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## Saddam Hussein's armourers

Saddam Hussein's alleged Weapons of Mass Destruction, the primary motivation for going to war with Iraq still remain elusive. In this article, David Baran takes a well-informed look at the political careers of the people working in the weapons programmes from the 1970s up to the war in 2003. He describes the mechanisms of military industrialization and the intricate workings of patronage and clientelism amongst the military analysts and experts. Baran corrects the over-simplified view of Saddam Hussein as the ultimate evil-doer whose circle includes merely figureless and interchangeable henchmen and raises new questions about the WMD-programmes and the American response to them.

The controversy on the Iraqi "weapons of mass destruction" is still ongoing. The US administration, who said to be in possession of substantial evidence regarding the existence of ambitious Iraqi armament programmes including nuclear weaponization, is compelled to postpone indefinitely the prospect of discovering just some residual traces. Various questions arise, on the justification of the war, on the credibility of the administrations responsible for hazardous allegations, on the cornerstones of the Bush government's foreign politics, etc. Curiously enough, the controversy puts the issue of "weapons of mass destruction" back to its context, namely the Iraqi arms industry. Could these mysterious deterrent weapons, which are as destructive as untraceable, be thus some sort of essence of maleficent origin, in no way related to the industry?

Under the regime of Saddam Hussein the generic term "military industrialization" (*al-tasni' al-'askari* in Arabic) was used for the whole arms industry. This particular industrialization, whose instigator is supposed to be Saddam Hussein<sup>1</sup>, was just one aspect of the country's accelerated development in various fields. The nationalization of oil in 1972 brought the regime not only considerable financial resources, but also the status of a "regional power" and a "model of development" – to use contemporary terminology. Thanks to economic and technical progress the regime was the champion of emancipation in the Arab world and, as an instrument of sovereignty, it integrated straight from the beginning military industrialization into its political programme.

From 1980 onwards, the war against Iran turned it into a major preoccupation. At that time Iraq acquired not only abundant, diversified and technically advanced military material, but also theoretical knowledge and practical experience pointing the way forward to its own industry. In 1987, the arms industry initiated a spectacular rise to power. This is the moment which some people locate as the turnaround of the Iraqi nuclear programme from a poorly financed civil research programme towards a military priority.<sup>2</sup> Various

sources confirm that decisive tests were carried out in this field just before the conflict of 1991.

Afterwards, the destruction of infrastructure caused by the war, the international sanctions restricting any supply of equipment and the regime's disgrace limiting any foreign cooperation, not to speak about the intrusive system of weapons inspections headed by the UN but controlled by Washington<sup>3</sup>, seriously complicated any pursuit of the earlier programmes at the same scale. However, the argumentation in favour of a new war, preventive this time, implied that Iraq pursued projects of great technical expertise, using mobile laboratories, underground complexes, an extensive covert network of suppliers, etc.

In fact, this a priori technical question has been asked among non-experts in a surprisingly subjective and moral way. This is precisely one of the ethical effects of the pseudotechnical formula "weapons of mass destruction". As if a B2 bomber dropping fragmentation bombs was not, strictly speaking, a weapon of mass destruction... The definition of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons prohibited by international regulations thus contains already a moral condemnation of certain regimes, among them all in possession of such weapons. These regimes cause concern about a "bad use" of their illegal arsenal.

In the case of Iraq, the issue of "weapons of mass destruction" somehow seemed to boil down to Saddam Hussein's evil intentions<sup>4</sup>. Despite the particularly close surveillance, there is no striking evidence for the presumed existence of residual weapon stocks, production facilities, missiles capable of delivering chemical, biological and nuclear warheads or covert ways to import the necessary components or technologies. However, the regime's hardly cooperative attitude regarding disarmament (contrary to the more honest and satisfactory cooperation in implementing the so-called "Oil for Food" agreement)<sup>5</sup> seemed to reveal an evident guilt. Even if the inspection system attacked the sovereignty and security of the regime, which might partly have justified its attitude, this alone could not explain the comprehensive concealment strategies developed to hide documents and materials from UN inspectors, a strategy that has been widely used<sup>6</sup>.

In the political discourse this concealment strategy led to endless speculations, supported by the media's diabolization of Saddam Hussein as the incarnation of the evil. Besides, wouldn't his ability to constantly produce weapons that nobody can ever find intuitively be the best indicator of diabolic actions? This approach presents the "weapons of mass destruction" not as a more or less complex technological appliance requiring infrastructure, components and know-how, but as a kind of physical sorcery or direct conversion of Saddam Hussein's evil intentions into reality.

In fact, this idea of "weapons of mass destruction" is nothing but a by-product of another idea relating more broadly to authoritarian regimes. The focus on the figure of the tyrant, who is surrounded by some sinister accomplices, reduces the politics under such regimes to an automatic execution of the despot's will. The subsidiary and ordinary actors of this system always remain anonymous, interchangeable, mediocre and unnatural. Basically, the tyrant is surrounded by an immense amorphous bureaucracy that acts like an infernal machine<sup>7</sup> and turns obsequiously his thoughts into reality. Furthermore, this mechanics is not operational unless the tyrant inhales his "energy", born out of the fear he spreads and his desire to harm.

The example of the Iraqi military industrialization is revealing in this respect. Saddam Hussein was not really a key player in the arms industry. However, due to his ability to identify, recruit and remunerate talented top officials he set up a group of "armourers" who were real masterminds. Indeed, their profile symbolizes the quality of human resources invested in this demanding, efficient, highly creative and reactive sector. Far from being replaceable or insignificant, the engineers of this long-term scientific programme which was impeded by the events of 1991, have been recycled since in other top functions of technical nature.

Against the strictly "negative" approaches of authoritarian regimes, expressed through coercion, repression, radical changes and failings, military industrialization conveys the image of an industrial sector that recognizes competence and productivity. Where it could be expected that fear-based loyalty would be the only cement of a regime in continuous disintegration, more subtle and sophisticated forms of personnel management can be discovered. A biographical approach that aims to be technical, didactic and original at the same time<sup>8</sup> will help to recontextualize the debate on Iraq's armament, in order to respond to some current issues and ask new questions.

### Hussein Kamel, a key player

The most outstanding personality in the history of military industrialization is beyond doubt Hussein Kamel Hassan al-Majid<sup>9</sup>. This member of Saddam Hussein's tribe (*Albou Nasser* called *Beigat*) also comes from his clan (*Albou Abdul Ghafour*), which has served as a breeding ground for high officials devoted to the regime since the beginning of the 1980s. As a general rule, the members of this clan, like other *Beigat* clans Saddam Hussein had chosen, occupied particularly sensitive posts within the apparatus of power.

In this manner, Saddam Hussein put his relatives into key positions of the arms industry. Notably his half-brother Barzan Ibrahim al-Hassan al-Khattab, who had been relieved from his post as director of the intelligence service in 1983 and relegated to a diplomatic post in Switzerland, used the strategic site of Geneva to take care of the financial aspects of the programme. His younger brother Sab'awi, who was deputy director of the intelligence service (*al-Moukhabarat*) at the end of the 1980s, reportedly also played at that time a prominent role in clandestine procurement<sup>10</sup>.

Having said this, it was Hussein Kamel who, in his prime time, oversaw the acquisition and manufacturing structures of military industrialization. The son of one of Saddam Hussein's paternal cousins was born in 1958 in the village al-'Oja, near Tikrit. Of modest rural origin, he attended the military academy in Baghdad before joining the special presidential guard (*al-Himaya*). This is where he got noticed by Saddam Hussein, who entrusted him in 1982, together with the Kurdish general Hussein Rashid Hassan Mohammed al-Windawi (army chief of staff during the Gulf war), with the transformation of the Republican Guard from a praetorian guard to an offensive armed force able to intervene on the Iranian front.

In 1983, he got married to Saddam Hussein's eldest daughter Raghad, who had already been promised to a more important *Beigat* member<sup>11</sup>. This marriage, which intended to rebalance the alliances within the tribe, led to a serious family crisis. Certain observers found here the explanation for Barzan's temporary removal to his Swiss exile, and of Saddam Hussein's two other half-brothers, Sab'awi, then director general of the National Security, and

Watban, a high ranking official in charge of Northern Iraq and governor of Salaheddin (Tikrit). Hussein Kamel himself seemed to gain increasingly the favour of his father-in-law. Significantly, he was soon perceived by the public as the only man authorized to carry a weapon in front of the President.

It is likely that Saddam Hussein's notorious affection for him derived partly from his competence in security matters. During the 1980s, he skilfully set up two of the most reliable bodies of the Iraqi security apparatus, namely the Special Security, which infiltrated and headed the whole system, and the Special Republican Guard, a paramilitary elite force primarily in charge of securing the sanctuaries of power and the presidential travel activities. He reportedly also directed Saddam Hussein's special protection guard (*al-Himaya*) and oversaw the Republican Guard at the time of its decisive victories against Iran.

The extent of these attributions in security matters proved Saddam Hussein's absolute confidence in the loyalty of his protégé<sup>12</sup>. This privileged relation undoubtedly explains the complete freedom he had been given in the crucial armament sector despite his striking gaps in science. Furthermore, Hussein Kamel hardly spoke anything but Arabic. But at least he had an iron fist in directing this enormous construction site of military industrialization, while the war against Iran cost enormous resources: the monthly Iraqi military expenditure reached one billion dollar in 1985<sup>13</sup>.

In June 1987, the young officer got his first ministerial portfolio. At the age of 29, he succeeded the experienced technician Qassem Ahmed Taqi al-Oureibi, who had occupied the extremely prestigious post of oil minister for a long time (from June 1982 to March 1987), at the top of the ministry of heavy industry. In August 1987, the promulgation of a law on military industrialization<sup>14</sup> paradoxically entrusted him with immense financial means, increasing the power of the armament programme at the very moment of a threatening economic bankruptcy of the country. To the direct and indirect costs of the war still had to be added the effects of falling oil prices in 1986. The decisive reorganization of the arms industry, which had previously been split up in a multitude of diversified structures, was quite ambitious.

In July 1988, the heavy industry, for a while in the hand of Abdul Tawab Abdallah al-Moulded Houweish al-Ani, the light industry headed by Hatem Abdul Rashid Mohammed al-Nasseri<sup>15</sup>, a member of Saddam Hussein's tribe, and the Public Company of Technical Industries, which is considered responsible for the production of chemical weapons, were merged to the super-ministry "of industry and military industrialization", which was totally dependent on Hussein Kamel. He retook among others the "Military Industrialization Organization", a sort of key entity within the huge network of research centres, state enterprises, front companies and dual-use factories capable of producing both civil and military goods.

### **The glorious days of military industrialization**

The war against Iran alone can by far not explain the remarkable rise to power these institutional arrangements reflect. It can at least be said that the cease-fire of 8 August 1988, the day following this reorganization, has not made the regime revise its ambitions. In May 1989, Hussein Kamel made one goal of his ministry public : the autonomy of basic military supplies from 1991 onwards. Since then it seemed, notably in the course of the UNSCOM inspections<sup>16</sup> during the 1990s, that Iraq had set new targets. In his speeches

from the early 1990s, Saddam Hussein also increased his ambiguous allusions to Iraq's "capabilities" in case of Israeli aggression against an Arab state<sup>17</sup>. Military industrialization remained certainly a priority for Iraq; efforts continued accordingly.

What was the scope? Before prematurely thinking of an intrinsic aggression of the regime towards its neighbours it would be worth reconsidering the political and social context of the time. Iraq was not yet a "rogue state". The regime still appeared "secular and progressive", in any case tolerable, while the state of emergency justified some of the most dreadful crimes<sup>18</sup>. Wide parts of the population, reduced somehow to clients of a paternalistic supply regime, kept living in illusory wealth, despite increasingly worrying signs of bankruptcy. Nevertheless, once the war was over, there was hope that the country could take up again its march towards progress. The regime even announced some symbolic measures of democratization. Iraq's future seemed rather bright, whatever can be said today about the victims of that time<sup>19</sup>. As a matter of fact, the contingents of students sent to study abroad, benefiting from bilateral cooperation agreements and a large national study grant programme, returned full of hope.

These young graduates, many of whom very patriotic, provided the military industrialization with a reserve pool of scientists and engineers familiar with western technologies. Only the nuclear research centre of al-Mouseyyeb counted at least 2000 employees, more than 350 of whom had an education higher than a master's degree<sup>20</sup>. This high ranking staff benefited from continuous education abroad and enjoyed a privileged status. An engineer's salary in this area was double the amount of someone with a comparable profile working in the private sector. Bonuses were common. Apart from such prosaic motivations many employees still remember today the military industrialization as a reactive and exciting environment. In the context of the time, some understood their mission as a contribution to a noble project of national emancipation.

Such considerations made the particularly restrictive working conditions more legitimate and bearable. As staff involved in armament were subject to tight vigilance of the intelligence service, they had to be careful. Mock appointments for instance could be arranged during a stay abroad. In Iraq itself, a harmless talk to a tourist or an expatriate could have severe consequences. In everyday life, working hours were designed to limit any interaction with other people. Early in the morning, six days out of seven, a coach service picked staff up from home and drove them back late in the evening. The hierarchy stayed on site. Like this, senior staff who might have been tempted to flee, were supplied with anything on site, even prostitutes<sup>21</sup>.

Why such precautions? One the one hand Iraq had strained relations with several neighbouring countries, notably Iran, Turkey, Syria and, of course, Israel. These countries represented a direct threat in terms of military intelligence. On the other hand, a risk of changing alliances encouraged Iraq to protect itself against its own allies and suppliers. Scientific material was installed in university laboratories by technicians from abroad; after their departure it was taken apart and moved to complexes of military industrialization<sup>22</sup>. In the same way whole factories were built and then abandoned, to be later-on identically rebuilt by purely Iraqi teams at secret and secure sites<sup>23</sup>.

An inextricable network of front companies was used for acquiring supplies. As far as possible, supply channels and facilities of the most sensitive programmes had to be systematically camouflaged. According to the former inspector Scott Ritter, the Iraqi military intelligence service (*al-Istikhbarat*) has benefited since 1982 from KGB expertise in concealing armament activities<sup>24</sup>. Actually all Iraqi intelligence services seem to have intervened in this area. The Special Security, set up by Hussein Kamel, reportedly was the kingpin, maintaining at the same time a clear distinction of services and the necessary coordination between them<sup>25</sup>.

Ironically, Iraq has learned to thwart western surveillance and detection methods through close cooperation with the West. Sabah's brother Sourour Mahmoud Mirza, a well-known bodyguard of Saddam Hussein in the 1970s and 1980s, allegedly had the idea to infiltrate the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) by placing there... some Iraqi weapons inspectors<sup>26</sup>. Following this objective, Dr Husham Sherif al-Shawi, former director of the Iraqi Atomic Energy Commission (IAEC) and former minister of higher education and research, reportedly was elected member of the IAEA Board of Governors<sup>27</sup>. Iraq has also gained from satellite imaging which had been put at their disposal by the USA during the war against Iran, and subsequently developed concealment methods for surveillance techniques and data analysis according to how they had been applied by its former ally<sup>28</sup>.

This inventiveness is surprising if we take into account the image the regime had in the eyes of military analysts of the time. During the Iran war, the Iraqi army appeared handicapped by the extreme rigidity of its command structures, by its lack of initiative and the predominance of political and security considerations to technical efficiency<sup>29</sup>. The regime was widely viewed in terms of its conflict management, whose cumbersomeness and failings corresponded closely to ideas about authoritarian systems. However, at the same time, the misjudged sector of military industrialization provided a more detailed image of the regime. Whereas many incompetent careerists interfered in top ranks of the army, the performance of the armament majors was surprisingly professional and faultless.

### **The group of armament majors**

The profile of Hussein Kamel's closest scientific collaborators, namely the three "deputy ministers" of industry and military industrialization, contrasted in general with the most visible figures. The only thing they had in common was that all of them belonged to the same generation as the members of the "Ba'ath command", born in the 1930s. However, they did not share their modest origin nor their poor level of education. On the contrary, Amer Mohammed Rashid al-Obeidi, Amer Hammoudi Hassan al-Saadi and Jaafar Dhia Jaafar had followed higher education abroad. Contrary to the careers of the power elite<sup>30</sup>, their later careers owed little – or nothing at all – to promotion within the party<sup>31</sup>.

With a Ph.D. in Electric Engineering, and a graduate degree in Electronics from Birmingham University, Amer al-Obeidi joined the army soon after his return to Iraq in 1974. From 1978 to 1983 he reportedly even served in the rank of deputy commander in chief of the armed forces. Director of the "research and development" department in the ministry of defence, he was appointed deputy minister of industry and military industrialization in 1988 when the super ministry was created. At that time his future wife, Dr Rihab Rashida Taha, a biologist who had studied in Great Britain, also belonged to

Hussein Kamel's closest collaborators: she was the grey eminence of the biology programme<sup>32</sup>.

Amer al-Saadi's career began more or less alike. With a Ph.D. from London University he joined the the ministry of defence immediately after his return to Baghdad. Employed in the production department of the war industries directorate, he was appointed head of the Public Company of Technical Industries between 1974 and 1987, before being promoted to deputy minister one year later. He is considered the "father" of the Iraqi chemical weapons programme and he simultaneously played a predominant role in the ballistic sector and the supply networks.

The third deputy minister, Jaafar Dhia Jaafar (known under the name *Abou Timmen*), headed the most sensitive and secret part of military industrialization, which is the nuclear programme. Accordingly, he remains the most mysterious out of the three deputy ministers, since his duties required total discretion. After four years of research at the CERN particle accelerator (Conseil européen pour la recherche nucléaire / European Organization for Nuclear Research) and a number of publications, he suddenly disappeared from the scientific scene upon his return to Iraq in 1974. With the exception of one escorted visit to the Soviet Union, he reportedly never left the Iraqi territory during the 1980s. His incarceration for unknown reasons, in February 1980, had even attracted Amnesty International's attention<sup>33</sup>. After twenty months of detention he suddenly took charge of the nuclear energy research programme.

In this organigram, the duties of coordination and political impetus were naturally granted to someone close to Saddam Hussein, in this case Hussein Kamel. Nevertheless, the practical programme management and technical issues were given to professionals with well-known competences combining administrative and scientific skills. This allocation of duties is only seemingly obvious. Actually it contrasted with the situation in the army, where the real war experts had nothing to say except in emergencies<sup>34</sup>... Whereas Amer Rashid, Rihab Rashida, Amer al-Saadi and Jaafar Dhia Jaafar enjoyed total freedom in their areas of specialization – electronics, biology, chemistry and nuclear technology respectively.

Dr Safa Hadi Jawad al-Habboubi, a person with complementary talents, joined this group. He had graduated in mechanical engineering from the universities of Baghdad and Lyon and had the necessary expertise in the fields of heavy industry and automated machine tools. This special qualification, together with his proven leadership qualities, predisposed him to run various production units, such as the above mentioned Public Company of Technical Industries. Simultaneously charged with procurement issues, he distinguished himself by his sense of initiative and inventiveness. In London he used a front company, the "Technological Development Group", in order to buy the American company Matrix Churchill Co., whose president he became. Later-on he engineered likewise the purchase of a special alloys factory. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning his involvement in the Atlanta negotiations concerning unlimited loans from the "Banca nazionale del lavoro", a particularly sensational scandal<sup>35</sup>.

Sure, Safa Hadi was not Hussein Kamel's only intermediary abroad. Also Fadhel Jawad Kadhem, a lawyer trilingual in Arabic, English, French who had graduated from Montpellier University, – and member of the Technological Development Group's administrative board, served as travelling salesman,

renowned for his sharp sense of business and secrecy. Thus Hussein Kamel relied on partners who were familiar with western culture and commercial habits, but when needed he resorted to technically more qualified experts for his purchase missions. Among them, there should be cited the artillery officer Abdul Jawad Dhenoun Mohammed Dhaher, successively head of the military intelligence, commander of the armed forces, and in the 1980s in charge of its equipment<sup>36</sup>. The famous general Abdul Jabbar Shanshal Khalil, veteran from all Iraqi wars, was also regularly dispatched abroad.

This amount of staff indicates the importance of professionals in this sector. Sectarian criteria were applied in the field of security, where the Sunnite Arabs were overrepresented, but they seemed much less predominant in military industrialization. It is well known that Shi'ites were represented at all grades of the hierarchy. Jaafar Dhia Jaafar, Safa Hadi and Fadhel Jawad Kadhem are just some examples among the persons cited here. Ba'ath membership seemed to be no longer a decisive criterion in an environment where the imperative of loyalty justified rather a pragmatic framework of surveillance than any kind of indoctrination.

The Ba'ath careerists were not less represented in the arms industry, clearly proved by the two following examples. Homam Abdul Khaleq Abdul Ghafour, who held a master's degree in Nuclear Physics from London University, got promoted simultaneously in military industrialization, where he became president of the IAEC in 1988, and within the party, where he obtained the command of one branch (*fere'*) at the age of 33. Abdul Razzaq Qassem al-Hashemi was older, he was the archetypal incarnation of the elite in power during the 1980s; he was an exception due to his high level of education. Holding a Ph.D. in chemical mineralogy from Missouri University, he was vice-president of the IAEC from 1976 to 1981 and afterwards minister of higher education and research. Nevertheless, they both remained in their prestigious, but bureaucratic posts. One of the particularities of the regime was that, given the circumstances, it generally proved able to get back to qualified persons rather than to party by-products. Valid confirmation for this is provided by the lead role of the three deputy ministers in managing the serious crises the regime had undergone since the golden age of armament.

### **The way out of the crisis from 1991**

In 1991, the infrastructure of military industrialization has undergone something that could be called "mass destruction". It was one of the main targets of the US forces, who were afraid Iraq might use its non-conventional weapons against them or against its neighbouring countries, notably Israel<sup>37</sup>. At the end of the military operations, the allies imposed on Saddam Hussein the most intrusive and stringent regime of weapons inspections ever. UN Resolution 687 of 3 April 1991, established the terms and conditions of a cease-fire between the conflict parties and ordered the set-up of UNSCOM.

The resolution charged this commission on the one hand to supervise the chemical, biological and ballistic parts of disarmament, and on the other hand to assist IAEA with the nuclear part. The new prerogatives of these two bodies entitled them to investigate sites of their choosing without prior notice, to seize documents, to take samples and photographs without any limitations, to use aerial inspection techniques, to install remote control camera systems, to hold interviews etc. The Iraqi authorities had qualified these extensive provisions straight from the beginning as incompatible with their national sovereignty. Nonetheless they ratified them on 14 May 1991, under the threat that the

hostilities would be resumed.<sup>38</sup>

This international interference was just one facet of the crisis the regime was going through; it was weakened by its political humiliation, its military debacle, internal uprisings, big revolts among the population, the ruin of its infrastructure and institutions, not to mention the economic collapse which had started during the war against Iran, then deteriorated in 1990 due to the embargo sanctioning the Kuwait invasion, and dramatically worsened in the course of the devastating effects of its military operations and other uprisings among the population. Thus the crisis was global. However, according to reports and analyses about this time, Saddam Hussein's single survival strategy was massive repression. What about this?

As a matter of fact, the major mass graves that were found, date back to 1991. Saddam Hussein had mobilized all high-ranking politicians to embark on a ferocious reconquest of the country. Each of them had to prove absolute faithfulness by blood. Quite frankly, the repression of 1991 resembled a baptism, bonding together a discredited elite by fateful solidarity, vowing to impose themselves at any price on the population. But contrary to the reactions that could be expected of a tyrant Saddam Hussein did not content himself with "tightening the ranks" of the regime. The ongoing crisis was a good opportunity to renew and extend his support network. His closest partners travelled across the country in order to identify in every town allies and traitors, awarding the ones by eliminating the others<sup>39</sup>.

Thus a new generation of young militants got promoted to the high ranks of the party, which had traditionally been reserved for the old Ba'ath guard. Certain tribes have been rewarded with lightning rise in recognition of their zeal and sense of initiative during the repression. The mass grave laid bare in Mahawil for instance is somehow a spontaneous work of a local Shi'ite tribe. However, their full responsibility for this crime does in no way affect the regime's guilt, the latter having abundantly paid the tribe and his chief afterwards<sup>40</sup>.

Nonetheless, the focus on these repressive and security related measures, however disgraceful they may be, remains deceptive. At this point ends in general the analysis of foreign observers, inclined to continuously demonstrate the brutality of the Iraqi regime and its "Stalinist" or "totalitarian" nature. However, Saddam Hussein's reaction to the crises did not end here. He had to confront himself with the complete disorganization of his devastated country. So he drew on another reserve of human resources. He distinguished openly confidants (*ahl al-thiqa*) from "people with knowledge" or experts (*ahl al-kheber*)<sup>41</sup>. Therefore it is logic that the proven organigramme of military industrialization was adapted according to the key areas of post-war times.

Once again Hussein Kamel imposed himself as the man with the iron fist. In February he replaced the technocrat Essam Abdul Rahim al-Chalabi (after all minister for almost four years) at the top of the ministry of oil. After his participation in the repression he succeeded the well-known Shi'ite general Saadi Toma Abbas al-Jebouri at the ministry of defence to restore order within the army. At the same time he established an ad-hoc committee for reconstruction and thus took charge of an immense logistic and technical operation which seemingly turned the country again into a construction site.

But the Iraq under embargo had to improvise in order to restore its basic infrastructure and symbolic buildings, since in the 1980s the big civil engineering works had systematically been handed over to foreign companies.

With his merciless persistence Hussein Kamel was undeniably successful, which the Iraqi nowadays put on the same level as the slow reconstruction under US patronage, emphasizing that the destructions had been more massive and the means more limited at that time. Several works carried out, such as the "hanging bridge" and, later-on, the two storey bridge and the Saddam tower, evoked real pride among many Iraqi people, even among those who were most hostile towards the regime. Reconstructing the country actually meant also restoring its dignity<sup>42</sup>.

Hussein Kamel's former deputy ministers took up the practical management of the current dossiers. Notably Amer Rashid chaired the negotiations on the modalities of the inspections system for the Iraqi side. Despite an extremely unfavourable balance of power he imposed himself as the main negotiation partner of UNSCOM throughout 1990 in order to rescue the vital part of the Iraqi point of view. During the war, Jaafar Dhia Jaafar personally headed a group of technicians for emergency interventions. Where others had failed, he managed to rescue the survivors of the famous al-Ameriya anti-aircraft shelter, whose bombing by the US air force caused hundreds of civilian victims<sup>43</sup>. After the war he was remembered as the person to have reanimated the wiped-out electrical sector in record time. Then Amer al-Saadi, who topped the hierarchy of the three deputy ministers, took the ministries of oil and industry and military industrialization back from Hussein Kamel.

Immediately after the war a clear division of duties arose between the "people of confidence" and the "people of knowledge" : in short, one sector tried to bring people into line, while others boosted the economy and institutions. This transitional configuration was symbolized by the remarkable government of so-called "technocrats", formed by Saddam Hussein in March 1991. It was headed by the respected Shi'ite Dr Saadoun Hammadi, who six month later left the floor to a more classic configuration, after having sufficiently stabilized the country.

Indeed, the much less respectable Shi'ite Mohammed Hamza al-Zoubeidi received the post of prime minister in September the same year. Far from being a technician and ideologist like Saadoun Hammadi, he had earned in the 1980s the reputation of being bloodthirsty and brutal, a reputation proved true during the repression of 1991. Other appointments indicated the "confidants" return to the political limelight. Notably the ministry of defence, traditionally in the hands of famous officers, was taken over by war experts only in 1995.

### **The arms majors recycled**

However, the role of the technocrats remained predominant in sectors like energy, industry, military industrialization and higher education. All the names cited above reappeared after 1991 in domains where productivity counted in the eyes of the regime. Safa Hadi was oil minister from September 1993 to June 1995, preceding Amer Rashid, who stayed in this post until 2003. Prior to 1993, the shadow technocrat who occupied this functions (Oussama al-Hitti) worked under Hussein Kamel's direct supervision.

In the first half of the 1990s, he alternated with Amer Rashid at the top of the Military Industrialization Organization. After the dissolution of the super ministry of armament in 1993 with only this body remaining, and Hussein Kamel's defection in 1995<sup>44</sup>, Amer al-Saadi briefly took charge of the so-called "ministry of industry and mines". Jaafar Dhia Jaafar had returned to his earlier function : he assisted Homam Abdul Khaleq Abdul Ghafour at the

top of the IAEC. In higher education, asked to take up the challenges caused by the country's intellectual isolation<sup>45</sup>, the same Homam Abdul Khaleq succeeded in 1992 Abdul Razzaq al-Hashemi, another person already mentioned above.

It is obvious that at this time the Iraqi authorities kept pursuing some ambition in military industrialization. Statements by Hussein Kamel after his flight to Jordan revealed the nature of Iraq's strategy, which consisted of concealing essential traces of the old programmes, notably certain documents and components<sup>46</sup>, for a *later* recovery once the embargo would be lifted. It became clear that the UNSCOM inspectors had often been fooled by concealment actions. On the other hand, these informations proved that the programmes were still existing and thus provoked much more "aggressive" disarmament operations. UNSCOM drafted an extremely precise inventory of the Iraqi armament. Persisting tensions between UNSCOM and the Iraqi authorities concerned hardly more than details<sup>47</sup> before the inspectors' departure in 1998.

Hussein Kamel's treason was certainly a hard blow for the regime and its ambitions related to military industrialization, but it didn't deal the final blow to it. All speculations remained possible, in as much as Hussein Kamel's revelations helped to demonstrate and uncover Saddam Hussein's duplicity. If he had concealed so much from the UN inspectors during almost five years, couldn't he still hide a lot more, not to say a whole secret industry? After the departure of UNSCOM in 1998, a lot of alarming statements even suggested an imminent nuclear breakthrough, – a very complex field however. Only few arguments seemed permissible in relation to this idea, in as much as, to quote a truism by Donald Rumsfeld, "we don't know what we don't know"<sup>48</sup>.

At least one particularly worrying thing could be mentioned... and this is the motivation for this article. It concerns the increasing scattering of an irreplaceable staff all through the 1990s, that was kept busy with duties other than weapons *production*. The above mentioned "majors" had established themselves at a time where military industrialization was simply an industry. As regards the components that are necessary for such an industry, from then onwards the facilities were precarious, education weak, foreign know-how limited or absent, supply difficult, etc. Above all, to complete the image of a sector in total disintegration, the pool of "skilled staff" seemed to have grabbed new posts.

At the top of the Military Industrialization Organization for instance primarily politicians appeared. From January 1996 until March 1997 this was Dheif Abdul Majid Ahmed, originating from Tikrit, then Abdul Tawab Abdallah al-Moula Houweish, who very likely was a relative of Saddam Hussein<sup>49</sup>. The assistant of the latter was nobody else than General Mezahem Saab al-Hassan Mohammed al-Nasseri, the former commander of the air force, Saddam's Fedayin and of a detachment of the presidential guard (*al-Himaya*) and finally air defence commander in 2003.

These political appointments did not reflect, as one might easily presume, a purge among the former senior staff in this sector, nor a crisis of confidence. All of Hussein Kamel's closest collaborators from the glorious days of military industrialization have survived his defection, which had however wreaked havoc on the security apparatus and even on Saddam Hussein's clan. Dr Ahmed Mourtadha Ahmed Khalil al-Hadithi, who was head of the technical office of Hussein Kamel's cabinet at the end of the 1980s and on a high level

involved in the biological programme thus preserved the portfolio of transport and telecommunications for ten years, from 1993 to 2003.

In general the old staff served as a pool of competences whose excellence Saddam Hussein had apparently fully recognized. Some of them were involved in realizing big projects that had priority in the eyes of the regime. This was notably the case with Nizar Joum'a Ali al-Qasir, the former deputy director of the Military Industrialization Organization, who was in charge of digging the "third river", a channel to drain marshes. Others were posted to the Iraqi diplomatic service, a "diplomacy" that often took the shape of shady business deals. Amer al-Saadi was the Iraqi ambassador in Russia at the end of the 1990s. He was replaced by Dr Muzher Nu'man Wahib al-Douri, another ballistics expert, former head of cabinet of vice-president Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri. Among his other diplomatic posts Tajikistan and the Ukraine should be mentioned. Dheif Abdul Majid for his part was sent on mission to Belarus.

The concept of a "staff pool" is characteristic for the Iraqi presidency. A lot of more or less formally appointed "presidential advisers" revolved around Saddam Hussein. At the end of the 1990s almost all majors of armament shared this ambiguous status. No doubt this nebulous concept corresponded to a preference of Saddam Hussein, inclined to exercise power of tribal inspiration. But it also suggested a progressive destruction of the arms industry which could after all, in order to correspond to western fantasies of a tyrant's apocalyptic power, only be a modern, rationalized, bureaucratic production sector at an *industrial* level<sup>50</sup>. But Jaafar Dhia Jaafar, who headed in his best times a talented team of 8000 staff<sup>51</sup>, seemed to have ten years later only his voice left, when he was "adviser" without laboratories nor staff, "negotiator" and "spokesman", limited to defy UNSCOM more by words than by actions<sup>52</sup>.

Should we draw the conclusion that Iraq had given up its ambitions, meaning that it did not represent "a threat for its neighbours and for the peace in the world"? Here we get back to the essential question of the ongoing controversy. Approaching the Iraqi military industrialization by its human resources allows at least to assert that the answer to this question does exist. Nowadays it is possible not only to know the "dimension"<sup>53</sup>, but all details of the illicit programmes. Actually you just have to look at the list of the Iraqi persons in question.

Abdul Hamid Hmoud al-Khattab al-Nasseri, Saddam Hussein's personal secretary, was generally presented, also in the official statements of countries supporting the war, as the mastermind of the concealment operations. Arresting him in Tikrit on 17 June, could not help to delay the revelation of the regime's darkest secrets. By the way, the capture of Saddam Hussein himself would not add anything to the informations given by his right hand, who was reknown for filtering all contacts with the President and isolating him from his environment.

Certainly, Hussein Kamel is dead, executed by his own family upon his inexplicable return to Bagdad in 1996. On the other hand, his first deputy minister, Amer al-Saadi, surrendered on 12 April. Jaafar Dhia Jaafar followed his example the day after. Amer Rashid was captured the 28th of the same month. The day before, General Hossam Mohammed Amin al-Yassin al-Tikriti, head of the national surveillance directorate in charge of inspection and disarmament matters, fell into the trap of the occupying forces. Abdul Tawab Houweish, who was still in charge of military industrialization, was added to this list on May 2.

Why didn't the arrests of Houda Saleh Mehdi Ammash (9 May) who was on the sinister card–game "Wanted" described as expert in bacteriological weapons, of Homam Abdul Khaleq Abdul Ghafour (19 April), the former IAEC director who had allegedly been appointed minister in order to protect him from UNSCOM inquiries<sup>54</sup>, and of Qa'ed Hussein al–Awadi (9 June), qualified as "member of the army corps in charge of chemical armament"<sup>55</sup>, bear fruit? The detention of some staff of the security apparatus still needs to be mentioned, among them those who most likely knew the secrets of the regime, such as Mezahem Saab, Kamal Moustafa Abdallah Sultan and his brother Jamal, Barzan Razzouqi Souleiman al–Majid<sup>56</sup>, etc.

Hence the controversy turns naturally to the following question: hasn't the opacity of the Iraqi armament dossier above all become, since the fall of the regime effect and indicator of a serious transparency problem on the American side?

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<sup>1</sup> See Khidhir Hamza. "Inside Saddam's Secret Nuclear Program", *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, September–October 1998. Even though this source is useful for certain historical details, Khidhir Abdul Abbas Hamza has knowingly exaggerated since 1998 the state of progress of the Iraqi nuclear programme. Compare Seymour M. Hersh. "Selective intelligence", *The New Yorker*, 12 May 2003. For an opposite point of view to that Khidhir Hamza developed in recent years, see the interview with Imad Khadduri, another Iraqi defector, in *The Toronto Star*, 6 February 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Khidhir Hamza. op.cit.

<sup>3</sup> At this point the history of the US policy towards the Iraq under sanctions should be recalled. It seems to be clear that the relative failure of the UN inspections and their maintenance resulting from 13 years of embargo amounted only to bad faith on the Iraqi side. Don't we forget a little too quickly how Washington made use of the sanction committee and the UN Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament (UNSCOM), who cynically used it as an instrument of provocation? One can refer, for example, to the controversy from September and October 1998 on the commission's collaboration with the Israeli intelligence services, which was for Iraq one reason to break off relations with UNSCOM. For a neutral presentation of the historical context, see Ragheda Dergham. "Iraq's Frustration Could Prompt it to Overplay its Hand", *Mideast Mirror*, 4 September 1998.

<sup>4</sup> In what exactly, technically speaking, did this regime pose a danger for its neighbours or, more generally, "for the peace in the world"? Its evidently harmful nature made it delicate prior to the war to ask this question: in fact, in a morally connotated debate this kind of question seemed to be either a sign of woeful naivety or the proof of hopeless bad faith. Thus the question that the debate was supposed to raise simply eluded.

<sup>5</sup> This is another example of disinformation practised by the US administration in relation to the Iraq dossier. In recent statements Paul Bremer accused notably Saddam Hussein of "having used much of the oil–for–food money to build projects like his Olympic stadium" ([www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030515-0186.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030515-0186.html)). In reality this money was put on an escrow account in New York and its use was subject to double control – of the sanction committee, whose approval was required for any purchase, and of UNMOVIC, the commission charged with verifying on–site the programme implementation. All UNMOVIC reports indicated a satisfying cooperation of the Iraqi authorities. Under US pressure and with view to the risk of "civil and military dual use" the sanction committee refused at this time trivial contracts such as outlet pipes or bulls for the genetic renewal of the bovine park...

<sup>6</sup> Paradoxically the credibility of documents on this matter drafted by the American and British administrations is undermined by some mistakes and manipulations, even though sufficiently convincing subject–related studies have already existed. See for instance Jonathan B. Tucker. "Monitoring and Verification in a Noncooperative Environment: Lessons from the U.N. Experience in Iraq", *The Nonproliferation Review*. Spring–Autumn 1996. Also the comprehensive report presented by UNSCOM by the end of 1998 should be cited; despite the suspect integrity of the Special Commission at that time the relevance of this report cannot be denied [cns.miiis.edu/research/iraqucreport/dis\\_acti.htm](http://cns.miiis.edu/research/iraqucreport/dis_acti.htm).

<sup>7</sup> This incidentally is the title of a book that refers to almost 15 years of Saddam Hussein's regime. Samir al–Khalil. *La machine infernale. Politique de l'Irak moderne*. Paris : Jean–Claude Lattès, 1991.

- <sup>8</sup> This complex programme was the subject of numerous descriptions and analyses, all with an implicit moral approach. They can be grouped in three different categories. The first one reveals the Iraqi supply channels during the 1980s, calling today's supporters of Iraq's disarmament their former suppliers. The second one resumes studies on the final scope of this ambitious programme. More specifically, could the nuclear weapons Saddam Hussein was longing for prior to the Gulf war have helped him to establish a sort of cold war balance with Israel or to support a more aggressive policy? The third category actually responds to this question : as a proof of Saddam Hussein's fundamentally bad intentions it documents the Iraqi efforts throughout the 1990s to thwart the inspection system and to conceal some of its weapons. The fact that Hans Blix' remarkable work prior to the war of 2003 has been politicized shows also the nearly unsurmountable difficulties of a less emotional approach.
- <sup>9</sup> The biographical data given throughout this article are taken from a number of sources (oral and written ones), too many to cite them systematically. In any way, they are just an *indication*. They aim to give a better understanding of the sector's organizational structure rather than a series of precise biographies, which would be an unfeasible objective given the current knowledge about the arms industry.
- <sup>10</sup> According to Kenneth R. Timmerman. *Le lobby de la mort. Comment l'Occident a armé l'Irak*. Paris : Calman Levy, 1991. Here again, this source is useful for certain details but should be read with caution. Kenneth Timmerman is, like Richard Perle and James Woolsey, member of the advisory board of the "Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs", a think-tank particularly favouring a tough US policy toward Iraq.
- <sup>11</sup> According to Amatzia Baram. "La 'maison' de Saddam Hussein" in Bonte, Pierre et al. (dir.). *Emirs et présidents. Figures de la parenté et du politique dans le monde arabe*. Paris : CNRS Editions, 2001.
- <sup>12</sup> Qusay, Saddam Hussein's son and protégé of his maternal uncle Adnan Kheirallah, seems to have started his career at his uncle's death, next to Hussein Kamel, with whom he shared some privileges since the late 1980s.
- <sup>13</sup> This amount corresponds to Iraq's annual oil revenues before the barrel price increased in 1973. Pierre-Jean Luizard. "L'improbable démocratie en Irak, le piège de l'Etat Nation", *Egypte-Monde Arabe*, 1990.
- <sup>14</sup> See the work of the UN scandal inspector Scott Ritter. *Endgame: Solving the Iraqi Problem Once and for All*. New York : Simon and Schuster, 1999.
- <sup>15</sup> This member of the Beigat tribe is an atypical character among Saddam Hussein's relatives. He is the son-in-law of Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr (from 1968 to 1979 president of the Republic of Iraq); two of his brothers were among the most famous commanders of the Iraqi army during the war against Iran, Taher et Maher Abdul Rashid (whose daughter was married to Qusay). His profile as technician is even more surprising. A management graduate from Texas University, he had a really meritorious career in the industrial sector. As president of the Federation of Iraqi industries, this accomplished technocrat was until recently (until February 1999) one of the outstanding personalities in this field.
- <sup>16</sup> See the UNSCOM reports on the website of the Special Commission [www.un.org/Depts/unscom](http://www.un.org/Depts/unscom) or the Monterey Institute of International Studies [www.cns.miis.edu](http://www.cns.miis.edu)
- <sup>17</sup> See Amatzia Baram. "An Analysis of Iraqi WMD Strategy", *The Nonproliferation Review*, Summer 2001.
- <sup>18</sup> At this time the so-called operation "Anfal" took place, headed by Saddam Hussein's cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid, nicknamed since Chemical Ali or Insecticide Ali. See Human Rights Watch/Middle East Watch. *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign Against the Kurds*. New York : Human Rights Watch, 1993.
- <sup>19</sup> The example of Halabja, a Kurdish village close to the Iranian border, which was gassed in March 1988, has for the US administration become the paradigm of the regime's brutality (see in particular the release of the State Department dated 13 March 2003, "Saddam's Chemical Weapons Campaign: Halabja, March 16, 1988"). At the moment of the tragic happenings though, the US position on the highly ambiguous gas attacks was much more distinctive, they had been attributed to Iran by certain contemporary analysts. See Stephen C. Pelletière. "A War Crime or an Act of War?", *The New York Times*, 31 January 2001. Anthony Arove. "Convenient and not so Convenient Massacres", *Znet Daily Commentaries*, 28 March 2002. Adel Darwish. "Halabja : whom does the truth hurt?", *openDemocracy*, 17 March 2003. Finally, on the specific role of ... Donald Rumsfeld, see Tim Reid. "How US Helped Iraq Build Deadly Arsenal", *The Times*, 31 December 2002.
- <sup>20</sup> Interviews with an engineer working on this site in the 1980s, held in 2002 in Baghdad.
- <sup>21</sup> Interviews with former staff in military industrialization, held in Iraq at different dates.
- <sup>22</sup> Interviews in Iraq, held in 1999.
- <sup>23</sup> Idem. Other techniques of this kind have been classified by Jonathan B. Tucker. op. cit.

- 24 Scott Ritter. op. cit.
- 25 Subsequently, the Special Security was involved, together with the Special Republican Guard, in the most sensitive missions relating to the regime's concealment strategy since 1991. This activity was not unknown to the Iraqi people, who assisted for instance special agents in civilian clothes with their descent above public schools, which they appropriated for a couple of days to store boxes full of records which the regime wanted to hide. Actually the whole system was based on isolation of the weapons inspectors – among others representatives of the international community –, who were closely supervised and cut off from any authentic contact with the population. UNSCOM has finally pointed out the key role of the Special Security in an annex to its last report, released beginning of 1999: "UNSCOM's Comprehensive Review: Actions by Iraq to Obstruct Disarmament" [cns.miis.edu/research/iraq/ucreport/dis\\_acti.htm](http://cns.miis.edu/research/iraq/ucreport/dis_acti.htm) .
- 26 Khidhir Hamza. op.cit.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Jonathan B. Tucker. op. cit. This cooperation served the Iraqi well from 1991 onwards. Tim Weiner. "Iraq Uses Techniques in Spying Against its Former Tutor, the US", *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 5 February 1991. Satellite images that had been provided to Iraq by the United States, during the war against Iran Iraq's ally, helped particularly to spot the concentrations of the Iranian troops, against whom Iraq notoriously used chemical weapons.
- 29 For a survey of these issues see Amatzia Baram. "The Iraqi Armed Forces and Security Apparatus", *Journal of Conflict, Security and Development*. Spring 2001. David Baran. "L'adversaire irakien", *Politique étrangère*, April–June 2003.
- 30 The archetype of this elite was born in the countryside into a farmer or merchant family; very young he joined the Ba'ath party, whose ranks he climbed with great commitment resulting in arrests at the time of clandestine militant movements and "meritoriously", which means a slow and hard-earned promotion in the hierarchy. For the only existing biographical work on the people in power during the 1980s, see Amatzia Baram. "The Ruling Political Elite in Ba'ath Iraq", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, September 1989.
- 31 The microbiologist Houda Saleh Mehdi Ammash, who holds a doctor's degree in medicine from Missouri University, can be cited as a good counter-example. In charge of international relations at the health ministry, she established herself as the regime's voice by publishing a number of scientific papers on the consequences of the embargo (compare Anthony Arnove (dir.). *L'Irak assiégé. Les conséquences mortelles de la guerre des sanctions*. Paris : Parangon, 2003). Thanks to her key role within the Women's Federation, she climbed to the top of the party at Saddam University. In May 2001, she became the first woman to join the Ba'ath command, completing her professional change from research to pure politics.
- 32 On the UNSCOM interrogations she had to undergo, see *Le Figaro* from 26 February 1998.
- 33 Amnesty International. *Irak : nouveau constat de violations des droits de l'homme (réponse des autorités et commentaires)*. Paris : EFAI, 1983. This report also mentions the arrest of Hussein al-Shahristani, another scientist and scientific adviser to the IAEC. He left prison only eleven years later, under the cover of the events of 1991. After becoming president of the "Iraqi Refugee Aid Council" in London, he offered himself before the war as a significant source of information about the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. According to him, this arsenal had been concealed in a huge complex of underground tunnels (see the article "Saddam's Deadly Subway Scheming" of 21 February 2003 on CBS News.com). By the way, Donald Rumsfeld had already confirmed this argument in December 2002. "They've got enormous miles and miles and miles of underground tunneling. [...] I don't know how inspectors on the surface of the Earth can even know what's going on in the underground facilities" (quoted in an Associated Press news story dated 9 April 2003). However, one could legitimately have some doubts about Hussein al-Shahristani's testimony, who is known for having lost his mind during his long years of solitary confinement (interviews with a former staff member in the nuclear sector, held in Iraq beginning of 2003) ...
- 34 The case of the Iran–Iraq war is revealing in this respect. See particularly Marine Corps Historical Publication. *Lessons Learned: Iran–Iraq War*. December 1990.
- 35 Kenneth R. Timmerman. op.cit. Alan Friedman. *Spider's Web: The Secret History of How the White House Illegally Armed Iraq*. New York : Bantam Books, 1993. Peter Mantius. *Shell Game: A Story of Banking, Spies, Lies, Politics and the Arming of Saddam Hussein*. New York : St. Martin's Press, 1995.
- 36 Kenneth R. Timmerman mentions a "Naguib Jenaab Thanoon", but this is simply the same person. By the way, the often inaccurate transcription of Arabic names is a recurrent problem in any biographical research. Even the rule of transcription applied here is approximative. It contents itself with providing phonetic indications accessible to both,

Arabists and readers who are not familiar with Arabic.

- 37 Why have these weapons never been used? Twelve years later, this question remains just as much disputed. Jonathan B. Tucker draws an inventory of circumstantial evidence indicating a strategic use of war gas by the Iraqi during the war, while he points out that all public reports and statements of the US administration have clearly denied such a use of chemical weapons. What is the conclusion? Jonathan B. Tucker. "Evidence Iraq Used Chemical Weapons During the 1991 Persian Gulf War", *The Nonproliferation Review*. Spring–Summer 1997. Amatzia Baram himself refers to statements of Hussein Kamel which are not included in the records of his UNSCOM interrogation, but have allegedly been revealed to him by UN inspectors kept anonymous. "According to General Kamil's account, Saddam declared that if contact with him was severed (SSO units possessing non-conventional warheads were based deep in the deserts of western Iraq), and if SSO officers believed that communications had been broken because of a nuclear attack on Baghdad, they should mate the chemical and biological warheads in their custody with missiles in the possession of the regular missile force and launch them against Israel". Amatzia Baram. "An Analysis of Iraqi WMD Strategy", *The Nonproliferation Review*, Summer 2001. As a result, another question is raised. Why does this normally extremely rigid author not mention the contrasting statements included in the records, the credibility of which is beyond question? "During the Gulf War, there was no intention to use chemical weapons as the Allied force was overwhelming. [...] They realised that if chemical weapons were used, retaliation would be nuclear. [...] In the nuclear area, there were no weapons. Missile and chemical weapons were real weapons. Our main worry was Iran and they were against them."
- 38 For details see Jonathan B. Tucker. "Monitoring and Verification in a Noncooperative Environment: Lessons from the U.N. Experience in Iraq", *The Nonproliferation Review*. Spring–Autumn 1996.
- 39 The contemporary press contains countless traces of this frenetic traffic of senior officials. On the visits/inspections (*tefaqqudat*) of Taha Yassin Ramadhan, Mizban Khudher Hadi and Hussein Kamel in the southern governorates, see for example al-Joumhouriya from 12 March 1991. Saddam Hussein himself has increased his meetings with ministerial officials, tribal chiefs, religious dignitaries, Ba'ath militants and also high representatives of Kurdish parties – like Jalaladdin al-Talabani (Babel, 25 April 1991) et Mas'oud al-Barzani (al-Joumhouriya, 1 December 1991).
- 40 The Shi'ite branch in question is Albou 'Alwan, who is denied by the rest of this primarily Sunnite tribe, related to the Douleim and living in the vicinity of Ramadi and Falludja. In 1991, the chief of the Albou Alwan de Mahwil, Mohammed Jawad 'Eneifes, reportedly raised a dam in Mahawil, just between the rebel town Hilla and the centre of power in Baghdad, and took prisoners in huge numbers who allegedly were buried on-site – alive – in mass graves. As a sign of gratitude for his contribution to the repression, Saddam Hussein allegedly offered him apart from money and weapons his private car. During the 1990, the tribe became a sort of informal entity parallel to the security in the region. Many of its members operated also in the official security bodies of Hilla. Mohammed Jawad 'Eneifes was detained beginning of May 2003 and surrendered to the occupying forces by the self-proclaimed government.
- 41 This is mentioned in Faleh Abdul Jabar. "Le régime irakien déchiré par les luttes de clans". *Manière de Voir*. March–April 1998.
- 42 Even a museum has been dedicated to this reconstruction. It contained mainly models of the major buildings destroyed by the bombings, following the principle before/after. It should be mentioned that all these buildings have been reconstructed *identically*, even though new, more modern or more functional constructions could have succeeded.
- 43 The shelter of al-Ameriya is one of the few sites that have been destroyed in 1991 and not been rebuilt as a whole. On the contrary, it has been preserved memorial-like. In the night of 13 February 1991, two missiles are said to have successively hit the shelter's weak point, the first one opening a ventilation pipe for the second by growing bigger. The explosion in the middle of the bunker has literally pulverized the bodies, while figures have been projected on the walls still bearing outlines of phantoms. The regime has integrated since the commemoration of this drama into its denunciation of the American barbarism : thus the military operations of 1991 should have had as target "to destroy the infrastructure in Iraq, residential areas, hospitals and *even the shelters*, which reflects the assailants' savagery" (al-Thawra from 18 January 2000).
- 44 On this sensational defection see Amatzia Baram. "Turmoil in Baghdad: the Regime's n°2 Defects", *Middle East Quarterly*, May–June 1995.
- 45 Until then, almost the totality of postgraduate studies had been attended abroad. Since 1991, the Iraqi universities have had to provide postgraduates in a broad variety of subjects, however without really bringing relief. The most competent

teachers often decided to emigrate. Libraries had almost no recent acquisitions added to their stock dating back to the 1980s. Briefly, it is illusory to believe that the human resources necessary for resuming the military industrialization programmes continued on a large scale, like the US administration claimed. Many engineers of this sector worked as taxi drivers all through the 1990s, while forgetting step by step their knowledge and know-how that would have needed a certain maintenance. But they wouldn't have been able to do so without massive help from abroad. Moreover, the lousy salaries offered to military industrialization staff since 1991 (150 000 DI in 2002, which is 75\$, for an assistant holding a university degree for example) showed in which direction the sector had developed since the 1980s.

- <sup>46</sup> As regards the stocks of residual weapons, Hussein Kamel's statements in the course of his interrogation by a UNSCOM team on 22 August 1995 in Jordan, were unambiguous. "All chemical weapons were destroyed. I ordered destruction of all chemical weapons. All weapons – biological, chemical, missiles, nuclear were destroyed". In reaction to a UN inspector's question on the specific role UNSCOM played in these destructions, he relativized the Iraqi capacities to escape from surveillance. "You should not underestimate yourself. You are very effective in Iraq". All this has hardly prevented the supporters of a new war from taking the affair Hussein Kamel as a proof of the incurable inefficiency of the inspection system. See the statements of Tony Blair and George W. Bush, from 25 February 2003 and 7 October 2002 respectively.
- <sup>47</sup> The last UNSCOM report is quite direct. "As has been reported to the Council, over the years, and as has been widely recognized, notwithstanding the very considerable obstacles placed by Iraq in the way of the Commission's work, a great deal has been achieved in: verifying Iraq's frequently revised declarations; accounting for its proscribed weapons capabilities; and in destroying, removing or rendering harmless substantial portions of that capability". Further down, the report leaves no doubt about Hussein Kamel's fundamental contribution to this result [cis.miis.edu/research/iraq/ucreport/dis\\_intr.htm](http://cis.miis.edu/research/iraq/ucreport/dis_intr.htm).
- <sup>48</sup> Quoted by Seymour H. Hersh. op. cit.
- <sup>49</sup> Dheif Abdul Majid had assisted so far Amer Rashid at the top of the Military Industrialization Organization. At this post he most likely played the role of a political superintendent, which was common for assistants of senior officials in sensitive sectors. Although Abdul Tawab Houweish had occupied the post of minister of heavy industry prior to the creation of the super-ministry of armament in 1988, he did not have any longer the profile of a competent technician.
- <sup>50</sup> In this respect, the discourse of the US administration has always been contradictory. Already in 1998, the day after the operation "Desert Fox", president Bill Clinton declared to have eradicated the Iraqi armament capacities. "Our objectives in this military action were clear: to degrade Saddam's weapons of mass destruction program and related delivery systems, as well as his capacity to attack his neighbors. [...] I am confident we have achieved our mission". On the one hand, this infrastructure was easily enough to become military targets. On the other hand, they seem not to have been easily enough identifiable, otherwise the UN inspectors could have fulfilled their disarmament mission.
- <sup>51</sup> Interview with a former staff member of the deputy minister, held in 2001.
- <sup>52</sup> In 1995, his statements seemed to counteract the deeply covert nature of the Iraqi armament programmes: "you can bomb our buildings and destroy our technology, but you will never get them out of our minds".
- <sup>53</sup> Expression by George W. Bush in his radio address from 21 June 2003.
- <sup>54</sup> "Iraq Press" story from 21 April 2001.
- <sup>55</sup> AFP news story from 10 June 2003.
- <sup>56</sup> To resituate these figures, see David Baran. "L'état-major de Saddam Hussein", *Point de vue*, IFRI, April 2003.

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Published 2003–09–30

Original in French

Translation by Irmgard Anglmayer

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