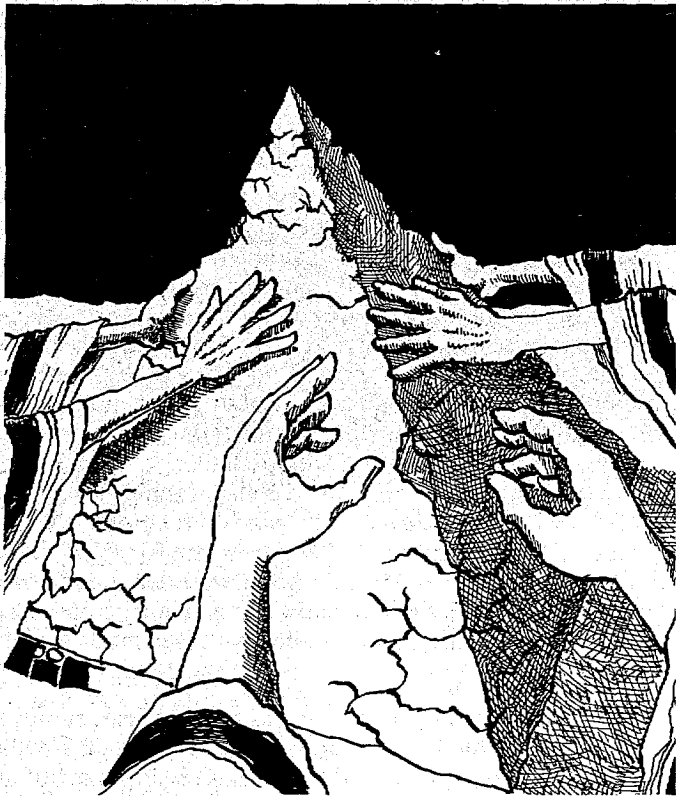


Moslems, Jews and geography

all those elements which had led to weakness and dissension in the past in order to bring about a true revival.

The struggle for political independence, a struggle spearheaded by early Arab nationalists, had neither unified the Arabs nor made them masters of their own houses. Control of Arab destiny had merely shifted from Istanbul to Western capitals. It appeared then that those Arab nationalists had betrayed the essence of Arab nationalism — the struggle for freedom and unity — for a superficial

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political independence that protected their power and privilege behind facades of Western democratic institutions. Within a decade of the Palestine defeat, these facades were dismantled by coups in Egypt (1952), Syria (1954) and Iraq (1958), and were severely challenged in every other Arab country where they existed.

Ideologically then, Palestine symbolizes the outcome of processes that are externally controlled and directed against the Arab people. Practically, the movement toward Arab unity has been the consistent defence against destabilization. This is reflected in the concrete patterns of interaction that have emerged in the region in the post-World War II era.

Decline of the West

In the period after the Second World War Britain and the USA were the two dominant external powers in the Middle East. The American presence was exercised through two channels — its bilateral relations with individual countries in the region, and its informal, though powerful, role in the Baghdad Pact alliance. British influence was more direct. Not only was Britain a member of the Baghdad Pact; it was also involved in the Saadabad Entente (a British-sponsored alliance of Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan organized in 1937 against the Soviet Union). This alliance was essentially superseded by the Baghdad Pact as the West's answer to Soviet competition in the region.

The shift from Britain to the United States as the dominant external power in the region had been an ongoing process since the end of the Second World War. The declaration of the Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957 signaled two important changes:

1. The transfer of dominance from Britain to the USA in the Middle East; and
2. The increasing exercise of regional strategy through bilateral relations with national governments, which were, in effect, American client states in the Middle East.

Besides the system of external powers there were two spheres of highly patterned political interaction in the region. These may be referred to as the Arab cooperative system and the Arab-Israeli conflict system. During the fifties and sixties, the Arab cooperative system was composed of the Arab League and pan-Arab political groups and parties. All of the independent Arab states of the region participated directly in this system.

The Arab-Israeli conflict system, the other sphere of highly patterned political interaction, directly involved only four states in the region: Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Israel. The profound regional magnitude of the Arab-Israeli conflict can be explained by the linkage between the Arab cooperative system and this conflict system. Three of the states involved directly in the conflict were also members of the cooperative system. Furthermore, by 1958 Egypt (involved in both regional systems) was the undisputed leader of the pan-Arab movement and had in fact forged a union with Syria and created the United Arab Republic (UAR) on February 1, 1958, achieving — if only temporarily — the major goal of Arab nationalism. In reaction to the nationalist challenge symbolized by the creation of the UAR, the Hashemite monarchies of Iraq and Jordan united to form the Arab Federation on February 14, 1958.

The 1958 Iraqi revolution in fact directly effected a major change in the structure of systemic links. With Iraqi withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact as one of the first acts of the revolutionary government, the alliance fell apart. The other members remained allied under the CENTO agreement, but with no Arab member, a key linkage with the Arab cooperative system was lost. Thereafter, American strategy emphasized bilateral arrangements with the remaining CENTO members for military and economic aid. Furthermore, the Iraqi revolution highlighted the increasing alienation of the members of the Arab cooperative system from the dominant external powers, and the emerging role of the USSR as a significant competitor for external influence.

Enter USSR

These changes in Iraq — the toppling of the pro-British government, withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact, and development of relations with the Soviet bloc — corresponded to increasing external influence in Iran, reflected in increasing bilateral arrangements between Iran and the USA. The reduction of influence in Iraq was part of the larger process of declining Western influence that was ongoing in the Arab world. While the external powers had no direct linkages with the Arab cooperative system, linkages were indirect through bilateral relations with states which were members of that system. However, the Soviet bloc was increasing bilateral relations with members of the

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