Culture of Command & Control of Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East -Iraq

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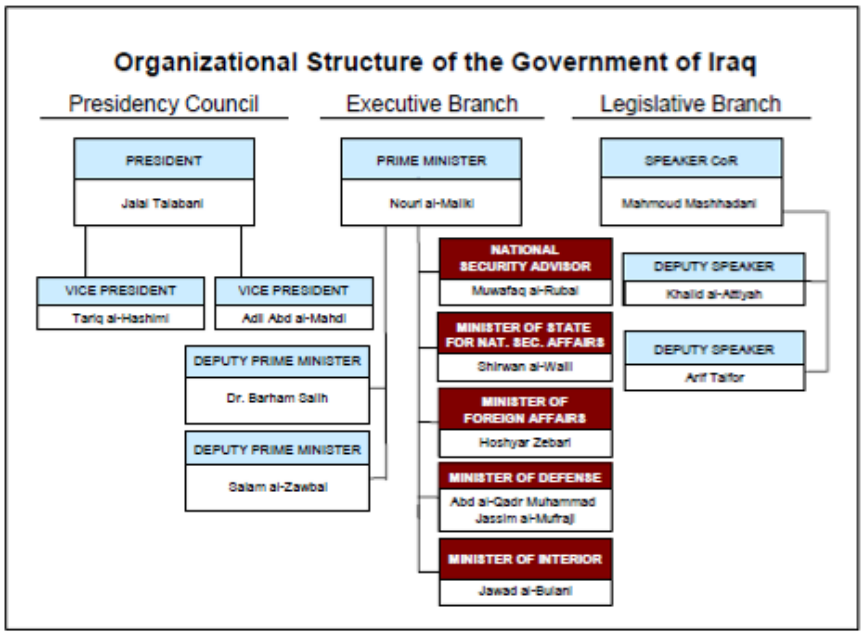
Executive Summary

Since the American invasion in 2003, the old Iraqi political and military establishment has been dismantled and a new establishment constructed under the guidance of the United States. While command and control systems of the past used to be very centralized and authoritarian under Saddam Hussein (the President of the Iraqi republic from 1979 till 2003), who used to make major decisions by himself, the political system in the new Iraq is much less centralized.

Factors which will influence command and control of nuclear weapons in Iraq will include: the process of building the political and military establishments; the fragility of the political and military situation; and the future political orientation of Iraq (will Iraq be a liberal pro-Western or pro-Iranian state? Will it remain a unified state or disintegrate?). At this point in time, were the Iraqi leadership to have to deal with building a command and control paradigm for nuclear weapons, it would have to take into account the lack of reliability and loyalty to the regime, assume a high risk of unauthorized use by radical (Shiite or Sunni) elements inside the regime, and of penetration of foreign elements into the system to disrupt it or steal materials.

Decision-Making and Command and Control in the New Iraq

The new political system in Iraq is established on formal democratic foundations. Iraq has been defined under the new Constitution of 2005 as a democratic federal republic with a parliamentary system. The President is mainly a representative figure, while the most influential figure in decision-making in Iraqi politics is the Prime Minister, especially in matters concerning security.[1] The Prime Minister is the head of the country's executive authority and perhaps most significantly the Commander of the Armed Forces.



The Organizational Structure of the Government of Iraq[2]

[1] http://www.wna-news.com/inanews/news.php?item.25369.
Currently, the Presidency Council of Iraq, made up by the President (Jalal Talabani) and two vice presidents (the Sunni Arab Tariq al-Hashimi and the Shiite 'Adil 'Abd al-Mahdi), functions in the role of the President of Iraq.

[2] http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/Security-Stabilty-ReportAug29r1.pdf , p. 6.

The current Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki is considered a pragmatic leader (unlike the impulsive, aggressive and violent Saddam), and may be expected to deal with an issue as important as nuclear weapons with appropriate gravity. As the Prime Minister is also the commander of the Armed Forces, he is in charge – *de jure* and *de facto* – of defense and security affairs and he would have to take the dominant role in control of nuclear weapons. In practice, al-Maliki's personal status is improving, as the security situation improves and a growing portion of the Iraqi people accepts him as a legitimate leader. However, al-Maliki's authority is not taken for granted, neither by his partners to the coalition, nor by the army generals[3] or the general public.[4] Hence, al-Maliki tends to rely on close cooperation with his two deputies (see below), with the President and with the Minister of Defense. It stands to reason that this group will also be part of the collective decision-making in regards to nuclear weapons.

Other key elements that may have a role in the nuclear chain of command include the Minister of Interior and the Ministry of National Security Affairs, the authorities of which are still under discussion in the Parliament. This is a relatively small Ministry, in charge currently of collection of information on terrorists, fighting weapons trafficking, counter-espionage and counter-infiltration and securing the country's vital installations. This ministry could play a role in the security of nuclear installations. Being a small body, it may be more suitable for some of the more sensitive tasks related to the nuclear weapons program.[5]

The political culture in Iraq today accords to Members of Parliament a role similar to that of Western democracies. Thus, one may expect that the procedures for command and control of nuclear weapons would be worked out in conjunction with bodies such as the parliamentary Foreign and Security Affairs Committee or an appropriate special sub-committee.

The New Iraqi Army

The Iraqi army would probably be responsible for operating nuclear weapons as well as responsible for the delivery systems, as it is the only organ in the country which is actually capable of taking on this mission. Even if the regime opts for establishment of a separate body for control of the nuclear arsenal, such a body would have to cooperate with the army if and since the delivery systems of the conventional and non-conventional weapons in the case of Iraq would be the same (surface-to-surface missiles [SSMs] capable of delivering either a conventional or weapons of mass destruction [WMD], including nuclear, warhead – as was the case in Saddam's time; however it might be envisaged that for nuclear weapons a designated unit would be formed).

Following the American invasion of Iraq, the Iraqi army and the Republican Guard disintegrated and some of their members – Sunni Arabs for the most part - joined the insurgency, especially al-Qa'ida.[6] Since 2004, American forces have assisted the new Iraqi government in building a new Iraqi army, which has grown stronger over time.[7] However, it is still primarily an internal security force and is not prepared to deal with foreign challenges or threats, such as might emanate from Turkey or Iran.

The new Iraqi army is formally non-tribal and non-sectarian. However, it reflects the composition of Iraqi society: the units are ethnically and sect-wise integrated, most of the soldiers and officers are Shiites (around 60%, pretty much the same as their share in the Iraqi population), while Sunni Arabs

[3] That situation was strongly manifested in 2007, when a few Generals of the Iraqi army, including the Chief of Staff, decided to announce their resignation, arguing that the Prime Minister interferes too much in their professional work.
[4] Most of al-Maliki's supporters come from his community, i.e. the Shiite community, while Sunni Arabs and Kurds seem to accept his authority in different levels. Furthermore, many of his Shiite supporters do not take his authority for granted.
[5] http://nahrain.com/d/law/wizaratamn.html.
[6] Most of the officers in the old Iraqi army were Sunnis, while most of the soldiers were Shiites.
[7] http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/09/the_iraqi_counter_te.php.

and Kurds constitute around 20% each. Notwithstanding, the Kurds continue to maintain their separate military force – the Peshmerga, which controls the Kurdish areas in Iraq. The estimated order of battle (ORBAT) of the Peshmerga is around 200,000, i.e. as large as the Iraqi army. Until now only around 30,000 Kurdish Peshmerga members have joined the Iraqi army.[8]

The Chief of Staff is the commander of the Iraqi Armed Forces, and he answers directly to the Minister of Defense, who is subordinate to the Prime Minister (the Commander of the Armed Forces). The army *per se* is not directly involved in political decisions; the Iraqi Minister of Defense is currently doing his best to distance the army from politics, and has even recently issued orders to limit military intervention in politics. Though Iraqi society tends to accept authority, the history of modern Iraq has been witness to numerous military coups.

The new Iraqi army has not yet developed its own paradigms of command and control, military planning, standard operating procedures (SOPs) and delegation of authority, and relies primarily on the doctrine it has received from its American mentors. Authentication of commands in the Iraqi army is often made personally as well as by military communication systems. However, it is notable that there is a shortage of the latter and the military communications infrastructure is unsatisfactory. At first, the Iraqi army chose civil communication equipment as it is much cheaper than military communication equipment, but the civil equipment failed in the field. The need for more durable systems prompted the Iraqi army to begin discussions about building a new communications infrastructure for the army. In addition, as mistrust in Iraqi society is widespread, a direct order delivered personally by an individual known to be a credible messenger could, probably, be considered preferable. These problems, which already beset the Iraqi army, will inevitably become considerably more crucial when the Iraqi army will have to control and manage a future nuclear weapons arsenal.

Currently, another problem plaguing the Iraqi army is the weakness of the intelligence system, which is highly dependent on US intelligence. Although further improvement can be anticipated, it is too early to predict who in the military intelligence would affect decision-making. Generally, when intelligence is weak, decision-makers may not see the whole picture, and may therefore be more inclined to miscalculate or to over-react. The situation necessitates awareness by the decision-makers of the problem. This may prompt the Prime Minister to create an alternative intelligence body directed by him, and to focus on collecting and analyzing nuclear threats and signals.

The Influence of Communalism on Command and Control

As ethnic and sectarian loyalties are still strong in the Iraqi society, the political leadership creates ethnic and sectarian balances in the political, military and bureaucratic sectors in order to establish legitimacy. Hence, a prime concern of the regime in regards to building a command and control structure will be the conflict between the multi-sectarian pluralism of the new Iraq, which entails involving all parts of the population in the units designated to deal with nuclear weapons, on one hand, and the fear of disloyalty and insubordination on the part of members of the most important minorities (Sunnis, Kurds) on the other hand.

[8] http://ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2010/1/independentstate3441.htm .
http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/Iraqi-Security-Forces-Order-of-Battle-2010-0203-06217/ .
There are different estimations about the number of Peshmerga. The number of 200,000 is one of the highest estimations, but seems to be quite trustful. In any case there are at least a few tens of thousands of them, and in a case of instability, the Kurdish people may join it massively.

The Iraqi nation-building process provides representation of the three main communities not only at the leadership level but at the operational levels as well. This is the basis of the new Iraq and applies to all areas of strategic importance. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Shiite community will continue to be the dominant force in the leadership. The current Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki is Shiite, and it seems that the Shiites will continue to occupy the Premiership in the future. The Prime Minister has two deputies, one Kurdish (Ibrahim Salih), and the other Sunni-Arab (Salam al-Zawba'i), who the Prime Minister is obliged to co-opt into strategic issues. These deputies, along with the President and the Minister of Defense, may well fill a role of authenticators of the Prime Minister's orders in a nuclear crisis. The sectarian balance is evident as well in the fact that the current Minister of Defense, 'Abd al-Qadir al-Mufraji, like his predecessor, Sa'dun al-Dulaymi, is Sunni. This too will probably prevent a situation that the entire chain of command over the Iraqi nuclear weapons would be Shiite. In this sense, a democratic nuclear weapons armed Iraq would retain some basic essential elements of a "checks and balances" system based on the need to sustain the ethnic solidarity and cohesion of the state. What a different, non-democratic Iraq, would do is a different matter, of course, much depending on the form that it would take in the wake of a final and complete US withdrawal (not just combat troops) from Iraq.

The main fear of military insubordination is linked to communal identity. In the early days of the new Iraq, problems of ethnic-based insubordination have arisen (most notably during the fighting in Falluja in 2004-2005, when Sunni-Arab Iraqi soldiers refused to fight against their Sunni-Arab brothers). Kurdish soldiers may refuse to fight their Kurdish brethren, and Shiites might refuse to fight against their Shiite brothers. These inhibitions could spill over into situations of nuclear crisis, when neighboring countries in which officers in the nuclear chain of command have religious (e.g., Shiite) sectarian, ethnic or even family links may be targeted.

Sunni and Kurdish leaders will probably demand that representatives of their communities be involved in the special units responsible for storage and securing the weapons, and in C3 (Command, Control and Communications) authorization procedures for launch of nuclear weapons. It also stands to reason that vetting of representatives of each community will be under control of that community – a system which could easily exacerbate the sense of insecurity regarding the ultimate loyalty of the forces in charge of the weapons. In this sense Iraq is very different from the more homogenous states on the list, like Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or Turkey, or even Syria.

Each community though may fear that in a situation which may involve nuclear escalation against a neighboring country which is ethnically/sect-wise affiliated with one of the Iraqi communities, members of that community may disobey orders. Thus, Shiite leaders may fear a Sunni "Fifth Column" in case of conflict with a Sunni country, or transfer of nuclear material to Sunni Jihadi elements, and Sunni leaders may also fear Shiite disloyalty in case of a conflict with Iran. In the future, the regime may be concerned by possible insubordination of Kurdish officers in case of a conflict with Turkey, and possible nuclear threats to neighboring Turkish Kurdistan. There may also be some concern that Kurdish elements would try to abscond with expertise, nuclear materials, and maybe nuclear weapons components, or more, in the interest of strengthening, or strategically protecting, autonomy in Kurdistan, and even for achieving Kurdish independence of a wider Kurdistan (extending from Iraq to Turkey, Iran, Syria and Armenia). These concerns may well bring each power center to attempt to create "backdoors" of access of their own to the operational forces responsible for the weapons.

The complex communal make-up of the regime would also probably create difficulties in defining certain neighboring countries as the permanent targets of such weapons. Hence, unlike the situation during the Cold War when each nuclear power could pass down orders to its forces for different contingencies and train them accordingly, the delicate relationship between Iraq and its neighbors and the lack of confidence in field security (i.e. maintaining secrecy) may preclude passing on operational plans to the lower levels. A wide spectrum of relevant scenarios can be envisaged in terms of potential regional (Iran, Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt – the latter three might be competing

with Iraq for an Arab dominant standing) and international rival (the US, Russia, Pakistan, India) states, or threats emanating from non-state actors like al-Qa'ida, or other elements not currently on the agenda (such as Libya); much will depend on the particulars of a future nuclear brinkmanship crisis scenario, the actors involved and the specifics of the conflict. All these are difficult to assess accurately today, but they definitely will impact on the problems raised so far regarding C3 of a future operational nuclear weapons option or capability

The Influence of Religion on Command and Control

Currently, 'Ali Sistani, the Shiite Grand Ayatullah of Iraq, has an important role in politics in the country. Though considered a "quietist" (a common appellation of those clerics who eschew clerical intervention in day-to-day state politics), he expresses from time to time his views on politics. He has played an important role in helping the new Iraqi regime to consolidate by issuing religious orders (*fatwa*s) which call for non-violence, loyalty to the state and the government, and participation in new political frameworks. As he enjoys strong influence among Shiites in Iraq, Shiite and even Sunni politicians would find difficulty maintaining any policy which Sistani opposes. Nuri al-Maliki, the Iraqi Prime Minister, would be likely to take into account Sistani's view in any issue, even though he does not need Sistani's permission to make decisions. The fact that he comes (like other Cabinet members and Coalition members) from a religious background may be of consequence in this regard. As a moderate cleric, Sistani probably opposes the use of nuclear weapons, but may be more understanding regarding possession of nuclear weapons for deterrence purposes alone. It is notable, however, that as his financial center of religious network is based in Qom, he is careful not to upset the Iranian authorities, and has so far declined to declare a *fatwa* concerning the production or use of nuclear weapons.[9]

If Sistani (or any other influential cleric of his status) were to issue a ruling against the use of nuclear weapons, it would almost certainly affect the reliability of forces in charge of such weapons. This is clear to the leadership and may influence the vetting of personnel in charge of the weapons. However, at the same time, the influence of clerics may dictate the appointment of officers loyal to them to various positions in the strategic weapons chain of command.[10]

Theoretically, religion may play a role in selecting the enemy. Although targeting a non-Muslim enemy may be considered more legitimate than targeting a Muslim enemy, in practice, however, Muslim states have waged devastating wars against each other, and such situations may recur when the countries involved have "graduated" to nuclear status. Escalatory situations, mutual suspicion and a lack of confidence on the part of each country's leadership in its ability to survive a first strike – could conceivably result in the use of the weapons, by either miscalculation or a deliberate pre-emptive first strike. In a poly-nuclear Middle East, where in addition to Iran there will be additional nuclear weapons states that have a very mixed bag of a record with respect to Iraq – Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and of course the US and Israel – the complexity of any potentially multilateral nuclear brinkmanship crisis situation, cannot but leave the observer with a sea of imponderables regarding the probable course of decisions, events and developments.

[9] http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=1055 .

[10] The Shiite Grand Ayatullah has great influence among the Shiite Iraqis and is considered "a source of emulation" (*marja' taqlid*) by many of them. As the Iraqi society is traditional, the role that Sistani cannot be underestimated.

Conclusions

Iraq is in a state of constant change. The fact that the American withdrawal has not yet been completed and the implications of that withdrawal are not clear yet – makes an analysis of C3I (Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence) in a potential future nuclear armed Iraq even more difficult. We cannot know what kind of Iraq will acquire such weapons, or will inherit them from a previous regime. Therefore the assessment here assumes a certain level of continuity; i.e. Iraq under the present Shiite leadership with a level of communal agreement.

The Iraqi leadership would probably view nuclear weapons as a necessity in order to maintain its status in an increasingly nuclear region. However, the weakness of the Iraqi regime for the foreseeable future would probably dictate a high level of caution in testing, brandishing as primarily weapons of deterrence to be used only *in extremis*. Unlike Saddam Hussein's regime and the incumbent leaderships in Iran and Turkey, the present regime of Iraq is not seeking regional hegemony, but rather internal and external stability. However, a different regime in the future could take another view. Nuclear capabilities may be used by an Iraqi government to consolidate its status internally by sending a message of a strong regional power.

Once Iraq acquires nuclear weapons, the regime will have to protect them against a number of domestic and foreign elements; al-Qa'ida and its affiliates, radical Shiite elements associated with Iran, rogue or renegade Sunni elements from within, and even separatist Kurds. In addition, security and protection of nuclear assets would be required against intrusion by foreign states, primarily Iran (but perhaps also Turkey, Egypt or Saudi Arabia, and of course the US and Israel), all of which would probably attempt to penetrate the nuclear control system. The C3 structure's integrity, reliability, security against unauthorized access, and dependability – would require an effort of challenging proportions for a fragile Iraq, as it is today.

The violent political history of Iraq (especially the traumatic experience during Saddam's rule), the present situation of instability and weakness, and the potential of disobedience and unauthorized use – would probably bring the leadership to attempt to design sophisticated procedures regarding command and control of nuclear weapons to ensure as far as possible the prevention of unauthorized use. **However, many elements of Western C3I systems would probably be inapplicable in an Iraqi context. Most Western C3I systems are based on secured computer communication. Iraqi society is much less technological and sophisticated than the US or Europe,[11] and since trust in such somewhat tenuous security mechanisms would inevitably be low, there may be some aversion to them on the grounds that unauthorized elements might infiltrate them, sabotage them or block authentic commands in time of crisis**. Therefore, personal or secured telephone systems may be preferred, and other, much more "primitive" methods can be envisaged, such as personal messengers or dispatchers physically transmitting orders, by motorbike, etc. Notwithstanding, the Iraqi military would probably be amenable to procedures based on dual (or even triple) verification of codes on nuclear warhead and delivery system locks, and incorrect codes may lead to immobilization of the weapon.

Thus, it seems that in light of the constraints described above, the Iraqi regime would refrain from building a complex multi-tier system of command and control, because, as described, such a system would raise fears of multiple weak points vulnerable to potential infiltration, or insubordination. Therefore, the command and control structure will most probably be "flat", with as few intermediaries

[11] The Iraqis started to use computers only recently, and the number of Iraqi users is extremely low relative to other societies. Furthermore, only few Iraqis were exposed to developed technology during the days of Saddam in power, so there is a big gap to bridge. See http://www.almc.army.mil/alog/issues/JulAug08/foster_iraqi_logsuccess.html; http://www.afcea.org/signal/articles/templates/SIGNAL_Article_Template.asp?articleid=1178&zoneid=7.

as possible. A possible chain of command may include the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense, Chief of Staff, the General Staff of the army, a few top echelon officers and relevant field commanders. With this, it would, probably, include multiple safety locks to prevent any one faction in the regime from activating the weapons without broad agreement. **A somewhat more sophisticated decision-making and command and control structure could borrow from the Pakistani model,** of having a separate senior body that takes decisions on nuclear issues. However, such a model may be dysfunctional in the Iraqi context, insofar as the current regime is experiencing problems in reaching consensus-based decisions (a case in point is the time it is taking to form a coalition in the new Iraq…).

The advantages and disadvantages of collective decision-making are poignant in the new democratic Iraq, and they are substantially different from the dilemmas faced by the authoritarian regimes examined in this study. In all the other cases of nuclear armed states in the region examined in this project, we have projected a cohesive leadership headed by an authoritarian figure retaining absolute control of a nuclear C3 chain of command. A democratic, multi-ethnic, multi-sectarian, Iraq would be different, but there is no guarantee that this would be the Iraq that acquired control of nuclear weapons.

In spite of prior experience allegedly connected with Saddam Hussein's delegation of authority to field commanders to initiate the use of chemical and biological weapons (CBW) in the 1991 Gulf War, in case leadership communication lines collapsed or the leadership is incapacitated – it would now appear to be extremely doubtful that an Iraqi regime would in a future nuclear weapons scenario environment adopt procedures for issuing orders for "launch on warning" that delegate authority to the military command, because this would dangerously increase the danger of unauthorized use. Pre-determined default options in case of failure of the pre-determined primary chain of command will also be problematic, as chances of unauthorized use would increase dramatically. **For example, an option of giving unit commanders permission to launch nuclear missiles in retaliation (second strike) would also be problematic for the same reason, and therefore will probably be deemed undesirable.**

On the operational level, commanders in the field can be expected to probably not have access to nuclear weapons launching authority without double or even triple authentication. There may well be, for example, a separation of nuclear warheads from delivery systems, such as ballistic missiles (SSMs), which could be dual use and part of the standard conventional order of battle. The fear of theft or unauthorized use would probably limit instances of pairing of the weapons and the delivery systems even for training purposes, though obviously some degree of operational training would be necessary, possibly using mock-ups (training warheads that would include the operational features but not the nuclear explosive device itself).

The weakness of such a system is obvious; the leadership will lack the level of responsiveness necessary in fast-moving nuclear crisis situations, and it may even become paralyzed by mutually conflicting interests. This may motivate the diverse political and ethnic factions that make up the regime to each build their own "back doors" into the nuclear command and control system, thus destabilizing it even further.

If Iraq acquires a nuclear weapons capability under a regime structure fundamentally similar to today's, then unlike some other regimes which may be suspicious of American or other foreign technological safeguards, the Iraqi regime will probably be more amenable to proposals to integration of American (or other Western) C3 systems into the nuclear command and control system, thus allowing for a significant enhancement of security and safety of the entire system. Again, in this case, the Iraqis could borrow from the Pakistani precedent, which has allowed for a significant investment of US security and safe control features, including relatively advanced permissive action links (PALs). Such a scenario would allow it to install a relatively sophisticated system of authentication of commands along the lines of Western countries' systems (other examples which could be borrowed from might be those of medium nuclear powers like India, the UK, France or the People's Republic of

China, each of which has a different C3 structure, set of rules regarding such issues as authentication of orders and delegated launch authorization to operational echelons – such as submarine-launched ballistic missiles [SLBMs] in case communications collapse – and operating procedures).

A primary consideration will be choices regarding the physical and geographical deployment of the nuclear weapons, warheads, or their disassembled components, and delivery systems. If the security situation does not improve drastically – to the point of total submission of all of the country to the regime in Baghdad, disarmament of all local groups and effective control over all of the extensive borders of the country – then the deployment of nuclear weapons will probably have to be concentrated in one area, though not in one site. The government would probably not store or deploy the weapons in "the Sunni triangle", which is considered the center of al-Qa'ida activity. The Southern area of Iraq, which is a Shiite area, could theoretically be used for storing or deploying nuclear assets, but this area is less favorable because local and tribal elements could potentially take control of them; moreover, the Sunni and the Kurds might easily oppose such a deployment to the South out of fear that the weapons would become “Shiite weapons”. The Kurdish areas are of course not relevant, since the regime would fear that Kurdish separatist elements could attempt to take control of nuclear assets.

Therefore, by a process of elimination, it stands to reason that the Iraqi nuclear arsenal will be stored and deployed in the general area of Baghdad. The Shiite components of the regime probably should be assessed to be unwilling to accept the deployment of nuclear weapons to the Sunni or Kurdish areas. Furthermore, locating nuclear sites physically close to the centers of command (the political and military command structures located in the Baghdad area), would help in transmitting orders in time of crisis, especially if the communications infrastructure is corrupted or incapacitated in time of conflict.

In current day Iraq, long range delivery systems are not in the Iraqi ORBAT, per se.[12] Also, other delivery options – by air or sea – are not currently relevant, although theoretically and potentially nuclear capabilities could be delivered by air, sea or land by unconventional or "primitive" means, such as by truck, ship or commercial transport aircraft, or even by combat aircraft on designated one-way, no-return, missions. Once Iraq decides to cross the nuclear threshold, attempts to rectify this situation may be inevitable, and modern delivery systems will be acquired from any accessible source (such as North Korea, or Pakistan, to name just two possible examples). Even if the Iraqi Air Force and Navy improve dramatically in their range of capabilities, drawing on the experience of strategic assets during the Saddam Hussein time, the use of ballistic missiles will probably come to be viewed once again as the most effective way to deliver nuclear weapons. In these circumstances, the army’s SSM command and forces would probably be charged with launch responsibilities of nuclear weapons assets, and be reconstituted to this end. This would allow for deployments to a geographically diffuse spread, including to Western Iraq, as was done in the Saddam era.

[12] http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/01/iraqi_field_artiller.php.

A Different Nuclear Armed Iraq

All the foregoing assumes a continuity regime in Iraq after a full and final US military withdrawal. But whether this assumption would hold true for a nuclear armed Iraq is questionable, or even significantly doubtful. Iraq, as is feared by many skeptics, or cynics, may transform in a most disconcerting manner to a multiplicity of different kinds of states, with more similar, disconcerting, characteristics, in the region.

One such possibility would be Iraq reverting to a strong-man secular rule, similar in its characteristics to Saddam's Iraq, though the probability of a secular Sunni minority regime appears at this stage remote. But in the event of a military coup, with a designated strongman of whichever ethnic identity (Sunni or Shiite; Kurdish would be unlikely), a more cohesive C3 structure for a potential nuclear assets capability might be envisaged. A military coup with a strongman is not a far-fetched scenario for an Arab state that is in a dire condition of flux, instability, corruption, and vacuum. A strongman leadership might reincarnate some of Saddam's C3 modes, and incorporate elements and characteristics described elsewhere in this study as they pertain to countries where the leaders retain virtually absolute control over primary C3I capabilities (Egypt, Syria).

Another possible scenario involves a disintegrated Iraq, with the establishment of a fully independent Kurdish state in the north, a Shiite dominated state in the south, affiliated with Iran, and a Sunni-led state in the center. A weakened Sunni "sandwich" state would naturally seek a nuclear capability to ensure its survival against the fierce forces surrounding it, especially if the nuclear trend were to go on the rampage and Turkey, Syria and Saudi Arabia were to join it.

A possibly worse scenario would involve a Shiite takeover in such a way that Iraq would become a satellite state of Iran. Ironically, if that were to occur prior to Iraq acquiring a nuclear weapons capability, then Iran would probably seek to prevent it from materializing at all. If, however, a Shiite nuclear Iraq subservient to Iran were to become supplemental to a nuclear Iran, a formidable nuclear front would be created in the region, assumedly seeking to undermine, or overthrow the status-quo, and spread the word of Shi'ism throughout. Moderate Arab regimes would be extremely threatened by such a scenario, not to mention the threat to regional stability, economic interest of the West, management problems for escalation dominance and stable deterrence. A Shiite Iranian-dominated Iraq would possibly borrow C3 elements from the Iranian model, though it would still retain essential traditional Iraqi characteristics, even some that may be reminiscent of Saddam's Iraq of old.