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German Institute for Global and Area Studies
Leibniz-Institut für Globale und Regionale Studien



Call for Papers

International Conference

Iraq Twenty Years After the US Invasion: Memory Politics, Governance and Protests

29–31 March 2023 | German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Hamburg

The US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 came after decades of Baath dictatorship, several wars and the humanitarian toll of the most extensive sanctions regime since World War II. It coalesced into a hybrid political system with sectarian undertones, civil war and the rise and fall of the Islamic State. This bleak picture poses challenges to politics of memory, reconstruction and reconciliation, but it also overlooks the creative approaches of Iraqi society to re-imagine itself, build a public sphere and claim public spaces. The aftermath of 2003 opened up new spaces for civil society and cultural expression, firmer constitutional roots for Kurdish autonomy and a reevaluation of sectarian divides, social and gender roles.

Against this backdrop we invite paper abstracts (max. 400 words) for an international conference that sheds new light on the main factors shaping Iraqi politics and society since the US invasion of 2003. The conference takes stock of the scholarship on Iraq's modern history, post-2003 transformations and current developments, with a special focus on questions of governance, institutions, protest movements, and the politics of memory.

Given the formative and long-lasting influence of Saddam Hussein's authoritarian rule the conference lays particular emphasis on historiographic research with Iraqi sources, such as newly available archival evidence and their use in recent scholarship, ego documents and oral histories as well as literary sources as an alternative form of historical archive. We also focus on emerging cultures of remembrance in contemporary Iraq as well as on Iraqi diasporic communities, including comparative regional perspectives: To what degree does Iraq form part of a wider regional trend of re-negotiating narratives of national belonging, both on the level of state sponsored discourses and on the level of civil society activism? The temporal focus is on the Baathist period as well as on the broader context of Iraqi history in the 20th and 21st centuries, including the question of path dependencies after 2003.

Among the topics that could be addressed are:

- The politics of memory, transitional justice and reconciliation
- The muhasasa system, sectarianism, and possible avenues of democratic reform
- The governance of late Baathist Iraq
- Constitutional reform: The judicial system, asymmetric federalism and human rights
- Iraqi diasporas and their role in the politics of memory
- Non-Muslim minorities and their narratives of transition, persecution and reconciliation
- Kurdish autonomy, its narratives, expression and politics
- The Iraqi army between militias and security sector reform
- Gender politics post 2003
- Labor politics and trade unions
- Iraqi civil society between social movements, NGOs, and GONGOs
- Discourses of development and natural resources governance
- Religious politics between nation and sect
- Politics of history and (higher) education
- Public health, Iraqi statehood and political legitimacy Iraq's cultural and art scene

The conference will take place at the GIGA (German Institute for Global and Area Studies) in Hamburg. A select group of papers presented during the conference will be published in different venues. Pending final approval by donors, travel costs and accommodation will be covered. Applications should include a short bio and an abstract (max. 400 words) of your presentation.

Please send your application until 20 January 2022 to gabriele.tetzlaff@giga-hamburg.de.

Conveners:

Nadje Al-Ali (Brown University, USA)

Hamit Bozarslan (EHESS – École des hautes études en sciences sociales, France)

Dina Khoury (George Washington University, USA)

Achim Rohde (Academy in Exile, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

Eckart Woertz (German Institute for Global and Area Studies and University of Hamburg, Germany)