of society, the Ba'ath Party was unsympathetic to calls for recognizing the cultural diversity of the Arab world. The Iraqi Communist Party's advocacy of a class-based politics was sharply rejected. While Islam was praised for its political contributions to the development of the Arab world, state and religion were maintained as distinct and separate realms in Ba'athist ideology.

The rise of communism and Pan-Arabism during the 1930s and 1940s as system-challenging movements presented two different visions of Iraq's future that juxtaposed themselves to the ever weakening legitimacy of the Iraqi monarchy and the small class of tribal landowners and urban merchants that provided its social base. The decline of British imperial rule following the end of World War II and the inability of the monarchical state to employ rising oil revenues to institute any significant reforms and thereby broaden its base of support sealed its fate. On July 14 1958 the monarchy was overthrown in a military *coup d'état* that was accompanied by massive street demonstrations in Baghdad and other urban areas.

The coup that brought Brigadier 'Abd al-Karim Qasim to power was significant not only for abolishing the monarchy and for withdrawing Iraq from the Baghdad Pact but also for tipping the balance of power between the communists and Arab nationalists in the former's favor. Left-leaning and committed to wide-ranging social reforms, Qasim came under attack from Arab nationalists both inside and outside Iraq. Nasserists and Ba'athists argued that by letting prominent communists gain positions of influence within the government, Qasim was opening the Arab world to

greater Russian influence. However, Qasim was no Marxist and refused to give the ICP any real political power. Attacked from the right and ultimately faced with declining support from the left, Qasim's power base narrowed until he was overthrown in a bloody coup led by the Ba'ath Party in February, 1963. The coup was followed by the massacre of over 3,000 communists and leftist sympathizers. Repulsion at continuing Ba'ath Party violence led to a counter-coup by the army and, between 1963 and 1968, Iraq was plagued by a succession of weak governments.

The military *coup d'état* that brought a wing of the Ba'ath Party under Saddam Husayn to power in July 1968 ended a decade of political turmoil. While the Iraqi populace did not accept this coup with any great enthusiasm, it nevertheless was relieved that the new regime was quickly able to restore political stability to the country. The new regime, under the leadership of President Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr, a highly respected military officer, and Vice-President Saddam Husayn, moved quickly to avoid the fate that befell the Ba'ath Party in 1963. The military was placed firmly under party control. At the same time, members of tribal groupings drawn from al-Takrit, the home town of both al-Bakr and Saddam to the north of Baghdad, were placed in positions of authority within the state apparatus including the public sector and the military.²⁷ To shore up its economic position, the regime nationalized the British dominated Iraq Petroleum Company in 1972. Oil revenues, which increased from one billion dollars in 1972 to \$26 billion in 1980, allowed the regime to initiate extensive development and social welfare programs.²⁸ A new state bourgeoisie tied to oil wealth began to prosper.

The period between 1968 and 1974 witnessed a sharp anti-imperialist rhetoric that allowed the Iraqi state to mobilize the Iraqi populace around its "revolutionary" ideology and the nationalization of foreign and domestic economic interests. Closer ties were established with the Soviet Union and the Iraqi Communist Party was invited to join a "national front" government in 1972. However, the Eighth Party Congress of the Ba'ath held in 1974 marked the beginning of a shift to the right. This move became decisive in May 1978 when Saddam personally oversaw the execution of thirty-one communists and supporters who were members of the national front government on the pretext of their attempting to organize a military *coup d'état*.²⁹

At the same time, seeking to forge a sense of national and collective identity that had eluded previous Iraqi governments, the state began to intensify its effort to reinterpret the nation's history. Headed by Saddam Husayn (who in 1979 deposed al-Bakr and assumed the presidency), the "Project for the Rewriting of History" led to a massive outpouring of books, journals, international and local conferences, television and radio programs and articles in the press that sought to present an interpretation

of the nation's history and popular culture — its national heritage — in terms that were in accord with Ba'athist ideology.³⁰

On the verge of the Iran-Iraq war, the Ba'athist regime controlled a powerful economy and a repressive state apparatus but presided over a weak civil society. Saddam had ruthlessly suppressed the left in the form of the Iraqi Communist Party. Numerous members of the Ba'ath Party were purged during the 1970s, including the powerful head of the secret police, Nadhim Kzar. The effort to rewrite history represented an effort to strengthen the power and legitimacy of the state and indicated the extent to which the Ba'ath still felt insecure in its rule.

Saddam's move to the right was less driven by ideology than by his efforts to consolidate his power base. By the late 1970s, a powerful new bourgeoisie had already developed on the coattails of the tremendous oil revenues flooding the country. This bourgeoisie was particularly evident in the construction sector which benefited from the extensive infrastructural, industrial and military projects being promoted by the government.³¹ Despite repression and a massive social welfare program that benefited large sections of the poor, especially the shi'i population of the south, it was common knowledge that political positions were still defined by one's social background. Almost all powerful positions within the government were controlled by Takritis, especially those from Saddam's own clan. This matter was so sensitive that any public reference to it meant imprisonment or an even worse fate.³²

The creation of a new bourgeoisie through state distribution of oil wealth was not only intended to create a cadre loyal to the state but also to overcome ethnic, linguistic and sectarian differences. It needs to be remembered that, prior to the increase in oil revenues during the 1970s, relatively weak economic development (lack of development of capitalist relations of production if you will) had not served to spread market relations and create extensive economic ties between different sectors of society. Although relatively few Kurds benefited from the new opportunities for upward mobility, this was not as true for the shi'i populace that did experience greater benefits. Still the new bourgeoisie was disproportionately sunni Arab.

By the end of the 1970s, the Ba'athists policy of the carrot and the stick (*taghrīb wa tarhīb*) had only been partially successful. It is at this point that a revolutionary conjuncture in neighboring Iran threatened to disrupt the fragile coalition and emerging sense of national identity that Saddam and the Ba'ath were trying to forge.³³ The model offered by the Iranian Revolution of 1978-9 had too many frightening parallels with Iraq for the Ba'ath. Lack of economic development in the countryside had led large numbers of peasants to migrate to urban areas, particularly Teheran, where they faced limited economic opportunities and a culturally alien environment. As such they were highly susceptible to appeals by religious notables

who accused the Shah's regime of misappropriating the country's tremendous petrowealth and of importing alien Western cultural values, especially secularism, lack of respect for traditional forms of authority (particularly those of males over females) and sexual laxity.

The model of the urban masses successfully confronting one of the most powerful armies in the world under the leadership of shi'i clerics was as frightening to Saddam Husayn and the Ba'ath as the overthrow and execution of Nicolaj Ceausescu was to be to them a decade later. The "demonstration effect" was not lost on shi'i mujtahids in Iraq who had been fearful ever since the 1958 Revolution over the attraction of many shi'i youth to the Iraqi Communist Party and leftist ideas in general.³⁴ Even though the Ba'ath was anti-communist, its secular and "socialist" rhetoric led the shi'i clerics to oppose it.³⁵ This opposition took several organizational forms, the most important of which was an anti-Ba'athist group known as the *al-Da'wa al-Islamiya* (The Islamic Call) founded in 1965. Thus even before the Islamic Revolution, groups such as *al-Da'wa* contributed to exacerbating confessional tensions.³⁶

On the surface, rising confessional tensions would seem to lend credence to the ethno-confessional model as applied in the domestic context. In other words, within Iraq confessional tensions between sunnis and shi'is were on the rise prior to the Iran-Iraq war. However, seen from a different vantage point, this hypothesis must be modified. Shi'i clerics, fearful of their declining influence among shi'i youth, particularly those educated in urban areas who were turning away from confessionalism towards Marxism and other secular ideologies, sought to exacerbate these tensions in order to reassert their authority within their own community. This was especially true in light of the extensive social welfare programs initiated by the Ba'ath during the 1970s using rising oil revenues. This program was particularly influential among the poorest sectors of society, namely the shi'i peasants in the south. Confessionalism should be seen less as a primordial reflex characteristic of all sunnis and shi'is than as one of many identities maintained by some shi'is and manipulated for political ends by others.

Thus the victory of the forces loyal to Ayat-Allah Ruhallah Khumayni fed into a very volatile situation in Iraq. The regime had just successfully destroyed the remnants of the Iraqi Communist Party within Iraq. However, considerable segments of the intelligentsia and student population still remained sympathetic to Marxist principles. Second, although proclaiming itself socialist, the Ba'ath party had actually fostered a privileged elite and a new bourgeoisie linked to the profits derived from oil production. Third, shi'i clerics in the south were agitating for an Islamic Republic in Iraq. Finally, the Ba'ath feared that the accusation that its ideology was a Western derivative (whether in its self-proclaimed socialism or in the actual Western norms and behavior patterns of the parvenue

bourgeoisie it had spawned) and thus inappropriate for the region might encourage a challenge to its authority.

These fears were made much more real by broadcasts from Teheran calling for the overthrow of the Ba'athist regime and the characterization of it as blasphemous and contrary to Islam. These broadcasts assumed a more serious edge with a bombing campaign that culminated in April, 1980 with an attempt to assassinate Tariq 'Aziz, the Deputy Chairman of the Ruling Command Council, and Latif Nasif Jasim, Minister of Culture and Information, and the bombing of a student gathering at al-Mustansiriyah University in Baghdad and the funeral procession that followed that killed several students.³⁷ Increased aid was also given to the al-Da'wa Party and to Iraqi Kurds seeking secession.³⁸ As a result, thousands of Iraqis of Iranian extraction were unceremoniously deported from the country and many shi'i clerics including their leader, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, were arrested and ultimately executed.

STATE-BUILDING AND WAR: THE INVASION OF IRAN

The Iraqi invasion of Iran on September 22 1980 was thus a response to potential challenges to the ongoing process of state formation in Iraq that was still in a fragile stage. Through what was expected to be a complete rout of the Iranian armed forces (who were perceived to have been weakened as a result of the revolution and the execution of many of its upper echelon officers), the Ba'ath sought to send a message to those segments of the shi'i community who hoped to duplicate the Iranian Revolution in Iraq. Further, Saddam Husayn and the Ba'ath sought to use the anticipated victory to accelerate the process of "rewriting history" by establishing the Iraqi leader as a latter day Nebuchadnezzar who was head of a powerful state.

However, there were still deeper motives even if these were not always fully conscious to the actors within the Iraqi regime. In one sense, the onset of the Iran-Iraq war represented the culmination of a struggle over Iraqi political identity that had been in process for the better part of the twentieth century. The defeat of the communists and the campaign to rewrite Iraqi history represented the end, in the short term, of any hope for accommodation among Iraq's conflicting political ideologies and for the recognition of the society's multicultural nature. Indeed, the war provided the perfect opportunity for the Ba'ath to strengthen xenophobic Arabism by informing the traditional distinction between 'arab and 'ajam (Arabs and foreigners, namely Persians) with new meaning. The 'ajami (foreigner) or *farisi* (Persian) was documented as the source of all Iraq's historical problems.³⁹ Thus the war was intended to strengthen social solidarity by ensconcing a unitary identity through an Iraqi defeat of the Other. An Iraqi victory was not only meant to force Iran to stay out of

Iraq's internal affairs but also to symbolically defeat, on the domestic front, shi'i, communist, Kurdish and all forms of particularism abhorrent to the Ba'ath.

Conversely the war was intended to solidify the new state bourgeoisie that was not only the emerging social base of the Ba'athist regime but also the new metaphor for Iraqi identity in which wealth, power and technical skills displaced confessional loyalties. Perhaps the best example of the 'new Iraqi man' recruited from outside the sunni community is the current deputy prime minister and former foreign minister, Tariq 'Aziz, a Chaldean Christian. Christened Yuhanna Mikhail, he would later change his name to one that sounded more Muslim. 'Aziz has demonstrated uncompromising loyalty to Saddam Husayn and the Ba'ath party while not developing any independent power base of his own.

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPACT OF THE WAR

Far from a short incursion into Iran that would have forced the Islamic Republic to sue for peace, the war ground on through eight years of brutal fighting between the Iraqi and Iranian armies. Although Iraq began the war with a \$35 billion surplus, the destruction of much of its oil exporting capacity early in the war forced it to borrow funds from wealthy Gulf states such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and from Europe. As a result, Iraq owed an estimated \$65 billion in debt at the war's end. Once Iraq and Iran increased exports of oil after the 1988 truce, an excess supply of oil on world markets tended to keep prices low. Overambitious development programs initiated by Saddam at the war's conclusion only served to increase economic pressures. The fact that many of the Gulf states, such as Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, were pumping crude in excess of their OPEC quotas served to depress world oil prices still further. Despite Iraq's argument that it had "saved" Kuwait and the other Gulf states from subversion by Iran and therefore should be released from its loan obligations, Kuwait in particular refused to forgive Baghdad its debts.

The Ba'athist regime had promised the Iraqi populace that living conditions would improve at the war's end. However, these expectations could not be fulfilled under the current economic conditions. Many Iraqis privately questioned what they had gained from the tremendous sacrifices made by the country in people and materiel. The Ba'ath was already uneasy given a number of efforts within the military to organize *coups d'état* towards the war's end.⁴⁰ The military was particularly resentful at Saddam's retirement, imprisonment and even murder of army officers that had become too popular during the war such as General Mahir 'Abd al-Rashid, the hero of the 1986 campaign to retake the Faw Peninsula and repel the Iranian threat to Basra, who was later placed under house arrest.⁴¹

STATE-BUILDING AND WAR: THE INVASIÓN OF KUWAIT

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was clearly linked to its war with Iran. As long as Kuwait refused to curtail its oil production and forgive Iraq its debts, Iraq could not hope to register any real economic growth. An invasion of Kuwait also offered several benefits including the ability to plunder the nation economically, keep the military preoccupied and provide an issue around which to rally the Iraqi populace.

Obviously, the ethno-confessional model tells us little about Iraq's seizure of Kuwait; both Iraqis and Kuwaitis are Arabs and sunnis dominate the Kuwaiti power structure as in Iraq. The Great Leader model requires more scrutiny since there was an almost universal tendency to define the crisis in terms of the personality of Saddam Husayn. As Senator John McCain put it during the January 1991 congressional debates on whether to authorize the use of force against Iraq: "The issue is not about the price of oil; the issue is the ability of one man to control the world's economy."⁴² However, the invasion of Kuwait was more a reflection of Saddam's weakness than of his strength. Having gained relatively few tangible results from the war with Iran, Saddam and the Ba'ath hoped to compensate through the seizure of Kuwait. The Ba'ath's miscalculation of the response by the United States, Europe and the United Nations requires no comment. Yet, leading up to the Gulf War, Saddam feared a military *coup d'état* should he have ordered a withdrawal from Kuwait. The Kuwait crisis forced him to withdraw Iraqi forces from the remaining Iranian territory that they occupied and to cede to Iran virtually all of its demands. If this process had been repeated in Kuwait, Saddam would have severely undermined his political legitimacy and eventually would have been overthrown. Thus the argument that he refused to withdraw from Kuwait due to "the Arab notion of pride" is less persuasive than the argument that withdrawal would have meant his ultimate political suicide.

The geopolitical model seems to have a considerable amount of validity in explaining the invasion of Kuwait. Would not Iraq's annexation of Kuwait have given it total domination of the Persian Gulf and control of 20 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves? This question is a valid one but neglects to explain why Iraq chose August 1990 to invade Kuwait rather than another point in time. In other words, why did Iraq not choose to invade Kuwait earlier?

CONCLUSION

At this point, it may be useful to reassess the explanatory models that have been brought to bear to help explain Iraq's initiation of violence in the international sphere. The ethno-confessional model seems to be more effect than a cause of Iraq's actions. It was only *after* the war with Iran

had begun that the Ba'ath began its vigorous campaign against the *'ajam* (foreigners) and the *furs* (Persians). Measuring the impact of this campaign on the Iraqi populace is difficult. It does not seem to have intensified hostility towards Iraqis. Rather it seems to have had a greater impact on the "modernizing" sector, i.e., the new bourgeoisie and would-be aspirants to that bourgeoisie, in increasing its rejection of certain forms of political and social consciousness within Iraq, particularly those associated with the traditional clerical and mercantile elements of the shi'i community and, to a lesser extent, traditional elements of the Kurdish community. In other words, incorporating an anti-Persian theme into the state's efforts to rewrite history represented a powerful symbolic message from the regime as to the acceptable norms and values of the new Iraqi society.

The Great Leader model certainly has much to offer in terms of Iraqi domestic politics and foreign affairs. No one can discuss the development of modern Iraq and avoid the impact of Saddam Husayn. Yet Saddam is a product of a particular sector of Iraqi society. He mirrors the values and aspirations of that group which forms the social base of the Ba'ath party. This group includes many second generation migrants from rural areas for whom "socialism" means hostility to the old elites and foreign domination and for whom "Arab nationalism" connotes rejection of tolerance for cultural and political diversity.

The geopolitical model offers many insights into the behavior of the Iraqi state. However, many of its hypotheses are almost truisms. What state does not want to increase its power within the international political realm whether at the regional or global level? The benefit of a model based on "geopolitical determinism" or structural realism is that it "generates testable hypotheses on an a priori basis."⁴³ However, the structure from which these hypotheses are drawn changes over time and is determined in the first instance by the domestic political economy. Thus a geopolitical model divorced from an historical and political economic perspective ultimately assumes a reified quality. It cannot explain the sources of state action and how these sources change over time.

In summary, the decisions to attack Iran and Kuwait were in the first instance determined by domestic considerations. The attack on Iran had been planned in August 1979.⁴⁴ It was linked to the forced resignation in July 1979 of Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr from the presidency in favor of Saddam Husayn. One of Saddam's main concerns was to insure the military's loyalty. Enabling the military to plan an attack on Iran was considered a key part of that strategy. The uncovering of a Syrian-backed plot to overthrow the Ba'athist regime which included the complicity of a number of high ranking party officials including a close associate of Saddam shocked the government's confidence.⁴⁵ Followed by Iranian attempts to assassinate high ranking Iraqi officials, the fragile base that the Ba'ath had established during the 1970s was threatened.

The invasion of Kuwait must be understood as an extension of the war with Iran. Unable to decisively defeat Iran or to compensate the Iraqi populace for the deprivations that it had experienced during the war, Saddam sought to use the seizure of Kuwait to solve his domestic financial problems and offset any potential challenges from the military and the populace at large. Neither the war with Iran nor the invasion of Kuwait solved the problems of state-building facing the Iraqi Ba'ath. The Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf crisis point to two important conclusions. First, both these conflicts must, in the final analysis, be seen first and foremost as efforts to strengthen the power and legitimacy of the Iraqi state. Second, military action can never be an adequate substitute for effective state-building. In Iraq, only through a sincere attempt to recognize and come to terms with the cultural and political diversity of Iraqi society, can the Iraqi state hope to achieve that end.

NOTES

- 1 There are many examples of this approach. One of the more recent is pro-pounded by Majid Khadduri who argues that, after being carved out of the Ottoman Empire, the modern Iraq state inherited liabilities stemming from the "creedal differences," i.e., sunnism and shi'ism, that had divided Persia and Ottoman Turkey for centuries. See his, *The Gulf War: The Origins and Implications of the Iraq-Iran Conflict* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 6-13; another prominent study whose title hints at its emphasis on an ethno-confessional interpretation of the conflict is Christine Moss Helms', *Iraq: Eastern Flank of the Arab World* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1984), especially pp. 141-62.
- 2 I follow Edward Said's definition of Orientalism: "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident' . . . Orientalism as a discourse . . . was able to manage - and even - produce - the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period." *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), pp. 2-3.
- 3 Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Iraqi-Iranian Dispute: Fact v. Allegation* (New York: unpublished, October 1980), p. 28.
- 4 For a more detailed discussion of the Iraqi state's efforts to rewrite and reinterpret the nation's history, national heritage and popular culture, see, E. Davis and N. Gavrielides, "Statecraft, Historical Memory and Popular Culture in Iraq and Kuwait," in E. Davis and N. Gavrielides (eds), *Statecraft in the Middle East: Oil, Historical Memory and Popular Culture* (Miami, FL: Florida International University Press, 1991), pp. 116-48; and Saddam Husayn, *hawla i'adat kitabab al-tarikh [On the Rewriting of History]* (Baghdad: Dar al-Hurriyya li-l-Tiba'a, 1979).
- 5 The first volume in this series is entitled, *al-'Iraq fi-l-tarikh [Iraq in History]* (Baghdad: Dar al-Hurriyya li-l-Tiba'a, 1983). This massive text includes essays by some of Iraq's most distinguished historians and is noticeable for numerous distortions of the country's history. Written by a "committee of experts," each volume in this series is distinguishable by its cover which has a date palm set against a brown background. As a group project, individual thinking is subordi-

- nated to the directives of the state. Inexpensively priced and readily available in bookstores, these volumes are meant to convey to the educated classes the manner in which they should think about the country's history and culture. See also, *hidarat al-'Iraq [Iraq's Culture]* (Baghdad: Dar al-Hurriyya li-l-Tiba'a, 1985).
- 6 (Baghdad: Dar al-Hurriyya li-l-Tiba'a, 1983).
 - 7 *Ibid.*, pp. 178-9; the author of this particular section, Dr. Khadr Jasim al-Duri, Dean of the School of Education at al-Musul University, argues that, given the difficulty of publically opposing religion under the 'Abbasid Empire, the *shu'ubiyyin* chose instead to attack the Arabs, "the foundation of Islam." Their ultimate goal was to destroy Islam in order to revive the Mazdaism that had predominated under the Sassanians. According to the author, the *shu'ubiyyin* chose Iraq as the venue for their attack given its status as "the legitimate heir of the ancient semitic culture and its role in consolidating Arabism and Islam, as a religion and a state." Clearly the author is seeking to develop arguments based on essentialist notions to explain Iraqi-Persian antagonisms as well as to promote the notion that Persians were responsible for the corruption and decline of Iraqi civilization following the collapse of the 'Abbasid Empire.
 - 8 See, for example, Shakir Sabir al-Dabit, *tarikh al-munaza'at wa-l-hurub bayn al-'Iraq wa-l-iran [The History of Conflicts and Wars Between Iraq and Iran]* (Baghdad: Dar al-Hurriyya li-l-Tiba'a, 1984). This study was sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and Information.
 - 9 Department of Defense, Defense Technical Information Center, *Iraqi Power and U.S. Security in the Middle East* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 1990), p. 15.
 - 10 al-Dabit, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
 - 11 As one astute observer of Iraqi politics notes, "Before 1975 one would have been very hard put to find anyone inside Iraq who actually believed there was a 'territorial' dispute with Iran." Samir ah-Khalil, *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), p. 275.
 - 12 Efraim Karsh (ed.), *The Iran-Iraq War* (London: Macmillan Press, 1989), p. 66
 - 13 al-Khalil, *op. cit.*, p. 272.
 - 14 *Ibid.*, pp. 274-5.
 - 15 *Ibid.*, p. 278.
 - 16 Efraim Karsh, "Geopolitical Determinism: The Origins of the Iran-Iraq War," *The Middle East Journal* 44 (Spring 1990), pp. 256-68.
 - 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 260-3.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, p. 257.
 - 19 al-Khalil, *op. cit.*, pp. 276-80.
 - 20 *Ibid.*, p. 279.
 - 21 See Robert O. Keohane, "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond," in Ada W. Finifter (ed.), *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association, 1983), pp. 503-40. I would like to thank Jack Levy for calling my attention to this article.
 - 22 *Ibid.*, p. 508.
 - 23 *Ibid.*, p. 519.
 - 24 See my essay, "Theorizing Statecraft and State Formation in Arab Oil-Producing Countries," in Davis and Gavrielides, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-35.
 - 25 *Ibid.*, p. 16.
 - 26 Of course, British duplicity during this period is well known. While the Arabs were being promised an independent state in the Hijaz and the Levant, the

Zionist movement was being promised through the Balfour Declaration a "national home" in Palestine. All the while the British and French were formulating the division of the Ottoman Empire at the war's end into respective spheres of influence as codified in the 1916 Sykes-Picot Treaty. See George Antomiks, *The Arab Awakening* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1939), and Fred J. Khouri, *The Arab-Israeli Dilemma* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 3rd edition, 1985).

- 27 It should be noted that Saddam's full name is Saddam Husayn al-Takriti. Subsequently he forbade Iraqis from using the surname, al-Takriti, indicating the degree of sensitivity at the fact that so many high level officials are drawn from al-Takrit.
- 28 Elyahu Kanovsky, "Economic Implications for the Region and World Oil Market," in Karsh (ed.), *The Iran-Iraq War*, *op. cit.*, p. 231.
- 29 Committee Against Repression and for Democratic Rights in Iraq (CADRI), *Saddam's Iraq: Revolution or Reaction?* (London: Zed Books, 1986), p. 155.
- 30 For an elaboration of the philosophy underlying this project, see Husayn, *op. cit.*
- 31 Issam al-Khafaji, *tatawwur al-ra'imaliya al-dawliya fi-l-'iraq, 1968-1983* [*The Development of State Capitalism in Iraq, 1968-1983*] (Cairo: Dar al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi, 1986), pp. 16-37.
- 32 This was the fate of an Iraqi academic whom I interviewed in Baghdad in 1980. He related to me that he had made a speech to a university audience while studying in Europe in which he noted that promotions within Iraqi ministries were governed by one's tribal background. He was immediately imprisoned for three months upon returning to Iraq and warned at his release that even more dire consequences would follow any further references to the tribal or regional origins of officials of the state.
- 33 One manner in which the Ba'ath has tried to create this national identity has been through the indoctrination of Iraqi youth. One of the more interesting aspects of this process has been the transfer of shi'i and Kurdish youth to each other's respective regions during summer vacations. This information was given to me by the Ba'ath Party secretary in Karbala' during an interview in May 1980.
- 34 Khadduri, *op. cit.*, p. 109. The reasons for this attraction are often said to be the feelings of exclusion and oppression felt by members of the shi'i community, politically, economically and culturally.
- 35 *Ibid.*, pp. 106-7.
- 36 *Ibid.*, pp. 108-9.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- 38 Karsh, "Geopolitical Determinism," *op. cit.*, p. 266.
- 39 See, for example, the anonymous introduction to *al-sira'a al-'iraqi al-farisi*, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-20, where this perspective is outlined.
- 40 Efraim Karsh, "In Baghdad, Politics Is a Lethal Game," *The New York Times Magazine*, September 30 1990, p. 100.
- 41 Among military officers, the most prominent to lose his life was 'Adnan Khayrallah Tulfa, the Iraqi Defence Minister and Saddam's cousin. Although he died in a helicopter crash, it is widely believed that he was killed due to his rising popularity as chief military architect of the struggle with Iran.
- 42 "The Persian Gulf Debate," National Public Radio, January 11 1991.
- 43 Keohane, *op. cit.*, p. 529.
- 44 John W. Amos, II, "The Iran-Iraq War: Conflict, Linkage, and Spillover in the Middle East," in R. Darius, J. Amos, II and R. Magnus (eds), *Gulf Security*

into the 1980s: *Perceptual and Strategic Dimensions* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1984), p. 56.

45 *Ibid.*, and Khadduri, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-8.

REFERENCES

- Amos, J. W., II (1984) "The Iran-Iraq War: Conflict, Linkage and Spillover in the Middle East," in Darius, R., Amos, J., II and Magnus, R. (eds) *Gulf Security into the 1980s: Perceptual and Strategic Dimensions*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, pp. 49-81.
- Antonius, G. (1939) *The Arab Awakening*, Philadelphia: Lippincott.
- Committee Against Repression and for Democratic Rights in Iraq (CADRI) (1986) *Saddam's Iraq: Repression or Revolution?* London: Zed Books.
- al-Dabit, S. S. (1984) *tarikh al-munaza'at wa-l-hurub bayn al-'iraq wa-l-iran*, (*The History of Conflicts and Wars Between Iraq and Iran*), Baghdad: Dar al-Hurriya li-l-Tiba'a.
- Davis, E. and Gavrielides, N. (1991) *Statecraft in the Middle East: Oil, Historical Memory and Popular Culture*, Miami, FL: Florida International University Press.
- Department of Defense, Defense Technical Information Center (1990) *Iraqi Power and U.S. Security in the Middle East*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College.
- Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Helms, C. M. (1984) *Iraq: Eastern Flank of the Arab World*, Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution.
- (1988) *hidarat al-'iraq*, (*Iraq's Culture*), Baghdad: Dar al-Hurriya li-l-Tiba'a.
- Husayn, S. (1979) *hawla i'adat kitabab al-tarikh*, (*On the Rewriting of History*), Baghdad: Dar al-Hurriya li-l-Tiba'a.
- (1988) *al-'iraq fi-l-tarikh*, (*Iraq in History*), Baghdad: Dar al-Hurriya li-l-Tiba'a.
- Kanovsky, E. (1989) "Economic Implications for the Region and World Oil Market," in Karsh, E. (ed.) *The Iran-Iraq War*, London: Macmillan Press, pp. 231-52.
- Karsh, E. (Spring 1980) "Geopolitical Determinism: The Origins of the Iran-Iraq War," *The Middle East Journal* 44, pp. 256-68.
- (1991) "In Baghdad, Politics is a Lethal Game," *The New York Times Magazine*, September 30, pp. 38-42, 100.
- (ed.) (1989) *The Iran-Iraq War*, London: Macmillan Press.
- Keohane, R. O. (1983) "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond," in Finifter, A. W. (ed.) *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*, Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association, pp. 503-40.
- Khadduri, M. (1988) *The Gulf War: The Origins and Implications of the Iraq-Iran Conflict*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- al-Khafaji, I. (1986) *tatawwur al-ra'imaliya al-dawliya fi-l-'iraq, 1968-1983*, (*The Development of State Capitalism in Iraq, 1968-1983*), Cairo: Dar al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi.
- al-Khalil, S. (1989) *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1980) *The Iraqi-Iranian Dispute: Fact v. Allegation*, New York: unpublished.
- Said, E. (1978) *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon.
- (1985) *al-sira'a al-'iraqi al-farisi*, (*The Iraqi-Persian Struggle*), Baghdad: Dar al-Hurriya li-l-Tiba'a.