Chapter Four

CASE I: IRAQ

The Iraqi nuclear programme was initiated as early as the 1950s. The programme commenced peacefully, but when the intentions of the political leadership changed, its aim shifted to exploring the military capability of nuclear technology. From the 1970s onwards, Iraq, as a wealthy oil producing country, continuously developed its capabilities in all fields—including nuclear technology.

Iraq signed the NPT on 1 July 1968 and ratified it on 29 October 1969. It then signed a Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA (INFCIRC/153) in 1972. Its nuclear facilities were inspected regularly by the IAEA to ensure the compliance of Iraq with the NPT, i.e., that it was not employing its nuclear facilities for military purposes. However, Iraq discreetly managed to start a clandestine nuclear programme about which the IAEA knew nothing for many years.

In this chapter, the following shall be discussed:

2. Role of World Nuclear Suppliers in developing the Iraqi nuclear programme.
3. Israeli bombing of Osirak.
4. Iraqi violations of its international obligations.
5. Process of disarming Iraq under UN SC resolutions.

1. Development of the Iraqi Nuclear Programme

The introduction of Iraq to the field of nuclear technology began during the fifties with the aim of harnessing the atom to reap the benefits of cheap energy and to enhance medical research. The Iraqi Government, together with allies in Turkey and Pakistan, funded a research centre in Baghdad which was in actuality no more than a spartan collection of laboratories. In 1958, a new government came into power in Iraq. It proceeds to strike a deal with Moscow for the establishment of forty industrial projects, the
centrepiece being a small two-megawatt research reactor, the IRT 2000, built at Tuwaitha, sixteen kilometres south-east of Baghdad.\footnote{Bhatia, Shyam and Daniel McGrory, ’Brighter than the Baghdad Sun- Saddam Hussein’s Nuclear Threat to the US,’ 2000, p. 56.


4 Deaver, Micheal V., ’Disarming Iraq, Monitoring Power and Resistance,’ 2001 p. 35.

5 Hamza, Khidir with Jeff Stein, ’Saddam’s Bombmaker, The Terrifying Inside Story of the Iraqi Nuclear and Biological Weapons Agenda,’ 2000, pp. 98–100.}

During the late 70s, Iraq supported the training of its scientists around the world, especially in the UK, France and Italy.\footnote{Hamza, Khidhir with Jeff Stein, ’Saddam’s Bombmaker, The Terrifying Inside Story of the Iraqi Nuclear and Biological Weapons Agenda,’ 2000, pp. 98–100.} Iraq’s secret nuclear programme (known as “Petrochemical Three” (PC3)) was conducted under the authority of its Atomic Energy Commission with support from the Defence Ministry and the Ministry of Industry and Military Industrialisation. PC3 received massive infusions of money and resources in order to build a nuclear explosive device.\footnote{Hamza, Khidhir with Jeff Stein, ’Saddam’s Bombmaker, The Terrifying Inside Story of the Iraqi Nuclear and Biological Weapons Agenda,’ 2000, pp. 98–100.}

The immediate objective was to acquire nuclear technology, but the long-range objective of the plan was to produce nuclear weapons. Iraq had impeccable credentials for receiving nuclear assistance. As an NPT party hosting IAEA inspections of its declared facilities on a regular basis, Iraq raised little doubts about its nuclear projects.\footnote{Hamza, Khidhir with Jeff Stein, ’Saddam’s Bombmaker, The Terrifying Inside Story of the Iraqi Nuclear and Biological Weapons Agenda,’ 2000, pp. 98–100.}

Iraq manoeuvred its way through the IAEA system. In 1974, it assigned a “scientific attaché” to its Embassy in Vienna whose main job was to provide detailed reports on IAEA matters, including the role of inspectors in uncovering clandestine programmes and the control over information within the organisation. Furthermore, Iraqi inspectors at the IAEA informed their government of the latest tools used during inspections.\footnote{Hamza, Khidir with Jeff Stein, ’Saddam’s Bombmaker, The Terrifying Inside Story of the Iraqi Nuclear and Biological Weapons Agenda,’ 2000, pp. 98–100.}

Hence, the Iraqi regime acquired sufficient inside knowledge about the IAEA system, and was able to find means to cover up the clandestine activities within its nuclear programme. During the same period, Iraqi scientists started to shop for nuclear material and equipment to expand nuclear projects in order to produce enough fuel to build a nuclear explosive device.

In 1975, the Iraqi and French governments concluded a Treaty on Nuclear Cooperation that permitted the purchase of two French reactors fuelled by HEU (Osirak). Hot cells that would permit irradiating natural uranium to produce some plutonium were installed. A further agreement