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IRAQ UNDER THE REIGN OF FAYSAL II (1953-1958)

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This study treats the last phase of the Hashimite monarchy in Iraq, where from 1941 until the 1958 revolution, Nūrī as-Saʿīd Pasha either headed or controlled most government coalitions. After World War II he tried to make a long term agreement with Great Britain by means of a new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty but so vehement were public demonstrations against it that the treaty was never ratified. The Arab defeat in Palestine war of 1948 had serious political and economic repercussions in Iraq. The defeat gave the regime the opportunity to impose martial law on the country. Nūrī as-Saʿīd continued his traditional pro-British policy and, in 1955, aligned Iraq with the Western defence system through the Baghdad Pact, extending British military privileges in the country. Failures in domestic affairs were matched by foreign policy failures. The new alliance with the West – achieved through relentless domestic suppression – only served to intensify the desire for independence and the nationalist sentiments. The opposition succeeded in bringing the regime down in 1958.

The most important change in Iraq in the mid-fifties was the development of the oil sector, upon which all other development depended. The Iraq Petroleum Company's (IPC) concession was renegotiated to give Iraq a greater share of oil revenues. With the changes negotiated in February 1952, Iraq's revenues per tonne more than doubled.[1] The establishment of the *Development Board* in 1950, reflecting the economic orientation of the regime, and the subsequent inauguration of a series of development plans were designed to improve Iraq's infrastructure and harness its agricultural potential. However, the oil industry's contribution to the national income was lopsided. The oil industry purchased almost all its capital equipment outside Iraq itself and employed a relatively small labour force which could be locally a dominant factor but nationally less signifi-

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[1] Penrose, Edith and E. F. Penrose: Iraq: International Relations and National Development. Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press 1978, p. 158.

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cant.[2] More than anything else, the rise in oil income placed massive economic power in the hands of those who controlled the state and it was to be the vision of men such as Nūrī as-Saᶜīd which largely determined how that power was to be used and who the beneficiaries were to be.

The younger generation, professionally educated in the West and imbued with progressive ambitions often coloured by socialist thought presented an opposition to the regime. These younger men were showing disturbing signs of frustration and discontent over the progress of economic projects which the *Development Board* was promoting with the funds from the oil royalties. Since 1952 the *Development Board* had largely lost its independence and its recommendations needed to be approved by the minister of development. Reinforcing a trend already apparent for some years, it elaborated plans and disbursed funds that substantially favoured the landed interest through massive irrigation and land reclamation schemes. It was the result of ideas then current about the development of Iraq as an agricultural country. However, the immediate beneficiaries tended to be confined to those who could lay claim to the newly irrigated lands. Furthermore, these policies tended to encourage the abandonment of lands which had become too saline through previous unrestrained irrigation. Agriculture received up to 45 per cent of total allocations. The second priority was transportation and communications (roads, railroads, ports and airports), which received around 14 per cent of allocations. Most of the remaining funds went to construction; its share ranged from 11 to 14 per cent.[3]

In order to address this, the government of Iraq appointed the British economist Lord Salter in the spring of 1954, to examine the whole economic programme and report. His "Plan of Action" was presented to the *Development Board* in the spring of 1955.[4]

His report criticized the concentration on infrastructure development to the exclusion of all else. Salter referred to popular resentment and aimed massive criticism against the Board's irrigation policy. Furthermore, using a rationale that was political as much as economic, he advised the board to spend much greater resources on housing, health, clean water systems and education in order to bring more immediate benefits to wider sections of the population. Many of his recommendations were acted upon, in the sense that substantial funds were allocated to the kinds of projects he had outlined, but the actual expenditure during the following three years proved to be less than planned. It remained the landed interest that gained the greatest benefits. Oil revenues thus provided the basis for a growing provision by the state, but crucially on terms dictated by those who controlled the state itself.[5] This was a recipe for a thoroughgoing pa-

[2] Longrigg, Stephen Hemsley: Oil in the Middle East. Its Discovery and Development. London, Oxford University Press 1961, p. 195.

[3] Jalal, Ferhang: The Role of Government in the Industrialization of Iraq, 1950 – 1965. London, Frank Cass 1972, p. 33.

[4] Salter, James: The Development of Iraq. London, Caxton Press 1955.

ternalism in which the underlying social and economic inequality would remain unchallenged. In the industrial sector, progress outside the oil industry was slow and inadequate to Iraq's needs. This was partly due to the advice of foreign development planners, who erroneously assumed that that industrial investment would be undertaken by private enterpreneurs.[6]

The greatest social change was the disintegration of the tribal structure and the decline in the nomadic way of life. The regime attempted to control social change, but it could not prevent it. The economic and social developments gradually eroded the traditional social structure and created new social groups. The disintegration of the tribal structure generated a new social problem, the emergence of a new upper class of landed proprietors and urban wealthy. By the end of the prerevolutionary period, this group had brought almost three-quarters of all the surveyed land of Iraq into their legal possession. A new middle class was also taking shape, who differed from the upper class more in outlook and culture than in wealth. The decisive factor in forming that outlook was secular education. As education expanded, it also diversified, giving the educated middle class a broader background. The second important factor in shaping the outlook of the new middle class was occupation. A UN report on the work force in 1957 found 3 per cent in commerce and 7.6 per cent in services, therefore a little over 10 per cent of the work force could be considered middle class.[7]

Although it is difficult to obtain accurate statistics on the size and composition of the lower classes, according to the above mentioned UN report, 6.2 per cent of the work force was engaged in industry; 1.8 per cent in construction and 2.7 per cent in transport, most of them labourers. An undetermined number of unskilled labourers worked in the service sector. The most skilled workers and the best organized were those employed in the oil industry and on the railroad, together comprising 1.3 per cent of the total work force. To this group should be added about half the factory workers in industries employing over ten workers – the group often under the influence of the *Communist Party*. The real poor in Iraq, however, were not these urban groups, but the rural peasantry, still the largest single component of the population. Well over 70 per cent of the work force were peasant farmers. It safe to say that at least four-fifths of Iraq's farmers were sharecroppers or agricultural labourers.[8]

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The year 1953 could have initiated a new era in Iraqi history; instead it marked another opportunity missed by te regime. Public opposition activity

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[5] Warriner, Doreen: Land Reform and Development in the Middle East. London, Royal Institute of International Affairs 1957, pp. 113 – 183.

[6] Penrose and Penrose, op. cit., p. 17.

[7] Batatu, Hanna: The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq. Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press 1982, p. 1126.

[8] Batatu, op. cit., p. 54.

continued, on a restricted scale, mobilizing in particular against martial law in the Baghdad area and the censorship and control that came with it, but it was unable to shake the hold of a government that included mostly conservative right-wing elements and which continued to enjoy the confidence of the Palace. On 2 May, after reaching his majority, Fayṣal ibn Ġāzī ascended the Iraqi throne as Fayṣal II. His uncle ᶜAbdalilāh ibn ᶜAlī thereupon lost his formal powers as regent and was accorded the rank of crown prince. This had little effect, however, either on his determination to play a key role in politics or on his ability to do so through the networks of protégés and associates which he had established over the years. ᶜAbdalilāh remained as influential as ever, pursuing his initiatives in foreign and domestic politics, despite the fact that King Fayṣal II assumed his full constitutional powers as head of state.[9]

The king was young, Western-educated, had democratic ideas and many Iraqis liked him. As a member of the younger generation he might well have been able to identify more readily with the newly emerging Western-educated class in the cities, the group that was giving the regime so much trouble. However, no such transition took place, for several reasons. Brought up under the aegis of ᶜAbdalilāh, Fayṣal had little political vision and had not had the time or opportunity to develop a political personality of his own. Young and inexperienced Fayṣal, was a shy youth with little public personality, although personal acquaintances acknowledged his charm. Raised as the only son of King Ġāzī who had died while he was still a child and Queen ᶜĀliya who died when he was fifteen, Fayṣal had been surrounded mainly by his aunts, in an insulated atmosphere largely cut off from Iraqi society.[10] Fayṣal's training also counted against him. Educated mostly by British tutors in Baghdad or in English schools, including Harrow, he was out of touch with Iraqi popular opinion. His circle of acquaintances was the same as that of the crown prince and consequently, when Jamīl al-Midfaᶜī offered his resignation in August 1953, the king consulted the crown prince and Nūrī as-Saᶜīd before asking Muḥammad Fāḍil al-Jamālī to form a cabinet.[11]

Prince ᶜAbdalilāh had no intention of relinquishing real power to the young king, even after 1953. For the remainder of the old regime the crown prince continued to dominate palace politics, although he no longer had the legal authority to do so. However, there was now a difference. As soon as the king married and produced his own heir, ᶜAbdalilāh would no longer be crown prince. This new situation worried him, and it was not long before ᶜAbdalilāh's interest in the Syrian scheme revived. From the very beginning, the secret preoccupation of Fāḍil al-Jamālī's cabinet was ᶜAbdalilāh's Syrian scheme.[12] He was en-

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[9] Al-Ḥasanī, as-Sayyid ᶜAbdarrazzāq: Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-ᶜirāqīya (History of the Iraqi Cabinets). Vol IX, (7th edition), Baghdad 1988, p. 23.

[10] Fawzī, Aḥmad: Fayṣal aṯ-ṯānī. (Fayṣal the Second). Baghdad 1988, pp. 77 – 84.

[11] Al-Ḥasanī, op. cit., Vol IX, p. 54.

[12] Marr, Phebe: The Modern History of Iraq. Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press 1985, p. 114.

couraged by recent events in Syria, where Adīb ash-Shīshaklī's dictatorship had come under severe attack. The crown prince found a prime minister to carry out his bidding in Fāḍil al-Jamālī, a man willing to undertake the Syrian project in return for entrance into the higher citadels of power. Considerable sums were paid to Lebanese and Syrian newspapers and to pro-Iraqi politicians in Syria to overthrow Adīb ash-Shīshaklī, as an overthrow seemed increasingly possible. Constant contact was maintained with these politicians through cabinet ministers and others. A detailed plan was even drawn up providing for an invasion of Syria by Iraqi forces if need be.[13] The situation in Saudi Arabia had also changed, for King ᶜAbdalᶜazīz had died and been replaced by the weaker Saᶜūd.

The new government lifted martial law in the country, ended press censorship and allowed party activity to revive in September 1953. However, it maintained pressure on the communists, encouraged also by factionalism within the *Communist Party* of Iraq itself. Nor was the government any more lenient towards the organized labour movement than its predecessors had been, going so far as to declare martial law in Basra province when oil workers went on strike for better pay and conditions. Fāḍil al-Jamālī had been associated with a number of the reformist ideas circulating in Iraq during the previous decade. However, he had kept aloof from the political parties, choosing instead to chart an individual course in which he was the centre of a grouping of young intelligentsia thinking about the future of the Iraqi state outside the radical or revolutionary opposition. When he formed his government it was made up of younger men, many of them with known reformist ideas in relation to land law, the organization of government and the provision of social services.[14] It was also noticeable that half of the cabinet (including the prime minister himself) were shīᶜī, representing the highest number and proportion of Shīᶜa yet included in an Iraqi government. For those Shīᶜa who resented Sunnī Arab dominance and favouritism, this was an important symbolic advance. It did not answer their grievances, but it did create a more hopeful atmosphere in which the promise of reform and promise of better communal representation appeared to go hand in hand.[15] These qualities appear to have recommended Fāḍil al-Jamālī to Nūrī as-Saᶜīd, and were why he chose to support the apparently reformist government, despite the fact that many of government's reformist ideas were in contradiction to the conviction of the landed and tribal exponents.

In his second cabinet, formed on 8 March 1954, Fāḍil al-Jamālī appointed a Kurd, Saᶜīd Qazzāz, who was a determined and ruthless practitioner in this field, to the sensitive post of minister of the interior, with control over public security. However, as minister, he also had wide powers of patronage and a say

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[13] An-Nāṣirī, Ṭāriq: ᶜAbdalilāh al-waṣīy ᶜalā ᶜarš al-ᶜIrāq (1939 – 1958). Ḥayātuhu wa dawruhu as-siyāsī. (ᶜAbdalilāh the Regent of the Iraqi Throne. His Life and Political Role.) Vol II, Baghdad 1990, p. 426.

[14] Al-Ḥasanī, op. cit., Vol IX, pp. 54 – 60.

[15] Tripp, Charles: A History of Iraq. Cambridge University Press 2000, p. 134.

in the government's distribution of the growing resources at its disposal.[16] This could be seen as a public signal that Kurdish interests would be accommodated – increasingly necessary as the Kurdish nationalist movement gained definition. After the collapse od the Mahabad Republic in early 1947, Ibrāhīm Aḥmad joined the *Kurdish Democratic Party* (KDP). The second congress in summer 1951 elected him as secretary-general and the party had moved in a more radical direction. Its president remained Muṣṭafā al-Barzānī, but he had lived in exile in Moscow. He was therefore in no position to prevent the KDP from adopting a programme of land reform and workers' and peasants' rights. In January 1953 the KDP changed its name to *Kurdistan Democratic Party* and called for the nationalization of Iraq's oil resources and for channelling of substantial oil revenues to specifically Kurdish development projects.[17] For the prime minister it was important to use government patronage not simply to placate the traditional chieftains of Kurdistan, but also to ensure that the KDP with its more radical ideas should not be able to capitalize on the powerful mixture of national and socio-economic grievances in the Kurdish region.

The secret activity of the Iraqi cabinet on the Syrian scheme was accompanied by a public proposal by Fāḍil al-Jamālī to the Arab League for an Arab federation beginning with Iraq, Syria, and Jordan. Although a revolt that finally overthrew Adīb ash-Shīshaklī in February 1954 was engineered by a faction within his own army, there is little doubt that it was helped along by Iraqi money, propaganda and support.[18] With the dictator removed and pro-Iraqi politicians in power in Syria, the crown prince looked forward to a successful conclusion of his union scheme. But he had reckoned without Nūrī as-Saᶜīd. Relations between the two men had deteriorated. Although Nūrī as-Saᶜīd would not openly oppose the throne, he could thwart the crown prince through his control of parliament. To bring the Syrian project to fruition, ᶜAbdalilāh needed more money. However, Nūrī as-Saᶜīd refused to allow a quorum of his delegates to attend the budget session, and in this way was able to bring about the fall of the cabinet.[19] Even this did not dampen the crown prince's ambition; he continued to seek ways to isolate Nūrī as-Saᶜīd and to pursue his own policy. A number of politicians advised the dissolution of parliament and new elections. This advice was entirely to ᶜAbdalilāh's liking, as a new parliament might be used to neutralize Nūrī as-Saᶜīd's influence and even to support the Syrian scheme.

The growing American influence became visible also in Iraq – that bastion of British colonial rule in the Middle East. The recent development in Iran and Egypt demonstrated that the British power was in decline as it was no more able

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[16] Al-Ḥasanī, op. cit., Vol IX, pp. 82 – 88.

[17] McDowall, David: A Modern History of the Kurds. London, I. B. Tauris 1996, pp. 295 – 297.

[18] Seale, Patrick: The Struggle for Syria, A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945 – 1958, London, Oxford University Press 1965, pp. 141 – 143.

[19] Al-Ḥasanī, op. cit., Vol IX, pp. 98 – 99.

to protect old loyal regimes from the rising national liberation movements. Within Iraq conservative politicians increased the number of those who pursued a policy of closer cooperation with the USA. Fāḍil al-Jamālī too had been a well-known pro-American politician and under his premiership the US positions in the country considerably strengthened.[20] Therefore the pro-British politicians led by Nūrī as-Saʿīd used their best endeavours to bring his cabinet to resignation.

However, Fāḍil al-Jamālī was brought down neither by opposition on the streets nor among the vociferous opposition parties, but by conservative resistance to the relatively modest reform schemes which he tried to introduce according to his government's programme. When these in December 1953 touched on questions of land ownership, land settlement or taxation they alarmed the dominant landed interest in parliament. The opposition of the landed interest then became apparent and it was only through Nūrī as-Saʿīd's influence that the *Constitutional Union Party* (CUP), in which these interests were heavily represented, grudgingly gave its support to Fāḍil al-Jamālī. This did not, however, remove the unease which many of its members felt at the government's modest land distribution schemes.[21] The landowners' fears were compounded by unease in other quarters when the government revealed its plans for civil service reform. These reforms were intended to create a more efficient state, but also one which would be more responsive to the communities which that state claimed to represent. It was a direct threat, therefore, to the groups which had installed themselves in the heart of the state machinery and which used patronage and favouritism to advance their own interests at the expense of other Iraqis. The nature of the power structure in Iraq and its colonization of the state machinery was such that any reform was potentially dangerous. The administration was chiefly regarded by the politically prominent as a place to build up the networks of clients which gave substance to individuals in political life and caused them to be taken seriously as political actors. The British Embassy had, therefore, a special interest in the success of al-Jamālī's cabinet in economic reforms.[22] Any attempt at reform threatened a broad spectrum of these interests. In the case of al-Jamālī's cabinet (as in previous instances when Shīʿa had been in a position to affect selection and promotion procedures in the civil service) there was the added complication of suspected communal or sectarian favouritism at the expense of the well-established privileges of the Sunnīs.

By the spring of 1954 the landed proprietors, both Shīʿī and Sunnī, had joined forces in parliament and elsewhere to force the government to water down its land reform proposals. The prime minister faced strong criticism in

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[20] An-Nāṣirī, op. cit., pp. 494 – 495.

[21] Tripp, op. cit., p. 135.

[22] Al-Windāwī, Muʾayyad Ibrāhīm: Al-ʿIrāq fī at-taqārīr as-sanawīya li-s-sifāra al-Brīṭānīya, 1944 – 1958. (Iraq in the Annual Reports of the British Embassy). Baghdad 1992, p. 167.

parliament for the alleged failure of his government to take adequate measures to deal with the flood situation.[23] At the same time, a campaign of attrition, often less visible, but no less effective, was initiated within the state administration to ensure that al-Jamālī's plans for civil service reform were blocked. This was set against a background of allegiations of Shīʿī favouritism and sectarian prejudice. In the short term, this meant that Fāḍil al-Jamālī became ever more dependent on the power and influence of Nūrī as-Saʿīd. The latter, however, was becoming distracted by the crown prince's eagerness to intervene once again in Syrian affairs, following the fall of the regime of Adīb ash-Shīshaklī. As a result, Nūrī as-Saʿīd found it difficult to expend much of his political capital shoring up the premier minister when his own following within the CUP was so suspicious of the government and when the ministers, frustrated at their inability to push through any meaningful reforms, were deserting the prime minister. Consequently, when Fāḍil al-Jamālī finally offered his resignation in April 1954, Nūrī as-Saʿīd did nothing to dissuade him. Nor did he agree to form an administration himself, but departed instead for Europe, leaving the Palace to sort out the problems to which the crown prince had in some measure contributed.

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In April 1954, the king and the crown prince, apprehensive of a backlash against the fall of Fāḍil al-Jamālī and the consequences of disappointed hopes for reform, turned to Arshad al-ʿUmarī to form a government and to hold elections.[24] Fearing a repeat of the repression of his 1946 administration, the *National Democratic Party* and the *Independence Party* unsuccessfully petitioned the Palace and then opened discussions with the *Iraqi Communist Party* (ICP), at that time veering towards social democracy. This led to the formation of a common election bloc named the *National Front* in May 1954, composed of the three opposition parties (the *Peace Partisans* standing in for the still illegal ICP) in time to contest the general elections the following month, on 9 June 1954. While the extreme right was split into pro-British and pro-American camp, the Iraqi national bourgeoisie rejected the proposal of the *Communist Party* to organize the Front on a wide anti-imperialistic base, prepared any time to organize mass actions for the fulfilment of the approved programme, in a naive hope of achieving this goal without the direct support of the popular masses.[25]

The programme of the *National Front*, called "the Charter" was as follows: 1. introduction of democratic freedoms; 2. defence of free elections; 3. abolition of the 1930 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty and the military bases and rejection of Iraq's membership in military blocs; 4. rejection of American military assistance aiming at connection of Iraq to the imperialistic military blocs; 5. demand for the cancellation of concessions to foreign monopolies, for introduction of social

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[23] Birdwood, Lord: Nuri as-Said. London, Cassel and Co., 1959, p. 226.

[24] Al-Ḥasanī, op. cit., Vol IX, p. 110.

[25] Paloncy, Evžen: Irák. Praha, Nakladatelství politické literatury 1964, p. 62.

justice, for solution of economic problems, unemployment, high prices and rising of the living standard of the inhabitants by development and protection of home industries; 6. work for liquidation of flood damages and granting reasonable compensations to those affected. Two more items were added concerning Palestine and the problems of the Arab world; 7. solidarity with the people of Arab countries striving for independence and the liberation of Palestine; 8. making every effort to save Iraq and Arab countries from the disaster of war.[26]

The conduct of the elections of 1954 became a controversial issue. While Nūrī as-Saᶜīd was vacationing in Europe, the crown prince and Arshad al-ᶜUmarī prepared to manage the elections as they wished, without consulting him. Although some of the usual controls were retained, the elections of June 1954 has rightly been regarded as the freest yet held in Iraq, at least in the urban areas and its result was the most representative parliament.[27] It produced the country's most representative chamber. All licensed parties participated, and the campaign was intense, with some 425 candidates standing for 135 seats. When it was over, the CUP of Nūrī as-Saᶜīd lost its absolute majority, and although it obtained the largest single bloc of seats, fell below a controlling majority and there was the usual large number of independents, heavily weighted in favour of the rural conservative interest. Though the *National Front* obtained only 10 seats, mainly in the towns (e.g. in Baghdad four of ten and in Mosul four of nine), it caused "consternation of the Palace and conservative elements".[28] The *National Democratic Party* returned 6 members, including Kāmil al-Chādirchī; the *Independence Party* returned 2; and the *United Popular Front* 1. Even a known communist sympathizer was elected: Dhūnnūn Ayyūb, a writer and teacher from Mosul. The *National Front* succeeded in giving a significant voice for the first time in parliament to the parties it represented, nevertheless, the balance of power lay with the independents, presumably committed to the crown prince.[29]

It seemed as if an era of legal opposition had begun and the crown prince would pursue his Syrian policy. Nothing could have been further from reality. The cabinet of Arshad al-ᶜUmarī became target of criticism from both sides: the representatives of the *National Front* criticized the cabinet for failing to keep the election promises and the extreme right criticized it for allowing the opposition deputies to attack the regime and even the Palace. The danger lay in the fact, that the criticism gained the support of Iraqi public and forced the ruling circles to take unfavourable measures.[30] Besides, the Anglo-Iraqi agreement

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[26] Al-ᶜAkkām, ᶜAbdalamīr Hādī: Tārīkh Ḥizb al-istiqlāl al-ᶜirāqī 1946-1958. (History of the Independece Party of Iraq). Bagdad 1986, pp. 295 – 296.

[27] Batatu, op. cit., p. 686.

[28] Gallman, Waldemar: Iraq under General Nuri. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press 1964, p. 4.

[29] Al-Ḥasanī, op. cit., Vol IX, p. 89.

[30] Paloncy, op. cit., p. 63.

was due to expire in 1957 and if a new treaty was to be concluded without a threat of new riots, the majority of the conservative politicians shared the opinion that only Nūrī as-Saʿīd could secure it. Believing that the opposition forces would now be harder to contain, Arshad al-ʿUmarī tendered his resignation on 17 July 1954, shortly after the parliamentary elections.[31] The elected parliament met on 26 July: the deputies listened to the king's speech and then on 27 July 1954, it was adjourned until the end of November.

This development encouraged the *National Front* and enhanced its members' sense of their own power, as well as their fear of the Palace's reaction. Consequently, they mobilized to put public pressure on the Palace to appoint an acceptable prime minister. Demonstrations and marches were organized in Baghdad, intending to give the impression of the unstoppable force of those asking for change. However, the effect was quite the reverse and during two months the situation changed radically. The reason for that was an agreement which provided for the country's entry into a military bloc (the *Baghdad Pact*) aiming to guarantee the security of the ruling classes. Within less than two months, the parliament would be dismissed, Nūrī returned as prime minister, and a new, strictly controlled election would be held to replace Iraq's first reasonably representative chamber.

The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 was due to expire in 1957, and the old treaty provided that a new one be negotiated between 1952 and 1957.[32] If any new treaty were to be negotiated, and a repetition of the "al-waṯba" avoided, most establishment politicians felt that Nūrī as-Saʿīd was essential.[33] However, they had not counted on the price of his cooperation. In the summer of 1954 Nūrī as-Saʿīd stayed in London in protest against the policy of the crown prince and it was essential to win his consent for the new political line. While he was vacationing in Europe, Nūrī as-Saʿīd made it known that he would not take responsibility for affairs under the chamber just elected, and in particular, that he would not work with a parliament that included leftists such as Kāmil al-Chādirchī. This ticklish matter had to be settled – on the direct pressure of the British ambassador – by ʿAbdalilāh himself who fearing the consequences of mounting civil disorder flew to Europe, invited Nūrī as-Saʿīd to Paris "to convince him" to return and form a new government.[34]

Thus Nūrī as-Saʿīd found himself in a situation, in which he was able to lay conditions and from which he could dictate his terms. In a hastily arranged meeting in Paris with ʿAbdalilāh and the chief of the royal dīwān, he laid down

[31] Al-Ḥasanī, op. cit., Vol IX, pp. 131 – 132.

[32] Treaty of Preferential Alliance: The United Kingdom and Iraq, 30 June 1930, Article 11. In: Hurewitz, J. C.: Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East. A Documentary Record: 1914 – 1956. Vol. II. Princeton, New Jersey, D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc. 1956, p. 180.

[33] An-Nāsirī, op. cit., p. 489.

[34] Ḥumaydī, Jaʿfar ʿAbbās: At-taṭawwurāt as-siyāsīya fī al-ʿIrāq, 1941 – 1953. (Political Developments in Iraq). An-Najaf 1976, pp. 82 – 103.

several conditions for his return to power. Nūrī as-Saᶜīd agreed to form a cabinet on the condition that the parliament would be dissolved and new elections be held, opposition parties disbanded and the opposition press abrogated and the crown prince would not interfere in Syrian affairs.[35] ᶜAbdalilāh had to acknowledge that he was the "strong man" the Palace now needed to steer the regime safely through the years ahead, despite the crown prince's misgivings about him. This sealed the fate of the newly elected chamber.

On 31 July Nūrī as-Saᶜīd presented these conditions. The king approved them on 3 August and on the same day he accepted the resignation of Arshad al-ᶜUmarī, issued a decree dissolving the "unreliable" parliament and appointed Nūrī as-Saᶜīd to form a new government.[36] So on 3 August Nūrī as-Saᶜīd formed his twelfth cabinet and his terms soon became clear. With parliament in abeyance, he began a systematic suppression of all political activity that surpassed any previously undertaken and began a new era in Iraq. A series of decrees designed to uproot the left permitted the Council of ministers to deport persons convicted of communism, anarchism, and working for a foreign government, and to strip them of Iraqi citizenship. It became an offence to join the *Peace Partisans*, the *Democratic Youth*, and similar organizations, and professional societies were prohibited from conducting activities impairing public security.[37] The police were empowered to forbid any meetings that might disturb public order, and night street meetings were stopped.

Nūrī as-Saᶜīd simultaneously disbanded his own party, the CUP and issued a statement attacking the nationalistic forces in the country and asked the people to support him in liquidation of these forces for the "good of the country", as defined, of course, by Nūrī as-Saᶜīd himself. Stricter measures were introduced against the IPC and against the communists' front organizations, sympathizers and fellow-travellers, and tighter controls were imposed on all other parties and their newspapers. Parties that protested vigorously, such as the NDP, found themselves and their newspapers closed down. Already on 14 August the Ministry of the Interior cancelled the licence of 15 newspapers and magazines in Baghdad and by 23 September 1954 closed down another 37 newspapers and magazines for one year.[38] As a fitting climax to these activities, the cabinet broke off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Before the elections hard blows hit the trade unions and the *National Democratic Party*, whose activity was closed down. The campaign of repression, conducted in the name of the fight against communism, was deployed against the political opponents of Nūrī

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[35] Kinna, Khalīl: Al-ᶜIrāq, amsuhu wa ġaduhu. (Iraq, its Past and Future). Beirut 1966, p. 172.

[36] Al-Ḥasanī, op. cit., Vol IX, pp. 134 – 136.

[37] Al-Ḥasanī, op. cit., Vol IX, pp. 113 – 117.

[38] Al-Chādirchī, Kāmil: Muḏakkirāt Kāmil al-Chādirchī wa tārīch al-Ḥizb al-waṭanī ad-dīmuqrāṭī. (Memoirs of K. al-Chādirchī and History of the National Democratic Party). Vol II. Beirut, Dār aṭ-ṭalīᶜa, 1970, pp. 641 – 676.

as-Saᶜīd and indeed against any writers, journalists and academics whom he regarded as critical of the *status quo*. Some were dismissed from their posts, others arrested and others fled into exile. The majority of the opposition leaders were interned or daunted, and therefore the opposition boycotted the elections held on 12 September 1954. This set the scene for elections, which produced what has been called "the unopposed parliament", a parliament in which 116 of the 135 deputies were returned unopposed, allowing the government to revoke the licences of all political parties and to bring all associations under tighter control. At the same time, restrictive legislation was introduced governing such matters as students' and teachers' conduct, the freedom of the press and the right to hold public meetings and organize demonstrations. In the elections the adherents of Nūrī as-Saᶜīd obtained nearly 90 per cent of the mandates (121 seats of 135), while of the remaining fourteen seats 2 were obtained by the *Independence Party* and the rest by independent deputies.[39] So tightly was it controlled that before the elections were held over 100 delegates were returned unopposed, with only 22 seats contested. When the returns were in, the parliament contained no genuine opposition at all. After the elections Nūrī as-Saᶜīd banned the activity of all political parties and all democratic organizations on the pretext that they were communistic and in this way he *de facto* liquidated the whole opposition.

Nūrī as-Saᶜīd now felt able to pursue two of his major policy initiatives. The first concerned economic development and was aimed at carrying through the kinds of measures, based on the growing oil revenues of the Iraqi state, that he believed would strengthen both the state and the regime which was shaping the state in its own image and for its own purposes. Since the agreement of 1952, oil had become the leading sector of Iraqi economy. Production rates had increased and royalties had risen. Thus, in 1951 oil revenues provided about 30 per cent of the Iraqi government's income, but by 1954 this had risen to 65 per cent (by comparison, agriculture accounted for a mere 3 per cent of government income by 1954).[40]

The elections and the decrees effectively put and end to any open political activity for the next four years, and Iraq settled down to rule maintained by the police and the army. There is little doubt that this suppression produced sufficient stability to shepherd the *Baghdad Pact* through parliament and later to ride out the Suez crisis. But it ultimately had fateful consequences. It put almost complete power in the hands of a man increasingly unable to come to terms with the new forces about to shake the Arab world. It eliminated any challenge to Nūrī as-Saᶜīd from within the establishment that might have caused him to moderate his policies. The opposition, deprived of any hope of change, was

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[39] Kubba, Muḥammad Mahdī: Muḏakkirātī fī samīm al-aḥdāṯ, 1918 – 1958. (My Memoires from the Centre of Events). Beirut, Dār aṭ-ṭalīᶜa 1965, p. 361.

[40] Sulaymān, Ḥikmat Sāmī: Nafṭ al-ᶜIrāq. (The Iraqi Oil). Baghdad 1979, pp. 158 – 161; Tripp, op. cit., p. 138.

driven from the parliament underground, where it inevitably became more revolutionary. The extreme right put full powers in the hands of Nūrī as-Saᶜīd, who already lost the ability to come to an understanding with the new forces in the Arab world. By using methods of police terror he got rid of the necessity to carry on a dialogue with the opposition and to moderate his policy and so he drove the opposition (including the right-wing one) to the choice of a revolutionary way to change.[41] The extreme right paid a high price for the temporary stability of the "black regime" in July 1958.

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The West, especially the USA, was anxious to tie the Middle East to its own mutual defence system. To many in the Middle East, this smacked of a revival of colonialism. Although the area had not yet frozen into pro-Western and anti-Western blocs, opposition to alliances with the West was growing. A younger generation of Arabs wanted complete independence from the West and an Arab unity that would overcome the territorial divisions imposed during the First World War. The older politicians, still in control in most countries, understood the inherent weakness of their states and the need for some kind of support from outside. The question was how to provide the necessary strength and yet satisfy the popular desire for independence. After 3 August 1954 the prime minister's internal policy became known as a policy of decrees.[42]

The other major preoccupation of Nūrī as-Saᶜīd during these years lay in Iraqi foreign policy. He continued to believe that Iraq's alignment with the Western powers and its cultivation of close relations with Turkey and Iran were crucial for the security of the state, as well as of the regime. The way was now cleared for him to begin negotiations on a new defence arrangement. Nūrī as-Saᶜīd had several possibilities at hand to solve the defence problem. One was to expand the base of Iraq's security system to include the Arab League countries in a joint defence command. This would collectivize Iraq's defence, but a realist Nūrī as-Saᶜīd had no intention of relying solely on an Arab collective security arrangement; he also wanted help from the West. Another possibility was to join with the northern tier states – Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan – in the collective defence arrangement then beginning to take shape under the guidance of US Secretary of State Dulles.[43] This arrangement was based on loose bilateral agreements that could later be joined by other countries, including Arab states.

Meanwhile, Nūrī as-Saᶜīd continued contacts with the British, who were interested in renewing their treaty, and the Turks, who were busy filling in the re-

[41] Oganesian, Nikolai O.: Nacionalno-osvoboditelnoe dvizhenie v Irake, 1917 – 1958. (The National Liberation Movement in Iraq). Erevan 1976, p. 346.

[42] Khalīl, ᶜĀdil Ġafūrī: Aḥzāb al-muᶜāraḍa al-ᶜalanīya fī al-ᶜIrāq, 1946 – 1954. (The Legal Opposition Parties in Iraq). Baghdad, al-Maktaba al-ᶜālamīya 1984, p. 268.

[43] Campbell, John C.: Defense of the Middle East. Problems of American Policy. New York, Frederick A. Praeger 1961, p. 51. (Marr, s. 116)

gional gaps in their alliance. On 2 April 1954, Turkey had signed a Treaty with Pakistan, and Adnan Menderes, the Turkish prime minister, supposedly urged on by the Americans, was anxious to include Baghdad. Nūrī as-Saᶜīd liked the shape of this arrangement, but there were several obstacles. An alliance of Iraq to Turkey and Iran (much like the Saᶜdābād Pact of 1937) was a connection that the Arab nationalists in Iraq had always opposed.[44] Furthermore, Iraq's relations with Britain had to be the cornerstone of any new agreement, and Britain preferred to leave this arrangement to the USA, fearing to jeopardize their position in the Arab world.

Nūrī as-Saᶜīd regarded the dogmatic pursuit of pan-Arab goals as potentially divisive. Although unsympathetic to Kurdish demands for autonomy, he knew that pan-Arabism complicated central control of the Kurdish region. Equally, he was aware that many Shīᶜa regarded Arab nationalism and Arab unity schemes as attempts by the dominant Arab Sunnī minority in Iraq to tie itself to a greater Arab Sunnī hinterland which it had lost with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Nūrī as-Saᶜīd came from these same Sunnī Arab circles and was familiar with their prejudices and insecurities in relation to the other communities inhabiting Iraq. He himself shared a number of their preoccupations and he was by no means an ideologically convinced Iraqi nationalist. However, he could see the unsuitable effect of pan-Arabism on Iraqi political society: it not only tied Iraq's fate to the unstable condition of other Arab polities and threatened to give other Arab leaders a disproportionate say in Iraqi affairs, but it also alienated much of the population, underlining the differences between them and the Sunná Arabs who dominated the state. The British were aware that "far too much rests upon Nūrī's shoulders ... but without him at the helm the situation would again quickly deteriorate".[45]

At the time that Nūrī as-Saᶜīd began his task, the defence posture of the Middle East and its relations with the West were still in a fluid stage. "Neutralism" was essentially a code for a break with the Western powers which he believed were the main external guarantors of the monarchy. He had to contend with foreign – particularly Egyptian – apprehensions. The most serious problem was posed by Egypt. Even after two years in power, Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir's domestic position was still precarious. Due to strong anti-British forces in Egypt, Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir felt the need to distance himself from Western alliances. In fact, he was still in the process of negotiating a new treaty with Britain that would provide for the withdrawal of British troops from the Suez Canal Zone. However, the British were demanding a clause providing for their right to use the Zone in case of an attack on Egypt, another Arab country, or Turkey.[46] The Egyptians,

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[44] McDowall, David: A Modern History of the Kurds. London, I. B. Tauris 1996, pp. 299 – 300.

[45] FO 371/110991 Troutbeck to Eden, 9 December 1954. The Annual Review for Iraq for 1954, p. 6.

[46] Ḥamrūsh, Aḥmad: Qiṣṣat ṭawrat 23 yūliyū. Vol II: Mujtamaᶜ Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir. (The Story of the 23 July Revolution. The Society of Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir). Beirut 1978, pp. 34 – 35.

and especially the anti-Western Muslim Brotherhood, resented the inclusion of NATO member Turkey; they wanted no tie at all to the former colonial powers.

Aware of the need to consult with Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir, Nūrī as-Saᶜīd went to Cairo on 14 September 1954 to discuss matters with him.There is no published record of the discussion, but according to one of those present, Nūrī as-Saᶜīd outlined the possibilities of coming to some agreement with Turkey and the northern tier countries, to be joined later by Britain. Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir with his own treaty with Britain still pending, and with a difficult internal situation, asked Nūrī as-Saᶜīd to wait. He clearly preferred to avoid a connection with the northern tier countries and to rely instead on a defence strategy based solely on Arab collective security. Nūrī as-Saᶜīd pleaded the special position of Iraq, with its borders with Turkey and Iran and its proximity to the Soviet Union. He told Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir in plain terms that he thought any collective security without the West would be indefensible. Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir finally told Nūrī as-Saᶜīd he was free to do what he liked.[47] The latter, however, seems to have left with the dangerously erroneus impression that he had secured Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir's agreement to pursue a treaty of alliance with Britain and the northern tier. He believed that only the timing was at issue, but "all Nasser had conceded was that Iraq could make defensive arrangements against Russia if she wished, as long as no attempt was made to drag the whole Arab world into a new Western alliance".[48]

Nūrī as-Saᶜīd was also no enthusiast for the pan-Arabism advocated by the Arab nationalist trend in Iraqi politics; by contrast, he was a functional Iraqi nationalist. At the same time, he was ambivalent towards distinctively Arab issues: dynastic pan-Arabism of the kind advocated by the crown prince was something which he believed to be of only limited utility. It needed firm controlling Iraqi hands and would unnecessarily complicate Iraq's relationships with Saudi Arabia as well as Egypt.[49] He believed that Iraq should not ignore Arab issues, but should also look to its non-Arab neighbours and, if necessary, beyond them for the regional order that would secure the boundaries and the very fabric of the state. It was with the idea of reinforcing such ties that he visited Turkey in the autumn of 1954, soon after assuming the premiership. He had become interested in the Turkish-Pakistani agreement of 1954, seeing it as the possible basis for a larger network of regional alliances which would help to contain the southward expansion of Soviet influence.[50] The example of Soviet

[47] Monroe, Elizabeth: Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914 – 1956. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins Press 1963, p. 181.

[48] Little, Tom: Modern Egypt. London, Ernest Benn Limited 1968, p. 182.

[49] Haykal, Muḥammad Ḥasanayn: Milaffāt as-Suways. (The Suez Dossiers). Cairo 1986, pp. 322 – 326.

[50] Agreement of Friendly Cooperation: Pakistan and Turkey, 2 April 1954. In: Hurewitz, J. C.: Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East. A Documentary Record: 1914 – 1956. Vol II, pp. 345 – 346.

involvement in neighbouring Iran in the 1940s, and his suspicions of the role played in Iraq by the USSR through the ICP, led Iraq to suspend diplomatic relations with the USSR in early 1955.[51]

In January 1955, during a visit by Turkey's prime minister Adnan Menderes to Baghdad, Nūrī as-Saʿīd expressed caution, indicating that he did not wish to plunge headlong into an arrangement with the northern tier until the way had been prepared among the Arab countries and with the West. He was worried about how the timing would affect Egypt, and told Menderes he would prefer to have the Turks talk to Egypt first before coming to an agreement. In fact, Menderes was willing to go to Egypt, but Jamāl ʿAbdannāṣir was unwilling to have him for domestic reasons. He had come under attack in his own country for precisely that reason (in October 1954, one week after signing a new agreement with Britain, the Muslim Brotherhood tried to assassinate him).[52] The conversations resulted in the joint declaration that Iraq and Turkey agreed to co-operate in repelling aggression in the region. Although Nūrī as-Saʿīd was apparently prepared to postpone the subject to a future date, Adnan Menderes insisted on a statement of intent before he left Baghdad.[53] On 12 January 1955 a statement was issued, casting the die that was to precipitate the clash between Egypt and Iraq. The pronouncement declared that the parties had agreed to undertake to cooperate in repelling aggression from inside and outside the area. In short, it announced an impending agreement and Iraq's alignment with the northern tier countries. At the same time, Jamāl ʿAbdannāṣir issued a warning against Arabs joining the northern tier bloc.

Nūrī as-Saʿīd went forward with this policy, and the formal agreement encapsulating these principles and their detailed implementation was signed in February 1955.[54] After the Iraqi-Turkish agreement was signed, the *Baghdad Pact*, as this system of intertwining alliances came to be known, was also joined by Great Britain which handed over to Iraqi control the two air bases of al-Ḥabbānīya and ash-Shuʿayba in return for air passage and refuelling rights. Great Britain also pledged to come to the aid of Iraq if the latter were attacked and would continue to train and equip the Iraqi armed forces.[55] In this it would be assisted by the USA which had already begun to supply Iraq with military equipment. On 23 September 1955 Iran joined the agreement and on 3 Novem-

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[51] On 3 January 1955. In: Al-Windāwī, op. cit., p. 208.

[52] Haykal, Muḥammad Ḥasanayn: Milaffāt as-Suways, pp. 306 – 312.

[53] As-Suwaydī, Tawfīq: Muḏakkirātī. Niṣf qarn min tārīkh al-ʿIrāq wa al-qaḍīya al-ʿarabīya. (My Memories. Half Century of Iraqi History and of the Arab Question). Beirut, Dār al-kātib al-ʿarabī 1969, pp. 537 – 538.

[54] Pact (Baghdad) of Mutual Cooperation: Turkey and Iraq, 24 February 1955. In: Hurewitz, J. C.: Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East. A Documentary Record: 1914 – 1956. Vol II, pp. 390 – 391.

[55] Special Agreement: Britain and Iraq, 4 April 1955. In: Hurewitz, J. C.: Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East. A Documentary Record: 1914 – 1956. Vol II, pp. 391 – 395.

ber Pakistan followed suit. The USA, which had originated the idea, did not officially join the pact, but it became a member of the pact's various committees and cooperated fully with it. The pact thus served a further purpose for the Iraqi prime minister: it ended the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 without committing Iraq to enter into another bilateral agreement.[56] Nūrī as-Sacīd thereby hoped to retain the advantages of the alliance with Great Britain (and indeed with the Western powers generally) whilst at the same time avoiding the uproar which had followed the signing of the Portsmouth Treaty in 1948.

However, the pact failed to provoke the kind of protest demonstrations which had marked the signing of the Portsmouth Treaty. In part, this was due to the effective preventive measures which Nūrī's security apparatus had employed precisely to pre-empt any large-scale eruption of public protest. In part, also, it was due to the particular weaknesses of the ICP and the fragmentation of the opposition coalition, as well as to their divergent views about the merits of the pact. The relatively muted public response may also have owed something to the fact that it evoked strong feelings of antipathy amongst only a relatively small section of the Iraqi population and in 1955 (unlike 1948 and 1952) it was harder to mobilize the urban public around the same array of issues which had made the other situations so critical.[57]

Egypt's reaction was immediate. Beyond Iraq's alliance to the northern tier, Arab unity and the struggle for leadership of the Arab world was at stake. No secret was made of Iraq's intention to induce the other Arab countries to follow their lead; Menderes made the rounds of several Arab capitals before he returned to Ankara. If this had been achieved, Iraq would have led the way into a new security arrangement, forming the cornerstone of a new alliance system tying the Arab countries to the West and to the northern tier. This prospect threw down a challenge to Jamāl cAbdannāṣir that he could not fail to take up. Nūrī as-Sacīd had no illusions about either the strength or the ability of the Iraq over which he ruled.[58] The issue of defence, even of neutrality, now took second place to the struggle for dominance in the Arab world. Also at stake was the nature of the regimes that would prevail in the Arab world in the coming decades. Although the constitutional structure of the Egyptian regime had not yet solidified, it was clear that the three pillars of the old regime – the monarchy, the landed oligarchy, and the British – had been largely swept away in favour of middle-class army officers and civilians. Their legitimacy rested on a policy of independence and Arab unity. If Jamāl cAbdannāṣir was to achieve these goals, the spread of the *Baghdad Pact* to the Arab world had to be stopped.

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[56] Ḥusayn, Fāḍil: Suqūṭ an-niẓām al-malakī fī al-cIrāq. (The Fall of the Monarchy in Iraq). Baghdad 1986, p. 17.

[57] Tripp, Charles: Iraq. In: Shlaim, A. and Y. Sayigh (eds.): The Middle East and the Cold War. Oxford 1997, pp. 186 – 215.

[58] Marlowe, John: Arab Nationalism and British Imperialism. A Study in Power Politics. London, The Cresset Press 1961, p. 93.

The *Baghdad Pact* unquestionably strengthened Iraq's internal defences and helped build up the state's infrastructure, but its disadvantages were overwhelming. The pact split the Arab world into two camps – those favouring a Western alliance and those favouring neutrality.[59] It embroiled Iraq in a constant succession of foreign policy problems at a time when it needed to concentrate on the home front. It generated a heated anti-Western campaign in the area, something Iraq, with its anti-Western opposition, hardly needed. The challenge to the leadership of the Egyptian president initiated a cold war between Egypt and Iraq, aimed at the elimination of either Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir or Nūrī as-Saᶜīd. The intensity of this struggle swept all other issues aside for the next four years.

Tension between Baghdad and Cairo was rising during the summer of 1955. From the beginning of the talks between Iraq and Turkey the Egyptian media had vehemently denounced any pact with the Turkish government. Playing on historical enmity and current suspicions of Turkey and the Western powers in Iraq, Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir ensured that Egypt maintained an unrelenting propaganda campaign against Nūrī as-Saᶜīd and his government for having entered into the pact. Nūrī's riposte was that the terms of the *Baghdad Pact* were not very different to the terms of the 1954 Anglo-Egyptian agreement and therefore were no more damaging to the idea of Arab collective security than that agreement had been. However, the Egyptian media attack found a ready audience in Iraq in the pan-Arab and leftist opposition which denounced Nūrī as-Saᶜīd for having undermined "Arab security" and for continuing Iraq's enslavement to the Western powers.[60]

The Egyptian attack on the pact did have an impact on the officer corps. Many resented the lingering ties with Great Britain, regardless of the improved level of military equipment that began to flow into Iraq from both British and American sources. The rapid rearmament and reequipping of the Iraqi army was a topic of constant concern for Nūrī as-Saᶜīd and his government. They believed that much of the unpopularity of the pact would be outweighed in one very important area at least by the influx of substantial quantities of modern weapons into the Iraqi armed forces. According to their calculations, this was a key to cementing the loyalty of the officer corps to the regime.[61] The arms shipments would focus the officers' attention on a professional task, professionally conceived, and would be a visible proof of the relative advantage of alignment with the Western powers. This did little, of course, to satisfy that small minority of officers who had larger reasons for conspiring against the regime. In the summer of 1956 one such conspiracy was uncovered, although it was inconclusively investigated, leading merely to the reassignment of the suspect officers.[62]

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[59] Birdwood, op. cit., p. 245.

[60] Mansfield, Peter: The Arabs. Penguin Books 1992, p. 250.

[61] Al-Windāwī, op. cit., pp. 225 – 226.

[62] Ḥusayn, Fāḍil: Suqūṭ an-niẓām al-malakī fī al-ᶜIrāq, pp. 42 – 44.

Although it had a tight clamp on internal opposition, the regime of Nūrī as-Saʿīd was unable to control the propaganda campaign broadcast by the *Voice of the Arabs* in Cairo. Egypt launched a vigorous and violent policy against the *Baghdad Pact* which included the unleashing of the Cairo propaganda machine, particularly the *Voice of the Arabs* radio.[63] The *Voice of the Arabs* penetrated the village, the field, and the bedouin camp, the barracks and the dormitory. Gradually its message spread hostility – previously limited mainly to the urban groups – among rural areas as well, swelling the numbers of those opposed to the regime and undermining whatever remaining legitimacy the regime possessed. The greatest impact of the *Voice of the Arabs* was on the officer corps, which was capable of mobilizing the force necessary to overthrow the regime.

As the summer advanced and the Suez crisis approached, Nūrī as-Saʿīd was losing ground fast among the Arabs, including the Iraqis. Israel and the *Baghdad Pact* were the focal points of Arab nationalist attack against him and against the British. Nūrī as-Saʿīd still tied to a British government which had always let him down over Zionism. Israel had clearly decided for another adventure, the French were in with her, and Arabs believed that, whatever Britain and America might say about their determination to prevent aggression by either side, it would be different when the shooting started. It would be different by necessity, they thought, for Israel would only strike when Western public opinion had been so inflamed against the Arabs that Western governments would be forced to sympathize with Israel.[64] The nationalists have been aware that without British support Nūrī as-Saʿīd would fall, for he and British policy stood or fell together. The only thing that could help him was real British backing over his Israel policy and it was missing. It was all the worse because the reality of his predicament was hardly reflected at all in the British press. The British public was in total ignorance of the political facts about what was stirring in the Arab mind and why.

The essential fact that Jamāl ʿAbdannāṣir was gathering an already existing nationalist movement behind him could not be grasped, because forty years of hegemony had necessitated the dogma that no real nationalist movement existed, but only periodic disturbances whipped up by paid agents of British enemies, which would collapse as soon as the ringleaders could be ousted, deposed or deported. It could not be understood in Britain that Arabs did not fear Soviet invasion, because the British public had been taught that that was what USSR planned to do, so Arabs who thought otherwise must be communist-contaminated. It could not be grasped that the demand for independence from British influence meant something real, because in British eyes Iraq had been a fully independent sovereign state for years and Arabs appeared to be shouting against a mechanism of control which was not supposed to exist.[65]

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[63] Hasou, Tawfig Y.: The Struggle for the Arab World. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1985, p. 78.

[64] Ionides, Michael: Divide and Lose. The Arab Revolt of 1955 – 1958. London, Geoffrey Bles 1960, p. 134.

[65] Ibid., p. 135.

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For Nūrī as-Saʿīd, the beginning of the Suez crisis seemed to provide an opportunity to isolate Egypt in the Arab world, but the unfolding sequence of events, culminating in the Anglo-French attack on Egypt in collusion with Israel, profoundly shocked him. Egypt's purchase of arms from the Soviet bloc after a series of frustrating negotiations with the West; the successful nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956; and the resulting tripartite aggression against Egypt by Britain, France, and Israel had profound repercussions throughout the Middle East. He rightly saw it as providing strength and encouragement to those groups in Iraq which had long indicted him for his close association with Great Britain. The hostility of local forces drew in world powers of the second rank pursuing interests of their own, only to come up sharply against the limits of their strength when they challenged the interests of the super-powers.[66] In Iraq, these events undercut the regime's entire position. Although efforts by Britain to protect its interests in the canal might have been understandable, Britain's collusion with Israel in an attack on an Arab country was regarded by all Arabs as intolerable treachery.

The significance of the aggression lay in the fact that it had considerable psychological impact on Arab perceptions of world politics. Egypt's confrontation with Britain and France convinced many Arab states of their ability to stand up to the big powers and assert their rights.[67] The Suez disaster confronted Nūrī as-Saʿīd with a severe crisis. His cabinet issued a statement protesting against the British and French action; demanded immediate withdrawal of all forces from Egyptian territory; boycotted Britain in the *Baghdad Pact* meetings; and broke off relations with France (although not with Britain), whilst recommending that the king attend the emergency Arab summit in Beirut in a show of a pan-Arab solidarity, but these actions failed to stem the tide of protest inside Iraq. For the opposition forces this was an opportunity to organize by the only means open to them, on the streets of Iraq's major cities and it was noticeable that disturbances and riots were on a larger scale in the provinces than in the capital. Whatever measures Nūrī as-Saʿīd took, they could not eradicate his long association with British power. Martial law was immediately declared and it remained in effect until May 1957.

Throughout the remainder of 1956, the country was in an uproar. On 21 November, several students were killed and over fifty police and nine civilians were wounded during demonstrations in Baghdad; the government responded by closing down all colleges and secondary schools in the capital until further notice. Strikes then spread to an-Najaf and to the four northern provinces. In the southern town of al-Ḥayy, deep in feudal territory, there was a struggle between

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[66] Hourani, Albert: A History of the Arab Peoples. London, Faber and Faber 1991, p. 368.

[67] Gerges, Fawaz A.: The Superpowers and the Middle East. Regional and International Politics, 1955 – 1967. Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press 1994, p. 70.

the townspeople and the police.[68] Some 2,000 demonstrators were involved; two participants were ultimately sentenced to death and executed. However, in the aftermath of the Suez crisis, Nūrī was particularly concerned about the apparent success of the ICP in establishing relationships with other sections of the opposition on the basis of an anti-imperialist and pan-Arab alliance.

The disturbances had also taken a toll on the economy. In November 1956, the IPC pipeline through Syria had been blown up by forces opposed to Iraq's policy, drastically cutting back Iraq's oil revenues and curtailing its development programme. Everything depended on Syrian agreement to repairing the pumping stations, however, the anti-Syrian campaign from the West had already sharpened hostility between Syria and Iraq.[69] Nūrī as-Saʿīd was so heavily committed to collaboration with London, so deeply suspected of having designs against Syria, that it was hard to see how working relations with Syria could be established.

Iraqi anxieties were not confined to foreign affairs. The shock of the Suez crisis had sharpened up the social stirrings in Iraq. The demonstrations took on a more general anti-regime character, providing an opportunity for protest not only against Nūrī as-Saʿīd and his government, but also against the kind of state that produced such a government and the injustices associated with it. There was a permanent "revolutionary situation" and the development works had helped to subdue reactions to the crisis only in a very limited way. The cold war had spread discontent in Iraqi cities and in the Iraqi countryside as well. Over 60 per cent of the population subsisted on agriculture, but nearly 70 per cent of the land consisted of large holdings which employed the bulk of the farm labour. At least four out of every five peasants in Iraq got no cash return for their toil. Their landlords paid them in kind, sometimes as little as a two-seventh share of the crop. Perpetually debt-ridden, forbidden by law to quit their places as long as they were in arrears, trapped by low productivity and high interest rates, most peasants lived in virtual serfdom.[70]

Nūrī as-Saʿīd went on the offensive, reviving the old charge linking communism with Zionism – given its ties with the USSR. It had deepened the bitterness of the intelligentsia and the students, who were now willing to risk arrest, and it had certainly penetrated the army. These demonstrations met with a more violent response from the security forces. For the opponents of the regime, the events of the autumn demonstrated that as long as the triangle Nūrī as-Saʿīd – Palace – army remained intact, there was little that could be done to shake his hold on power. In response, the opposition parties formed the *United National*

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[68] Al-Ḥasanī, op. cit., Vol X, pp. 103 – 109.

[69] Haykal, Muḥammad Ḥasanayn: Qiṣṣat as-Suways. (The Story of Suez). Beirut 1983, pp. 239 – 249.

[70] Lehrman, Hal: Development in Iraq I. In: Laqueuer, Walter Z. (ed.): The Middle East in Transition. Studies in Contemporary History. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1958, p. 262.

Front of February 1957, grouping together the *Independence Party*, the *National Democratic Party*, the ICP (now under the conciliatory leadership of Ḥusayn ar-Rāḍī) and the nascent *Baᶜth Party*.[71]

In Iraq the regional branch of the *Baᶜth Party*, led by Fu'ād ar-Rikābī, a young Shīᶜī engineer from an-Nāṣirīya, appealed particularly to a younger generation of Shīᶜa, critical both of the Shīᶜī clerical and of the landowning hierarchies, as well as of the Sunnī Arab nationalist elite. Arab nationalist and secular, but not atheistic and vaguely socialist in orientation, the party was critical of the more glaring inequalities of landownership in the Arab world. As such, its message was attractive for students and for others growing restive at the domination of an older, more conservative and more exclusive elite of Arab nationalists. The *Baᶜth Party* takes great credit for the formation of the *United National Front*.[72] The *Baᶜth Party* had large popular followings, but their supporters were concentrated in certain professions, in urban areas, among students and among workers in some key industries. The Front's programme, although critical of Nūrī as-Saᶜīd, was not particularly radical, reiterating the call for democracy and constitutional freedoms, the abolition of martial law, the withdrawal of Iraq from the *Baghdad Pact* and the pursuit of "positive neutralism".[73]

In spite of the regime's foreign and domestic problems, the last few years of the old regime were also boom years for development. A massive building programme, begun in the 1950s, resulted in new dams, barrages, hospitals, roads, and other facilities. However, these improvements came too late to salvage the regime's image.[74] The programme brought too little to the middle and lower classed already alienated from the regime on other grounds. On the other hand, considerable attention was given to the army and the bureaucracy, the regime's main interests. A new army service law provided privileges and benefits to officers, and a new army pension law raised their pensions.[75] Among the benefits to officers was housing, built with development funds. Whole streets sprang up in Baghdad, inhabited only by active and retired officers. As for the bureaucracy, a new law established a civil service commission for appointing, promoting, and retaining employees. Civil salaries were raised, including teacher's salaries. A social security law was passed, but so was a graduated income tax, which fell heavily on the salaried while the independently wealthy found means to avoid paying.

The terror of the regime was brutal rather than economically efficient. It worked, and increasingly effectively, but largely because it moved like a steamroller over every uneveness on the surface of social life.[76] It had seemed impos-

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[71] Al-Chādirchī, op. cit., Vol II, pp. 675 – 676; Tripp, Charles: A History of Iraq, p. 143.

[72] Devlin, John F.: The Bath Party. A History from its Origins to 1966. Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University 1976, pp. 107 – 109.

[73] Al-ᶜAkkām, op. cit., pp. 323 – 329.

[74] Al-Jalīlī, ᶜAbdarraḥmān: Al-iᶜmār fī al-ᶜIrāq. (Development in Iraq). Beirut 1968, p. 218.

[75] Kinna, Khalīl: Al-ᶜIrāq, amsuhu wa ġaduhu, p. 270.

sible that Nūrī as-Saᶜīd should politically survive, but each time a decision by the British government had reprieved him. So Nūrī as-Saᶜīd continued to avoid pressing social problems, hoping that the benefits of development would trickle down fast enough to make up for discontent over the lack of political freedom and the uneven distribution of wealth and privilege. By 1957, Iraq was surrounded by hostile Arab states (with the exception of weak, ineffectual Jordan) – and it was apparent to all that it was time for a change of cabinet, if not of strategy. On 8 June 1957 Nūrī as-Saᶜīd resigned[77] and his resignation was precipitated by a split in the cabinet over financial policy in the light of losses of revenue caused by the stoppage of oil exports. The regime still had a year to alter course and save itself, but as events will show, it did neither.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

On 20 June 1957, ᶜAlī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī, aged sixty-four a contemporary of Nūrī as-Saᶜīd formed his second cabinet. His government, which included a substantial number of former cabinet members made a last attempt to moderate foreign policy. The new prime minister maintained the basically pro-Western, anti-communist stand of Nūrī as-Saᶜīd, but with a definite shift in favour of Arab nationalism. His first foreign policy statement pointedly avoided mention of the *Baghdad Pact* and spoke of achieving better relations with Arab countries. The very fact that Nūrī as-Saᶜīd was no longer in office, suspect as he was of aiming at absorbing Syria, eased the tension between the two countries. The domestic policy statement was more timid, but the prime minister did promise a just land tax that would distribute the public burden more equitably – an obvious reference to the landlords who had benefited from development schemes without paying their share of taxes.[78]

The new policies of ᶜAlī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī were never implemented. Once again, he was drawn into Syrian affairs. This time it was the US government, concerned over alleged increased Soviet influence in Syria that urged Iraq to take action. Initially, the crown prince wished to comply – indicating how thoroughly out of touch he was with public opinion – but neither the prime minister nor the chief of the Royal dīwān favoured any action, and there the matter ended.[79] By the middle of 1957, the reality of Lord Salter's warning as summed up in his report had been proved in practice. The government reached a political deadlock: popular feeling was too strong for things to be done which would obviously put money directly into the landowners' pocket; the landowners were too strong for legislation to be passed to meet the difficulty.[80]

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[76] Caractacus: Revolution in Iraq. An Essay in Comparative Public Opinion. London, Victor Gollancz Ltd. 1959, p. 53.

[77] Gallman, op. cit., p. 82.

[78] Al-Ḥasanī, op. cit., Vol X, pp. 147 – 149.

[79] Jawdat, ᶜAlī: Ḏikrayāt. (Memoirs). Beirut 1967, pp. 306 – 318.

[80] Ionides, op. cit., p. 206.

Prime minister's efforts to improve relations with Syria and the tendency towards neutralism were not at all to the liking of the crown prince who could not contemplate a rapprochement with Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir and had ambitions to establish himself as king of Syria. In any case, hostility between Iraq's rulers and the Egyptian president had gone too far for any real accommodation to be possible and the tide of popular Nasserism in Iraq had made it impossible for the monarchy to stand without Western support. For the Iraqi pan-Arabs, Nūrī's unforgivable crime was not his social blindness, but his reliance on the British connection.[81] From the point of view of Iraq's rulers this was no time for moving away from the West towards neutralism, since Arab nationalism and neutralism was associated with revolutionary Egypt. This meant closing in with USA and Britain and also with Jordan and Lebanon against Egypt and Syria.

Internal strains in Iraq were mounting alarmingly during the summer of 1957. In October 1957 the prime minister hoping that a new parliament could support his moderate reforms, asked permission to dissolve the present parliament and hold elections, but the disappointed crown prince refused the request. ᶜAlī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī, who could accomplish nothing of his programme, had no choice but to resign. He tendered his resignation on 14 December and was succeeded in office by ᶜAbdalwahhāb Mirjān,[82] who was a Shīᶜī, a Baghdad Law College graduate, a rich landlord from al-Ḥilla, and most importantly, a supporter of Nūrī as-Saᶜīd. He was a well-respected and upright man, but he had not the qualities for that arduous post. In his first announcement, ᶜAbdalwahhāb Mirjān supported the *Baghdad Pact* This, and the composition of his cabinet, indicated that he was a mere caretaker and Nūrī as-Saᶜīd would soon be back in office.

No sooner had this cabinet come to office than it was faced with another foreign policy crisis. On 1 February 1958, Egypt and Syria announced the formation of the United Arab Republic. It was naturally regarded in the West as an expression of imperialist ambitions of president Jamāl ᶜAbdannāṣir and an advance for communism.[83] In fact it had come about at the instigation of the Syrian government itself, who were of the *Baᶜth Party*, which can roughly be described as socialist and pan-Arabist, but not communist. This relatively short-lived experiment created immediate fears in Jordan and Iraq that the next step would be the overthrow of their own regimes by forces favourable to the union. King Ḥusayn took the initiative and invited the Iraqis to Jordan and proposed, as a joint reply to the UAR, an Iraqi-Jordanian federation. Within a fortnight Iraq and Jordan countered in April 1958 by forming a federal union.[84] Very lit-

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[81] Kirk, George E.: Contemporary Arab Politics. New York, Frederick A. Praeger Publishers 1961, p. 143.

[82] Al-Ḥasanī, op. cit., Vol X, pp. 186 – 188.

[83] Peretz, Don: The Middle East Today. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. 1963, pp. 363 – 363.

[84] Ṣāliḥ, Ġānim Muḥammad: Al-ᶜIrāq wa al-waḥda al-ᶜarabīya bayna 1939 – 1958. (Iraq and the Arab unity). Baghdad 1990, p. 241.

tle discussion appears to have taken place on the merits and demerits of the federation. Like the UAR, it was formed in haste and as a reaction to external events.

The federation was negotiated in Amman between 11 and 14 February 1958. There was to be a federal parliament with a prime minister and ministers of defence and foreign affairs, so that these two functions would be handled centrally. King Fayṣal was to be the head of state, King Ḥusayn his deputy. It soon received the blessing of Saudi Arabia, now thoroughly alarmed by the emergence of anti-Western regimes in Egypt and Syria. The federal government, being completely new and unencumbered by any foreign alliances enjoyed a genuine independence and freedom of movement.[85] For a time it almost seemed as if a situation had now been created by which the bitter rivalries could be calmed.

Freedom from external strife was more necessary than ever, because it was certain that the task of organizing the federal union and settling the many problems of internal affairs would demand all the time Nūrī as-Saʿīd and his ministers could give. The administration in Iraq was caretaking badly and and social forces were stirring ominously. Nūrī as-Saʿīd was the only one to voice scepticism from within the Iraqi establishment. He felt the federation was unnecessary and would be a burden on Iraq's finances, and events proved him correct. The constitution of the federation provided that each country was to retain its political system, and Jordan was given an escape clause that absolved it from joining the *Baghdad Pact*. Significantly, Iraq was to supply 80 percent of the federation's budget.[86]

Anyway implementation of the federation required an amendment of the constitution of Iraq, and this necessitated a new election. On 2 March 1958, ʿAbdalwahhāb Mirjān resigned to make way for Nūrī as-Saʿīd, who engineered the election in May with his usual thoroughness. There were only twenty-nine new faces in the chamber, virtually all of them committed to the government. On 12 May, this parliament ratified the constitution of the federation; and on 19 May, the last government under the monarchy was formed. Its strongest politicians took federal posts, a factor that may have hastened the revolution, as they had less time to pay attention to internal affairs. The government lasted less than two months.[87]

Finance was a major problem for the new federation which became the last straw for the old regime. Iraqis regarded it as little more than an alliance of Hashimite kings that would drain Iraq's resources and squander precious oil money on Jordan.[88] When Nūrī as-Saʿīd came back as the federation prime

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[85] Al-Ḥasanī, op. cit., Vol X, pp. 263 – 268.

[86] Al-Ḥasanī, op. cit., Vol X, pp. 272 – 274.

[87] Ibid., Vol X, p. 243.

[88] Bayān ilā ash-shaʿb ḥawla al-ittiḥād al-ʿarabī. (Declaration to the People on the Arab Union), 24 February 1958. In: Niḍāl al-Baʿt (The Struggle of the Baʿth). Vol V, Beirut 1971, pp. 223 – 225.

minister on 3 March 1958, he made great efforts to bring Kuwait into membership, a move that would have made the federation more palatable to Iraqis. Kuwait could have shared the expenses, and many Iraqis regarded Kuwait as a part of Iraq, detached from the Ottoman Empire by the British. However, the federation idea was unenthusiastically received in Kuwait, which did not want its territory or its oil resources swallowed up by Iraq and Jordan, and by Britain, which was not ready to relinquish control over Kuwait. In the early summer Nūrī as-Saʿīd had an angry session over the issue with Selwyn Lloyd, Britain's foreign minister, in London. He gained few concessions.[89] The Shaykh of Kuwait saw little to gain by joining the federation and much that he might lose and whether anything would have come of this projected amalgamation cannot be known, because the Iraqi regime was overthrown before negotiations could proceed any further.

The two unions had radically changed the international alignment in the Middle East. A pro-Western territorial belt made up of Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon lay between the two members of the UAR, Egypt and Syria. Between Iraq and Egypt and Syria there was such a degree of bitterness that without some radical change, relations could not be mended. While the regime was involved in federation affairs, the deceptively quiet internal situation was putting forth ominous signs. The opposition, now underground, was coalescing into a united front against the regime, nurtured by its exclusion from power and bitterness over Nūrī's internal repression and his foreign policy. This process had begun as early as September 1953, when the *Independence Party* began to cooperate with the *National Democratic Party*. In June 1956, the two parties had applied to the government to form a new joint party with a programme based on neutrality, Arab federation, the liberation of Palestine, political freedoms, and an end to Nūrī's decrees. The request was denied. The same year, the two parties were joined by Ṣāliḥ Jabr, indicating how widespread was the opposition to Nūrī as-Saʿīd and his policies. Ṣāliḥ Jabr collaborated with them until June 1957, when he suffered a fatal heart attack.[90]

In 1957, the *Independence Party* and the *National Democratic Party* turned to the more radical elements in the political spectrum, forming the *United National Front*, which included the *Communist Party* and the relative newcomer to the Iraqi scene, the Baʿth. The *Baʿth Party* had originated in Syria in the early postwar years. Its programme combined the two strands of political thought that had dominated the intelligentsia since the 1930s – pan-Arabism and radical social change. Early on, the *Baʿthist* had adopted the communist tactic of cell organization, which soon made them one of the best organized and disciplined parties in the Middle East. The *Baʿth* leader Fu'ād ar-Rikābī joined the *United National Front* in 1957.[91]

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[89] Kinna, pp. 297 – 299.

[90] Birdwood, op. cit., p. 247.

[91] Devlin, op. cit., p. 109.

Far more serious for the regime was disaffection in the army. Troubles in the officer corps had come to light as early as 1956, when a plot to overthrow the regime had been discovered. Though the leaders had been dispersed, intelligence sources in 1958 revealed new conspiracies.[92] Lulled into a false sense of security by his repressive tactics and believing that the benefits extended to the army had done their work, Nūrī as-Saʿīd evidently dismissed these signs. Had the regime been less preoccupied with foreign problems, some action might have been taken, but in May 1958, civil war broke out in Lebanon. Fearing that it might spread, King Ḥusayn asked that Iraqi troops be sent to Jordan to protect its frontiers, and this event sealed the fate of the monarchy in Iraq. Ordered to march to Jordan, the troops marched instead on Baghdad. A swiftly executed coup ended the Hashimite monarchy and Nūrī's regime in the early hours of the morning on 14 July. Few mourned their passing.

The Hashimites were hated by Arab nationalists everywhere, because they were seen to serve Western plans to split the Arab world. Their failures in domestic affairs were matched by foreign policy failures. The increasingly visible British tie, the renewed treaty negotiations, and the new alliance with the West – achieved through relentless domestic suppression – only served to intensify the desire for independence and the nationalist sentiments that had been the main motive force behind Iraqi politics since 1920. The opposition had failed to bring the regime down in 1920, 1941 and 1948, but it succeeded in 1958.

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[92] As-Suwaydī, op. cit., pp. 594 – 597.