

SYRIA UNDER THE BA'ATH:
STATE FORMATION IN A FRAGMENTED SOCIETY

Raymond A. Hinnebusch

Developing States, divided by a multitude of cleavages and confronted by the mobilization of new social forces, seek to fashion political systems which concentrate enough power to cope with rising demands and push modernization ahead, yet can absorb expanding participatory pressures; failure to do so results in praetorianism or repression. In the search for authority amidst fragmentation, elites in many of these societies have resorted to authoritarian models.

Although there is little consensus in the political science literature on the nature and viability of these models, three general views seem to dominate. One acknowledges that the authoritarian concentration of power may enhance extractive and control capabilities, but at the cost of much reduced responsiveness and participation.¹ Another view, stressing the weakness of institutionalization in such States, sees them as both politically incompetent and repressive.² A third, arguing the ability of strong single-party systems to both concentrate and expand power, holds that such regimes can score high on both effectiveness and responsiveness.³

No assessment of these conflicting arguments can proceed far without a careful study of individual cases. This study will examine the case of Syria under the Ba'ath party. Syria makes a good case study because: (1) plagued by social fragmentation and political praetorianism, she has presented a difficult challenge to state-builders; and (2) the Syrian response, combining a military

Raymond A. Hinnebusch teaches Political Science at the College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, Minnesota.

1. Gabriel Almond and G. Bingham Powell, *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (Boston, 1966) pp. 310–13.

2. S.N. Eisenstadt and those inspired by his work tend to take this position. The argument for the weakness of the authoritarian State has been extensively developed for the Egyptian case by Clement Henry Moore, *Images of Development: Egyptian Engineers in Search of Industry* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980); and Robert Springborg "Patterns of Association in the Egyptian Political Elite," in *Political Elites in the Middle East* ed. George Lenczowski (Washington, 1975).

3. Samuel Huntington argues the case for the single-party regime in Huntington and Clement Henry Moore, *Authoritarian Politics in Modern Society: The Dynamics of Established One-Party Systems* (New York, 1970) pp. 3–47.

one-party State with populist-nationalist policies, represents a distinctive but typical populist variant of the authoritarian model.

THE SYRIAN SOCIOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

The special challenge of state-building in Syria results from several features of the context in which it has had to take place:

1. Syria was a society historically fragmented into a sectarian-ethnic mosaic, rent by strong kinship and localistic loyalties and divided by great class and urban-rural gaps.

2. Superimposed by imperialism on this centrifugal society was an artificial, truncated State, embracing only one corner of the felt national community; this deprived it of the legitimacy accruing to States which correspond to a unit of nationhood, focused Syrian political identities and energies outward, opened the country to outside intervention, and divided Syrians over conflicting irredentist aspirations.

3. Syria's regional environment has been dominated by Western and Israeli power, frustrating the realization of her national aspirations and further retarding the development of national legitimacy by the State.

4. Syria experienced a delayed dependent form of modernization characterized by (a) an extroverted, unstable economy combined with high rates of social mobilization and (b) an agrarian crisis focused on high concentration of landownership; these stresses produced sharp new social cleavages, the most important of which pitted the landed-commercial elite against the salaried middle class and the peasantry, a conflict which has yet to be resolved.

5. The penetration of conflicting outside ideologies and the rise of local reactions to them stimulated a multitude of rival political forces, sometimes reinforcing, sometimes cutting across social cleavages. In the absence of a strong overarching national identity focused on a State enjoying national legitimacy and an economy able to absorb rising aspirations, this produced a powerful praetorianism which, overt or latent, has continued to destabilize Syrian political life.⁴

4. For good analyses of the cleavages in Syrian society, see Michael H. Van Dusen, "Political Integration and Regionalism in Syria," *Middle East Journal* 26, no. 1 (1972); and Van Dusen, "Syria: Downfall of a Traditional Elite," in *Political Elites and Political Development in the Middle East* ed. Frank Tachau (New York, 1975). Also see Michael Hudson's section on Syria, notably pp. 251-61 in his *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven and London, 1977). On Syria's post-independence socioeconomic crisis, see Tabitha Petran, *Syria* (London, 1971), pp. 61-105; Doreen Warriner, *Land and Poverty in the Middle East* (London, 1948); Rizkallah Hilan, *Culture et Développement en Syrie et dans les pays retardés* (Paris, 1969), pp. 161-250; Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society* (New York, 1958), pp.

The Ba'th emerged as a reaction to these challenges, putting forward in its ideological tradition three powerful countervailing themes: (1) an etatist stress on creation of a strong State able to integrate Syria's conflicting social segments and forces and direct the development of an integrated national economy; (2) a populist call for a redistribution of resources in the interest of equity and community; and (3) a nationalist drive to eradicate foreign intrusions from the Arab world and to construct a new extra-Syrian Arab political community. But the Ba'th also came to reflect in itself and ultimately to falter in its effort to master the environment forces which precipitated its emergence.

THE ROAD TO POWER

The Ba'th's road to power greatly shaped the outcome of its state-building effort. The Ba'th developed some political assets which help explain its relative success in the conquest and consolidation of power. Its nationalist-populist ideology attracted significant segments of the middle and lower classes, enabling it to develop a wider, more politically conscious base than the traditional notable or sectarian parties competing with it, and its introduction of branch-type party institutions helped it to organize this constituency. It was cross-sectarian: although minorities, such as Christians, Alouites, and Druzes were disproportionately drawn to it, the Ba'th also attracted a following in the majority Sunni community. It also bridged the urban-rural gap, as the urban middle-class teachers who founded it recruited followers among rural students and through them built a constituency in the villages. By inserting its partisans in the army, it forged an alliance with key elements in the officer corps which would provide it with a critical striking force in the struggle for power. In so bridging social cleavages with ideology and organization, the Ba'th showed potential to develop a broad base for rule. By the late fifties, it had become a leading part of a middle-class/peasant coalition which challenged and decisively undermined the traditional regime.

Yet, owing to certain liabilities and misfortunes, the Ba'th proved unable to sustain its impetus. By the early sixties, its coalition was disintegrating. Its leaders, riven by personal rivalries, engrossed in the political struggle at the center, and too aloof from work at the bases, were unable to develop the party into a disciplined political machine which could mobilize the majority of the masses still encapsulated in the traditional social system and overcome rival

264-302. On the destabilizing effects of Syria's international and regional environment, see Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria* (London, 1965). On praetorianism in Syrian politics, see Gordon Torrey, *Syrian Politics and the Military* (Columbus, 1964).

middle-class political movements. The party organization, retaining some of the centrifugal characteristics of the scattered *halaqat* (circles) from which it emerged, reflecting as much as bridging cleavages between the various social forces incorporated into it, and pulled in different directions by the heterogeneity of viewpoints attracted by its broad-based ideology, suffered from constant factionalism. After 1958 the party's inability to devise a workable formula for Arab unity resulted in quarrels with Nasser, the hero of Arab nationalism. This cost it a big part of its nationalist constituency (especially among urban Sunnis), led to the near dissolution of its organization, split its leaders over how to deal with Nasser, and undermined the leaders in the eyes of younger Ba'thists who questioned their preoccupation with Arab unity and wanted to steer the party left. Yet, at this un auspicious juncture, Ba'thist army officers, fearing the party's chances were slipping away, chose to seize power in a military coup.⁵

Thus the Ba'th came to power at a time when it was reduced to a small core of officers and intellectuals, its former base scattered and demobilized. Yet it chose to embark on a revolution from above, and decided that this revolutionary project required a monopoly of power, the creation of a single-party State. This policy had enormous consequences. All other political forces were alienated by the Ba'th's unwillingness to share power—not only traditional politicians, liberals, and Islamic fundamentalists, its natural rivals, but also Nasserites and many leftists with whom it had much in common. The Ba'th's stress on "revolution in one country" brought renewed conflict with Nasserites whose first priority was union with Egypt, further costing the party legitimacy in the eyes of its natural nationalist constituency. The fact that the party was by now increasingly minoritarian and predominately rural lower middle class in composition and its rivals were urbanites of higher social status cut the party off from the city. Its effort to entrench itself became a process of turning the institutions of State into rural strongholds dominating urban society. In the first two years of its rule, the party found itself virtually isolated in the still largely urban political arena, and dependent on the use of repression to stay in power.

5. This analysis of the development of Ba'th ideology and organization before the power seizure relies on the many materials in Western languages and in Arabic which have been published on the subject, among the most important of which are the following: Michel Aflaq, *Fi Sabil al-Ba'th* (Beirut, 1959); Gordon Torrey, "The Ba'th: Ideology and Practice," *Middle East Journal* 23, no. 4 (1969); Kemal S. Abu Jaber, *The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party: History, Ideology, and Organization* (Syracuse, 1966); Sami al Jundi, *al-Ba'th* (Beirut, 1969); Jallal as-Sayyid, *Hizb al-Ba'th al-'Arabi* (Beirut, 1973); Ibrahim Salamah, *al-Ba'th min al-mudaris ila al-thakanat* (Beirut, 1969); Qiyad al-Qaumiyya, *Dirasa tarikhiyya tahliliyya lil-Nidal Hizb al-Ba'th al-'Arabi al-Ishtirakiyya* (Damascus, 1972); Bashir Dauk, ed. *Nidal al-Ba'th*, 10-volume series (Beirut); Naji Allush, *al-Thawra wa al-Jamahir* (Beirut, 1962).

At the outset, the Ba'th faced a severe crisis of legitimacy. Its leaders knew that to retain power and carry out their revolution they would have to break out of this isolation and reconstruct the middle-class/peasant coalition they had forged in the fifties. Their strategy was three-pronged: (1) forging a Leninist type party-state which would regroup, expand, and link up their scattered strongholds throughout the country and become the motor of revolution from above; (2) a social revolution centered on nationalizations and land reform which would mobilize the masses on their side and submerge the opposition; and (3) the export of revolutionary nationalism from Syria in a challenge to Western and Israeli power in the region. In principle, this strategy was a coherent response to the needs of state-building in Syria, which, if successful, could have won nationalist and populist legitimacy for the Ba'th. But, in its threat to powerful interests inside and outside Syria, it was bound to arouse wide and deep hostility which would ultimately deflect the Ba'th from its course.⁶

ELITE TRANSFORMATION, INTRA-ELITE CONFLICT AND CENTER BUILDING

The Ba'th sought to concentrate power in a new party-state center, popular in social composition, and possessing the institutionalized authority to unite the new elite and direct the revolutionary course; the outcome of this center-building effort, however, fell considerably short of the Ba'th's goals.

Under the Ba'th, the social composition of the political elite was indeed transformed. The urban-bourgeois leaders of the old regime gave way to a new elite of wholly different social composition: (1) Its core has been petit bourgeois, and while more mainstream middle-class elements have been represented in its outer circles, the old upper class has been virtually excluded from power. (2) Urban elements are included in the elite, but it is dominated by rurals not far removed from the village. (3) It is cross-sectarian, but minority elements, especially Alouites, have been over-represented at the core. (4) It is a civil-military coalition in which officer-politicians have played dominant roles. This composition has appeared representative, and hence more legitimate, to rurals, especially minoritarians, and parts of the lower strata, much less so to urban Sunnis, and not at all to the old urban

6. The best analysis of the Ba'th's dilemma is Itamar Rabinovich, *Syria Under the Ba'th, 1963-66* (New York, 1972). On the conflict with Nasserism, see Malcolm Kerr, *The Arab Cold War* (London, 1971). The definitive ideological documents adumbrating the Ba'th's strategy of rule are: The National Command, *Some Theoretical Points of Departure* (Damascus, 1973); the resolutions of the 6th National Congress in *Arab Political Documents, 1963*, pp. 439-42; and the party program issued by the 8th National Congress, *al-Manhaj al-Marhali* (Damascus, 1965).

establishment and its clients. Its dominant rural petit bourgeois composition has made for substantial elite solidarity against urban rivals, but its relative heterogeneity along sectarian and regional lines has contributed to a high incidence of intra-elite conflict.⁷

The regime's efforts to institutionalize authority have not been wholly unsuccessful, but such authority remains precarious. Intense intra-elite conflicts have repeatedly emerged: the major breaks in elite solidarity have pitted cross-sectarian, civil-military coalitions committed to opposing policy courses and led by ambitious rival personalities. More purely sectarian rivalries, largely turning on the issue of Alouite ascendancy, have also seriously weakened elite cohesion. The intensity of these cleavages has retarded the institutionalization of authority, which, in turn, has forced power contenders to engage in continuous coalition-building in which every available cleavage and tie—ideological, regional, personal, generational, urban-rural and sectarian—has been used.

The prominent role of military politicians in the political arena has meant that power contenders have had to seek support in the military and try to exclude rivals from it. Hence, the politics of transfer, purge, and appointment in the army has run parallel with that of elections and votes in party assemblies, and, in the end, every major turnover in the elite has come via military coup, shattering the thin layer of institutional legitimacy. This persistent praetorianism has not only endangered the survival of the regime, but it has made it hard to forge a leadership team committed to an agreed program and impossible to create an institutionalized system of leadership recruitment and accountability.

The Ba'th's center-building efforts can be considered to fall into three phases.

1963–1966—The Struggle for Power and Policy

The first three years of Ba'th rule were characterized by a struggle for power (1) between the Ba'th and rival political forces and (2) between younger, rural radicals in the party and the older, more moderate, party founders. The moderates contested the radicals' decision to impose a Leninist State and social revolution on Syria. The moderates wanted a more liberal Arab-unionist course which would appease the Ba'th's opponents; the moderates

7. On elite composition, see Van Dusen, "Syria: Downfall of a Traditional Elite," especially pp. 139–41; Nikolas Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria* (New York, 1979), especially pp. 98–103 and tables in the appendix; Ronald Robert Macintyre, "The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party: Ideology, Politics, Sociology and Organization" (Ph.D. diss., Australian National University, 1969); and Avraham Ben Tsur, "The Neo-Ba'th Party of Syria," *Journal of Contemporary History* 28 (1968): 165–75.

were also fighting a rearguard action against their loss of power in the party to the largely radical officer-politicians who had brought the Ba'th to power and inevitably claimed a lion's share of the leadership. Interlocked with this major cleavage were rivalries between prominent party officers, notably Jedid, Umrān, and Hafiz, each of whom used sectarian rivalries and ties to enhance his position.

For most of this period the radicals held the upper hand and worked to tighten the grip of the party over the State and then, in a series of nationalizations, over the heights of the economy. A set of party collegial bodies and assemblies, formally run along democratic-centralist lines, was erected in spite of intra-elite conflicts and indeed, for three years, helped to contain them. But because the outcomes of conflicts depended too much on organizational maneuvers—the purge of opponents, the bending of rules—they were not regarded as legitimate by the losers. Hence, each faction struggled to mobilize coercive support in the military, and, in the ultimate 1966 showdown, competitive military mobilization proved decisive. The moderates were ousted from power, largely because their course had threatened the power of much of the new elite as well as its vision of revolution. Because urban and Sunni elements were disproportionately in the moderate camp, its fall enhanced the rural minoritarian flavor of the Ba'th elite core.⁸

1966–1970—Dominance of the Radicals

Under the second, “Jedid,” or radical Ba'th regime, the elite worked to consolidate the party's position and course. In spite of fierce resistance from the old establishment, its etatist-populist policies—nationalizations, state-led development, and land reform—were pushed ahead. The political system—the party machine and its mass organizations—took shape. A campaign against traditional Arab regimes and Western interests in the Middle East and support for the Palestinian guerillas expressed the Ba'th's attempt to challenge its regional environment. The regime did begin to win a constituency among small employees, workers, and peasants. The radical drive was, however, aborted within five years by the breakup of the elite coalition which had supported it. Although personal and sectarian rivalries had already weakened its solidarity, the 1967 defeat, undermining faith in a radical course and splitting the elite over how to deal with its consequences, was chiefly responsible for this. Gradually, a new “right wing” emerged inside the regime led by General Hafiz al-Asad which proposed that the revolution

8. Rabinovich, *Syria Under the Ba'th*; also, Munif ar-Razzaz, *al-Tajriba al-Murra* (Beirut, 1967).

be suspended in the interest of Syrian and Arab unity against Israel. When efforts to reach a compromise in party assemblies failed, a virtual duality of power emerged in which the party leadership lost control over the military to Asad; when the leadership attempted to dismiss him, it was overthrown in a military coup.

In the immediate sense, the fall of the radicals resulted from personal power rivalries—between Asad and Jedid—and conflicts over the proper course for dealing with the new Israeli expansion into Arab lands. But it also reflected the inability of the radical leadership to mobilize the masses enough to break continuing resistance by the opposition, to forge a sufficiently ideologically disciplined party, to submit the military to party control, and to devise a workable strategy for advancing revolutionary nationalism in the Middle East at an acceptable cost.⁹

1970-?—The New Realists

Under the third Ba'th regime, that of Asad, the composition of the elite has barely altered, but the structure and orientation of the state center have significantly changed. The Asad leadership largely abandoned the effort to carry the revolution forward, either inside or outside Syria, and contented itself with efforts to consolidate Ba'th rule, broaden the base of the regime through accommodation with opposition elements, and build an army and an Arab alliance able to recover the territories lost to Israel.

Owing to these changed goals and his awareness of the precariousness of institutional authority and the susceptibility of collegial leadership to factionalism in the Ba'th State, Asad personalized and concentrated power in a dominant presidency which raised him above the rest of the elite and other power institutions of the State—party, cabinet, and general staff. Asad constructed his power on several bases: a network of personal Alouite clients dominating strategic levers of the military-police apparatus, including several praetorian guards detachments, and an alliance with Sunni officers and party politicians. He tried to broaden the base of his regime by coopting a bigger proportion of urban Sunnis into the party leadership and middle-class technocrats and members of the non-Ba'th progressive parties into government. The prominence of Alouites at the very apex of the regime, however, probably marks yet another increase in the power of this sectarian group and has contributed to inter-elite sectarian tensions which—as ideological

9. See Seymour Martin, "The Dynamics of Power in Syria Since the Break With Egypt," *Middle Eastern Studies* 1, (1970); also Petran, *Syria*, pp. 182–204, 239–44; Van Dam, *Struggle for Power*, pp. 83–97; and *Taqrir al-Siyasi al-Mutamir Qawmi 'Ashur al-Istethnai* [Political report of the 10th extraordinary national congress] (Damascus, 1970.)

conflicts decline—have become more salient. But Asad has been careful not to become identified as leader of an Alouite block and has played a balancing brokerage role between sectarian-tinged factions. He seems to have forged a more cohesive and stable, albeit no more institutionalized, center of authority for the Ba'th State.

As the ideological impetus among the elite apparently exhausts itself, two other orientations have emerged more strongly: a technocratic pragmatism which places economic growth over social equality and a "neopatrimonial" tendency by elites to treat the State as their private property, manifested in the growth of corruption and the use of political power for private gain. These tendencies are subtly transforming the power elite from petit bourgeois outsiders into a new "state bourgeoisie." There is yet little movement, however, toward its amalgamation with the old private bourgeoisie to produce a new unified conservative upper class.¹⁰

STRUCTURAL BASE OF THE REGIME

The Ba'th regime rests on three overlapping structures: the party-syndicate apparatus, the military-police establishment, and the state bureaucracy. The architects of the regime ostensibly set out to build a Leninist-style regime in which the party, forged into an ideologically disciplined vanguard, would penetrate society, bypassing traditional influentials, to mobilize the masses, and direct and drive the state apparatus in the revolutionary transformation of society. This effort fell far short of its goal and by the seventies had largely exhausted itself, but it did result in a formidable political machine which has helped to organize a constituency for the regime, extend its control over society, and consolidate its rule.

The Political Apparatus

A party apparatus, constructed of a series of assemblies running upward and executive and specialized bureaus running downward, and linked to a series of auxiliary organizations for peasants, workers, artisans, youth, women, and professionals, now stretches from the center to the base of society. In the mobilization of numbers it has not performed badly; the party possesses about 100,000 cadres and through its auxiliaries has organized about one-third of the population. Moreover, this base has a popular

10. The best work on the Asad regime to date are: Moshe Maoz, "Syria Under Hafiz al-Asad: New Domestic and Foreign Policies" *Jerusalem Papers on Peace Problems* (1975); and Adib Darwisha, "Syria Under Asad, 1970-78: The Centres of Power," *Government and Opposition* 13, no. 3 (Summer, 1978).

character, much of it having been recruited from the lower middle and lower classes; in the countryside, where its base is widest, the typical Ba'athi organization is made up of educated village youth and small and middle peasants.

Although this base is generally loyal and infused with a nationalist-populist orientation, the effort to make of it an ideologically disciplined apparatus has had modest success. A set of formal selection and socialization structures and a system of party schools were set up. But, owing to the party's need to rapidly reconstruct itself subsequent to the power seizure, and due to intra-elite conflicts which impelled rivals to maximize their following in party bases, recruitment procedures were often bypassed, and party ranks were flooded with newcomers as much on the basis of friendship, kinship, and sectarian ties as ideological commitment. In addition, the constant attrition during intra-elite conflicts of old members who had served the party before its power seizure and their replacement by newcomers frequently drawn by the advantages of membership in a ruling party, diluted ideological commitment with careerism. Recruitment motivations were thus personal, primordial, and careerist, as well as ideological. The quality of the party cadre has been correspondingly mixed. Some do have more than a passing resemblance to the ideal ideologically disciplined militant exercising leadership in the local community. But the all too frequent deviations from this role are catalogued in party documents: "personal" rather than a team style of work, negligence, "feverish craving for benefits and posts," bureaucratic attitudes toward the masses, "revolutionary chattering" (i.e. idle talk of revolution without concern for the concrete methods of carrying it out), and "sick" (tribal, sectarian) relations.

The performance of the political machine has been no better than the material out of which it is made. In the countryside, where it is best established, the party and peasant union have been too infected with traditional and bureaucratic traits to carry out the revolution for which they were forged. They have been unable to exclude the sectarian, localistic, and kinship rivalries which divide Syrian society; prevent local notables from occasionally infiltrating and derailing their work; or keep cadres from becoming engrossed in the building and servicing of personal clientage networks. It has been difficult to get local leaders out of their offices and into the field to exercise innovative leadership in the village and to follow sustained, systematic methods of planning and work.

Still, in spite of these bureaucratic and traditionalistic "deviations," the Ba'ath political organization does represent an innovation in political technology which has helped serve the goals of the regime and its constituency. In its voluntaristic recruitment from a local base and in its provision of channels for the flow of communication and political mobility upward from this base, it is something more than a mere new bureaucracy. In

its relatively modern organizational norms and task orientation, and in the lack of great asymmetries in the personal resources of leaders and followers, it is more than a traditional clientage network. In the countryside, this machine has been able to penetrate the formerly "encapsulated" village, bypassing the traditional gatekeepers which formerly mediated between government and the masses. To be sure, a part of the typical village remains under the sway of traditional zaim or landlords, or is politically inert, but through its political organization the regime has established strongpoints and a constituency throughout the countryside. This network of control has helped limit the access of opposition forces to the masses and, cutting across sectarian, urban-rural, and regional cleavages, helped to contain the centrifugal forces in Syrian society. It has also been an indispensable aid in the social reorganization and technical innovation the regime has been able to bring to the village. On the other hand, the regime has been much less successful in the city: about one-half of the working class has been organized, but the loyalties of the masses in the great traditional urban quarters remain attached to the Ba'th's ulama and notable rivals.¹¹

The State Apparatus

When the Ba'th came to power, Syria did not possess an efficient state bureaucracy, much less a development-oriented one. Yet the party imposed itself atop the existing bureaucracy and set out to impart a revolutionary and developmental drive to it and to greatly expand it and its functions through nationalizations and an ambitious development plan. A whole new set of development agencies and a large public sector emerged as a result of this effort. A greater development orientation does seem to have been imparted to the bureaucracy and, at least among officials recruited from and close to the local community, a greater service orientation. The bureaucracy has become the central instrument of an etatist development strategy that can claim real achievements. Moreover, the state machine has proven its value as an instrument of political consolidation. The massive recruitment of partisans and the economic dependence of numerous employees on the regime have made the bureaucracy a largely compliant instrument in the hands of the Ba'th; owing to substantial increases in its penetrative ability and in the

11. Raymond Hinnebusch, "Political Recruitment and Socialization in Syria: The Case of the Revolutionary Youth Federation," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 11 (1980). See also my articles, "Syria: The Role of Ideology and Party Organization in Local Development" in *Local Politics and Development in the Middle East*, ed. Louis J. Cantori and Iliya Harik (Boulder, Colorado, 1982); and "Local Politics in Syria: Organization and Mobilization in Four Village Cases," *Middle East Journal* 30, no. 1 (1976).

dependence of the population on it for essential services, it dominates Syrian society as never before.

Nevertheless, the capacities of the state machine have fallen well short of the formidable responsibilities assigned to it: the mobilization and investment of capital, the implementation of development programs, and the regulation of society in the interest of equity. It has simply failed to develop efficient tools to perform many of these functions. The planning apparatus remains rudimentary, confined to little more than the projection of budgets, unable to hold state agencies to plan objectives, and lacking the macro-economic tools to effectively control the market. The bureaucracy and public sector have proven inefficient in extracting a capital surplus from the economy and, in the effort to maximize employment, have dissipated much of what is extracted on salaries.

Incentive and personnel practices have failed to sufficiently recruit, train, and motivate needed skilled manpower. Industry and agriculture suffer from a scarcity of technical cadres.¹² Discrimination against the urban bourgeoisie, army conscription, slashing of bureaucratic salaries, and the ability of other nearby States to offer much higher salaries have all led to a damaging "brain drain" from public service, in good part made up for by influxes of unprepared rural partisans. The greater solicitude shown by the Asad regime for expertise and the opening of new technical schools have helped. But the motivation of employees remains a major problem. The continuing lack of an effective personnel policy able to put the "right man in the right place" and reward him according to performance is a major factor. Political loyalties and personal connections often count more than skills and service, a notable aspect of which is favoritism shown Alouites. The continual erosion of salaries by inflation in the seventies has compounded the problem. Moreover, the Ba'th party has had little apparent success in imparting ideological motivation and drive to the state apparatus in a way comparable to revolutionary parties elsewhere; indeed, by the seventies, the party had become part of the problem: party functionaries were themselves responsible for a share of the growing corruption, embezzlement, and influence-peddling which have come to plague all public institutions. Thus, although indispensable to the regime's efforts to reshape and redirect Syrian society on a statist-populist course, the state apparatus is an inefficient instrument of, and in some respects, a parasitic drain on, the modernization effort.

12. A revealing analysis of the planning process and of the problems of the public sector is contained in Rizkallah Hilan, *Suriya bayna al-takhallaf wa al-Tanmiyya* (Damascus, 1973).

The Military-Police Apparatus

The Ba'th came to power on the back of the army and, given the persistence of strong opposition to the regime and the historic role of the army as a vehicle of regime change, the capabilities and reliability of the army-security apparatus remain decisive factors in the survival of Ba'th rule. The steady expansion in the size and firepower of the military under the Ba'th makes violent opposition to the regime difficult and costly, if not futile, so long as the military remains loyal. The early "Ba'thization" of the army in which Sunni upper- and middle-class officers were replaced with rural, often minoritarian ones, the maintenance of a Ba'th organization in the army, and the later development of an Alouite-recruited "praetorian guard" have helped ensure regime control over the military. But they have also stimulated discontents among Sunni officers, especially non-Ba'thi officers. To dilute such resentments, Asad has given non-Ba'thi professional officers greater responsibility. Currently, the greater professionalization of the officer corps, the stake it has in maintaining the integrity of the military establishment—and of its privileged position in society—against a recurrence of the purges which previously resulted from intervention in politics, and the greater difficulty of plotting and mounting a successful coup in a larger army—all work in favor of the regime. But defeat in war, or sectarian strife on a large scale, could yet split the armed forces and turn part of it against the regime.

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE

The Ba'th's state-building effort has depended greatly on its ability to develop policies able to cope with Syria's problems and meet the needs of her population. The following brief survey will show that although Ba'th policies have made an important difference, there has been a persistent gap between goal and achievement.

Modernizing Strategy: Populist Etatism

The Ba'th's socioeconomic policies flowed initially from three sources: (1) a belief that the unblocking of the economic impasse and the curbing of dependency required state economic entrepreneurship; (2) the belief that social justice and the national mobilization of the people required a redistribution of wealth; and (3) the interest of the party's constituency—the petite bourgeoisie and the peasantry—in etatist and populist measures against big concentrations of private property and in favor of public ownership, but which stopped short of any attack on small private property.

The Ba'th initially adopted a relatively radical "socialist" program. A

process of “socialist transformation” brought the heights of the modern Syrian economy—finance, large and medium industry, foreign and parts of internal trade—under state control. This aimed to break the control of the bourgeoisie over the economic surplus and to channel it away from luxury consumption and commerce and toward industrial and agricultural investment and popular consumption. It also aimed to impose state control over external economic relations and snap ties of dependency on the West. A medium-sized, private capitalist sector was allowed to persist in internal trade, housing, small industry, construction, and agriculture, albeit subject to state regulation in the interest of equity; the regime intended that its scope would gradually be narrowed. In agriculture the smallholding sector was expanded by land reform, and partially cooperatized and linked to the State. Thousands of similar small enterprises in trade and artisanship persisted in the city, subject in principle to state regulation and cooperatization efforts but in practice largely outside its effective control. How has this system performed?

The public sector has been able to channel substantial investment into an ambitious and expanding development effort which is laying the basis of a modern agro-industrial economy—notably in the development of infrastructure, a petroleum and power sector, the Euphrates basin, and industrial diversification. This “great leap forward” has given serious impetus to economic expansion. But the State has not proven as effective as had been hoped in mobilizing or efficiently using resources in this development effort. It failed to develop the efficient management and incentive systems in the public sector needed to produce an expanding surplus, and has dissipated part of it through overstaffing and corruption. It failed to develop an effective planning mechanism able to allocate resources efficiently and prevent bottlenecks. A significant capitalist sector persisted, but, depressed and alienated by the socialist measures, it contributed little to the development effort, instead siphoning its surplus abroad or engaging in black-market activities. Yet the regime lacked the tools to effectively tax the private sector or control and neutralize its opposition. Overcommitment—to big defense expenditures, and welfare measures as well as development—overstrained the resources of the State. And the party’s ideological commitment to socialism proved too weak to support a strong socialist effort. External factors, which greatly weakened the forces in the party most committed to socialism, help explain this. The 1967 war shattered the morale and caused the fall of the party left wing and spurred the rise of a pragmatic wing which subordinated socialism to the requirements of national unity and the acquisition of aid and investment from the Arab oil States; the post-1973 petrodollar revolution only consolidated this reorientation.

Under the pragmatic Asad leadership there have been significant alterations in the original “socialist” model. The public sector remains intact

as the main engine of development investment, but a gradual economic liberalization has revitalized the medium-sized private sector, opened some foreign trade channels to it, and permitted an influx of Arab oil capital. These measures have created a spurt of prosperity and increased resources in the economy, but at a cost. Because the State continues to lack the will or means to effectively regulate, guide, or tax the private sector in the interests of development, much private "entrepreneurship" is channeled into luxury comprador importing, housing speculation, black marketeering, and the exploitation of the public sector by suppliers and contractors in league with an increasingly corrupt officialdom. Owing to continuing inefficiencies in resource mobilization, unmitigated resource overcommitment, and burgeoning luxury consumption, the resource crunch has continued, forcing the State to become increasingly dependent on deficit financing and Arab oil money. A major symptom of this imbalance in the economy has been an inflationary spiral.

The redistributive performance of the regime has been similarly mixed. Originally, socialist measures—nationalizations, reductions in salary differentials, subsidization and price controls on popular consumption commodities, labor security laws, and broadened public employment—reduced inequality and benefited the less-privileged strata. But, particularly since the economic liberalization, new inequalities are reemerging. Inflation erodes the incomes of workers and public employees, while those in the private sector keep up with or exceed it. The regime has proven increasingly unable to control prices or tax excess profits. The growing involvement of the political elite in corrupt business activities has steadily eroded its commitment to an egalitarian society.¹³

Finally, in the rural sector, Ba'th policies have altered the socioeconomic structure, but have also fallen well short of developmental and egalitarian goals. The great latifundia which once dominated the agrarian structure are now gone. Land redistribution, cooperatization, and state aid have nearly halved the landless stratum and made the smallholding peasantry a

13. On the socialist measures, see *Documents sur la Transformation Socialiste* (Damascus, 1965); Jean Ducret, "Secteur Public et Planification en Republique Arabe Syrienne," *Proche Orient Etudes Economiques*, January–June, 1969; Ziad Keilany, "Socialism and Economic Change in Syria," *Middle East Studies* 9, no. 1 (January, 1973). Among the better studies on the structure and performance of the economy are Bent Hansen, *Economic Development in Syria* (Santa Monica, 1969); Hilan, *Culture et Development en Syrie*; Hilan, *Suriya Bayna Takhallaf wa Tanmiyya*; and Yehia Arudki, *al-Iktisad al-Suri al-Hadith* [The modern Syrian economy] (Damascus, 1972), 2 vols. My analysis also relies on the various reports of the World Bank and the UNDP office in Damascus, the many publications of the Office Arabe de Presse et du Documentation, Damascus, and those of the Central Bureau of Statistics, especially the *Statistical Abstract*.

significant force in the *rief*. Legislation has given protection to tenants. A new state-cooperative system of credit, supply, and marketing has displaced much of the old landlord-merchant dominated system. Rurals now enjoy enhanced opportunity of access to education and nonagricultural state employment. The greatest inequalities in the distribution of agricultural revenue have thus been curbed, and the peasants have achieved greater security and opportunities.

However, the Ba'th slogan, "The land to he who works it," is far from implemented. Both urban landlords and rich peasants rent land to tenants or use hired labor. Middlemen of all kinds persist between producer and consumer. The condition of the rural proletariat has barely improved. Moreover, while the penetration and functions of the State in the village have greatly increased, it has been unable to stimulate an economic revolution there. Its technical resources have been too limited, its instruments of planning and control too crude. State delivery of credit and supplies is not always efficient or adequate. The regime's occasional use of state marketing as an instrument of taxation has worked against its efforts to stimulate production and raise peasant income. Most state investment has gone into industry, or when it has gone into agriculture, into a few long-gestating projects (the Euphrates Dam), to the relative neglect of the traditional sector. As a result, urban-rural income gaps have persisted. Cooperatization, the main institutional instrument of rural modernization, has lacked the hoped-for dynamism; plagued by factionalism, corruption, and a lack of technical support, cooperatives have not spurred significant increases in peasant investment or technical innovation, and as yet embrace only about one-third of the peasantry and much less of the land surface. On the whole, while agricultural production has, after a period of stagnation in the sixties, steadily expanded, it has lagged behind the needs of a growing urban population and industry.¹⁴

Defense and Foreign Policy

The Ba'th's ideology committed it, in varying degrees, to an ambitious design for reshaping Syria's regional environment, including the promotion of Arab unity, the export of revolution to the rest of the Arab world, and the liberation of Palestine. But it has been unable to develop the instruments or mobilize the resources to serve this messianic vision; hence its efforts have largely failed, and at great cost.

During the first period of Ba'th rule, the spread of revolutionary Arab

14. Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *Party and Peasant in Syria, Cairo Papers in Social Science* 3, no. 1 (November 1979).

nationalism was principally hindered by the Ba'th's own quarrels with the other main center of nationalism, Nasser's Egypt. The Ba'th engaged in dangerous challenges to powerful outside forces at a time when the politicization and decimation of the Syrian officer corps—for which it was largely responsible—made Syria particularly vulnerable to outside attack. The Ba'th can take credit for having given a vital assist to the emergence of the Palestine liberation movement.¹⁵ But in its haste to challenge Israel and the West, at a time when neither Syria or the Arabs were properly prepared, it invited the onslaught of 1967. This defeat, a watershed in modern Arab history, derailed the Ba'th's radical enterprise and, undermining revolutionary Arab nationalism, ultimately led to the current Arab accommodation with Israel. Thus, the Ba'th's actions entirely negated its own objectives.

Under Asad, the Ba'th has concentrated its foreign policy energies on the much reduced objective of recovering the land lost in 1967, and has in practice otherwise accommodated itself to the status quo Middle East state system. It has become increasingly dependent on Western-linked oil States, failed to effectively support and indeed turned its guns on the Palestinians, and permitted the expansion of Israeli power into Lebanon. While the Asad regime did build a bigger, more effective military establishment which credibly challenged Israel in the 1973 war, it proved unable to translate this into the leverage needed to dislodge Israel from Arab territory. Unable to maintain its coalition with Egypt, or—owing to its rivalries with Ba'thist Iraq—to build a new one in the Arab East, Syria can neither make an acceptable peace with Israel nor defeat her on the battlefield. Hence, Syria remains locked in a dilemma which saps her resources and energies and leaves her in a state of permanent insecurity. Her only compensation is the subsidies and the psychological credit she receives as the only remaining front in the battle for the Arab cause.¹⁶

THE ARENA OF PARTICIPATION

The outcome of the Ba'th's state-building effort has rested in great part on its ability to dominate the political arena: to forge and keep a support base, through some measure of response to its supporters' expectations, including

15. See Fuad Jabber's analysis in William Quandt et al., *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism* (Berkeley, 1973), especially pp. 168–75.

16. The shifts in the regime's foreign policy objectives can be traced through a comparison of the resolutions of its various party National Congresses. See also Petran, *Syria*, pp. 187–204 and 239–58, for the best analysis of Syrian foreign policies into the early seventies. Hudson's analysis, pp. 266–68 in *Arab Politics*, is insightful on Syrian policies in the late seventies.

their participatory demands; and to contain or accommodate pressures from opposition forces. The regime's strategy can best be called authoritarian-populist. On the one hand, it has forged a formidable set of political structures designed more to concentrate power at the center, mobilize and control society, and repress opposition, than to aggregate demands from below or allow leaders to be held accountable. On the other hand, it has consistently sought to incorporate a maximum array of social forces into its base by demonstrating responsiveness to the demands or expectations of those below, particularly the less-privileged sectors of society. The very limits of its success have forced it to be constantly attentive to the political arena, both to repress challenges and satisfy its supporters.

In the course of Ba'th rule, the regime's political capital has seemed to fluctuate widely. At the time of the power seizure, it faced widespread opposition, but subsequent estatist-populist measures, nationalist militancy, and political organization won it a support base. This fragile legitimacy was shattered by the 1967 defeat. A change in leadership, together with conciliatory policies toward the opposition, the 1973 war, and an economic takeoff seemed to widen the regime's base in the early seventies. But, by the end of the decade, impotence in the face of Israeli power, the erosion of traditional commitments to populism and Palestine, corruption in the elite, and economic troubles had once again dissipated much hard-earned political capital. Only massive repression deflected a broad-based challenge from the opposition in early 1980. In spite of these fluctuations, the rough lines of a political arena, divided between the regime's constituency, the opposition, and the politically inactive, can be discerned.

Regime Constituency

The Ba'th's constituency can best be seen as those elements of the salaried middle class, working class, and peasantry which are organized in the party and mass syndicates and part, at least, of those incorporated into, or made dependent on, the military and bureaucratic establishments. Parts of the salaried middle class, especially those recruited from the village, have felt favored by the regime's estatist-populist policies, especially the effort to maximize state employment. Initially, much of the urban middle class was committed to rival movements, particularly Nasserism, but the 1971 incorporation of the small "progressive" parties into the regime coalition, accommodated many urban progressives to Ba'th rule. The salaried middle is still discontented with favoritism in personnel policies (especially toward Alouites), elite corruption, and the erosion of populist and nationalist commitments; but it is dependent on the regime and can expect no more favorable policies from the opposition. The organized working class was initially also divided between the Ba'th and rival progressive forces, but the

nationalizations won the Ba'th a following in worker ranks which it was able on several occasions to mobilize against challenges from the right. Workers currently share many of the discontents of the salaried middle class, but are similarly dependent on the regime. About one-third of the peasantry has also been attached to the Ba'th, having benefited from its reforms and currently dependent on it for aid and protection. Finally, several of the minority communities, especially Alouites and to a lesser degree Druzes, Ismailis, and Christians, traditionally lean toward the Ba'th.

Even the Ba'th's own constituency enjoys limited political power. Policies and the recruitment (or removal) of leaders are determined more by elite interests, ideals, and rivalries—on occasion even by the actions of a few strategically placed military commanders—than by demands from below. Yet, the Ba'th's political structures do absorb some participatory pressures from its constituency; for those in the party, ladders of political mobility and channels of access to elites do exist. To those elements of the peasantry which the Ba'th mobilized into the political arena and accorded chances for local power and even national influence, the political system is likely to seem more open than before. Moreover, the Ba'th has not been wholly unresponsive to its constituency. In the early period of Ba'th rule, the elite's ideological commitments and closeness to its popular roots kept it attentive to the interests of its constituency. To be sure, ideological erosion and the self-enrichment of the elite are gradually differentiating the elite from its base. But intra-elite rivalries, the need to satisfy the middle and lower ranks of the officer corps (recruited from and close to the regimes' popular base), and the need to contain the appeal of counterelites—all operate to maintain some elite sensitivity to the expectations of its constituency. And, to the extent that the Ba'th political system is closed to demands from the more privileged classes, public policy has been more likely to respond to the needs of its popular base.

The regime does have a popular constituency which reaches relatively deep into the peripheries and the lower strata, cuts across sectarian and regional cleavages, and contains opposition access to the masses. Yet it is probably fair to say that, except for elements near the center with a big stake in the regime, the support of this base is lukewarm. It has much cause for dissatisfaction with the tarnished nationalist record of the regime, the growth of self-serving behavior in the elite, and the erosion of equality. Moreover, many participatory aspirations remain unmet; many party members, while loyal to the regime, oppose particular policies and elements of the leadership, and are frustrated in their desire to effect changes at the top. But, for most of the regime's constituency, there is no viable alternative to the Ba'th.¹⁷

17. See my studies *Party and Peasant*, "Local Politics in Syria," and "Political Recruitment and Socialization in Syria" for discussions of the regime's base, particularly its rural constituency. In a paper prepared for a SSRC Conference on

The Opposition

Since its power seizure, the Ba'th has faced strong opposition which it has proved largely incapable of either eradicating or accommodating. Most of it has been urban-centered, and much of its leadership has been recruited either from the bourgeoisie the Ba'th deprived of wealth and power, or from the rival middle-class political movements it excluded from a share of rule.

In the first years of Ba'th rule, Nasserism, based in the urban middle class, constituted the strongest opposition force; by the seventies, this opposition had largely dissipated. A small liberal opposition, made up of segments of the old elite, professional, and business elements, has opposed the Ba'th's authoritarian-etatist course. Islamic fundamentalism represents the most durable and powerful wing of the opposition and is currently the main alternative to the Ba'th. Its leadership is drawn from the ulama, merchant, and notable families, and its base embraces the merchants, artisans, and lower classes of the traditional Sunni urban quarters. These elements have been most receptive to political Islam because their religiosity makes them resentful of the secular, minoritarian caste of the Ba'th. In addition, they have been most damaged by the etatist-populist policies of the regime: state intervention in the market and the village, dominated before the Ba'th by the urban landlord-merchant establishment, has represented a persistent and basic grievance of the *suk*. Thus a big part of the city has yet, after nearly two decades, to reconcile itself to Ba'th party rule.

For the most part, the regime has declined to share political power with opposition forces. The few channels of institutional access to decisionmakers open to them—professional syndicates, chambers of commerce, parliament—carry modest political weight in the Ba'th system. Hence opposition activity has taken covert or anti-regime forms. Although risky and costly, such political action has not been ineffective in wringing concessions from the regime. Disinvestment, the brain drain, and the economic guerilla warfare of the *suk* against the regime in the sixties played a role in derailing the radical Ba'th leadership. Urban street disturbances have won liberalization measures and at least lip service to religion. Bribery increasingly opens doors hitherto closed for those with money. The opposition has not, however, been able to force a significant change in the structure of the political system or to bring down the regime in spite of six major urban uprisings and a very effective recent campaign of assassinations and sabotage. To topple the regime, the opposition must break the cross-sectarian coalition at the Ba'th center, destroy party morale and military discipline, and cause the mass desertion of

Social Legislation in the Middle East, entitled "Social Policy Under the Ba'th: Ideology, Legislation and Implementation in Syria and Iraq," I analyze the regime's relations with the working class.

the Ba'th's constituency, and/or mobilize the politically inactive elements which are currently in neither camp. It is doubtful whether the opposition has a sufficient populist or nationalist character to enlist such broad support against a regime which retains a modicum of legitimacy on both these grounds. But the persistence of intense opposition undermines the regime's effort to carry out its policies and prevents the political relaxation and greater institutionalization of popular participation which might accommodate more Syrians to Ba'th rule.¹⁸

The Politically Inactive

This third segment of the population, outside the political arena, is made up of those lower strata elements who lack the consciousness or resources to involve themselves in politics and those other persons who currently see no gain in standing with either regime or opposition. Success by regime or opposition in mobilizing the inactive to its side could, however, be important in deciding the outcome of their conflict. In this competition, the Ba'th enjoys the superior resources of government, but the opposition can plausibly attribute all responsibility for Syria's ills to a regime which insists on monopolizing power.

AUTHORITARIAN-POPULISM IN SYRIA: AN ASSESSMENT

Institution-Building

There seems little utility in characterizing Syria as either "praetorian" or "civic." Under the Ba'th enough institution-building has gone on to contain but not to eradicate praetorianism. On the one hand, central party-state institutions ultimately proved too fragile to subordinate the military to legal authority, eliminate the use of military violence in decisionmaking and recruitment, or sufficiently dilute sectarian, personalistic, and ideological factionalism among a fragmented elite. In time the regime reverted to a more traditional model, subordinating formal institutions to personalistic leadership and clientalism. The ideological discipline needed to contain corruption in the political process also rapidly melted away.

18. Rabinovich, *Syria Under the Ba'th*, and Petran, *Syria*, contain good analyses of the nature and bases of opposition in the sixties. I have attempted to analyze the character of the opposition in the late seventies in a contribution entitled, "The Islamic Movement in Syria: Sectarian Conflict and Urban Rebellion in an Authoritarian-Populist Regime," in Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, *Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World* (New York, 1982), pp. 138-69.

On the other hand, there is a real political party in Syria, and it has made a difference, giving the regime a strength it would lack were it to rely merely on personal, military, or bureaucratic rule as have many authoritarian States. Ideology and organization have helped mute cleavages and praetorianism within the regime, and imbue it with solidarity against outside forces. The regime has been able to mobilize and organize a support base which cuts across and helps contain the numerous cleavages in Syrian society. Covert praetorianism lurks below the surface of the regime, but has been contained enough to impart a modicum of stability to it. In contrast to the chaotic pre-Ba'th period, since 1963 there have been only two changes of leadership, both from inside the establishment. Moreover, in spite of these changes, there have been few abrupt departures from the Ba'th's nationalist-etatist populist course.

Legitimacy and Participation

Because the Ba'th came to power by a coup rather than at the head of a broad-based movement, yet set out to rule alone and impose a revolution from above on an already fragmented society, it incited intense opposition from the start. Subsequently it mobilized support, and drew new actors into the political system. In a sense, it narrowed political participation at the apex, but partly made up for it by widening it at the base. But the level of activism stimulated among its constituency was too low and the extent of controls over it too tight to either intensely mobilize and satisfy its own supporters, or wholly make up for the exclusion of non-Ba'th political forces from the arena of participation. Thus, it alienated a multitude of political rivals, but, in contrast to totalitarian regimes, proved unable to eradicate counterelites, deprive them of their mass bases, or submerge them in a total mass mobilization. Hence it has had to constantly alternate between repression of challenges to its rule and concessions to the opposition. Relying on its own rural lower status base, it has been able to contain urban and upper-class opponents, but not to overcome the emergence of a great new cleavage in Syria—that between the regime and its enemies. The cost has been a failure to build the legitimate new political order to which the Ba'th aspired and which is ultimately critical to the success of its nationalist and modernizing goals.

Policy Performance

Nevertheless, the Ba'th's authoritarian-populist State did successfully use its coercive power to break and redistribute great concentrations of wealth and to launch a modernization drive which together have transformed Syrian society. In the absence of concentrated state power these changes are hardly

imaginable. Yet this power has not been enough to forge a new socialist socioeconomic order. The State took over the heights of the economy, intervened in and tried to reshape the market, but without adequately developing the instruments of a command economy or replacing private entrepreneurship as the motor of the economy with a disciplined ideological party. It alienated the private sector, but would or could not eradicate it or control it in the interests of development. This, combined with massive but politically essential commitments to defense and populist welfare, produced a resource crunch which forced a widening economic liberalization and, in its train, new inequalities, external dependency, and an erosion of the national-populist course. These developments followed, in part, from the failure of the Ba'th to institutionalize authority and win acceptance and compliance from more than a part of the population.

External factors have also been critical. The Ba'th knew its "socialist" policy was only viable in a wider Arab framework; indeed, this policy was meant essentially to serve a wider Arab national revolution. But its efforts to export revolution was a threat to local and global interests; Israel, in its 1967 strike at Syria, nipped the effort in the bud. The subsequent erosion of the Ba'th's national-populist commitments suggest that its historical role will not be the creation of "socialism" in Syria, but the destruction of patrimonialism, clearing the way for a mixed state-private capitalist road reincorporated, via Arab petropower, into the system of world capitalist dependency. Yet this will depend on a solution to the problem of Palestine which, ironically, the Ba'th has helped to put and keep on the world political agenda.

Conclusions

The Ba'th regime's major strengths have been its party organization and its populist-egalitarian policies, which, together, have enabled it to win and consolidate a support base; its weaknesses, the limited ability to satisfy participatory demands and the vulnerability to abuse of power typical of authoritarian regimes. Overall, the Ba'th's authoritarian-populist model has proven much less effective than its architects hoped. Yet its performance must be assessed in the light of the intense centrifugal forces, environmental constraints, and overload of demands with which it has had to cope. Moreover, it is doubtful whether any other model would have proven better; totalitarian regimes are difficult and costly to build, conservative authoritarianism both repressive and inegalitarian, and the record of liberalism in the Third World, dismal. If the Ba'th had not existed, Syrians might have had to invent something like it.