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The Past is Never Dead. It's Not Even Past: History and Memory in Iraq Studies

Achim Rohde[1] and Eckart Woertz[2]

[1]Asia-Africa Institute, University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany; Lower Saxony Memorials Foundation, Celle, Germany and [2]German Institute of Global and Area Studies; Department of History, University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany. Email: eckart.woertz@giga-hamburg.de
Corresponding author: Achim Rohde; Email: achim.rohde@uni-hamburg.de

The history of modern Iraq has been marked by violence, oppression, and foreign interventions to a degree that stands out even among other war-torn countries. On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the US-led invasion of Iraq, many retrospectives were still dominated by a US-centric navel gazing of the chattering classes inside the beltway, but more Iraqi voices and alternative viewpoints were present in op-eds and articles than a decade earlier.[1] In this spirit this roundtable section reflects on recent Iraqi history and contemporary developments with an eye toward memory politics in the context of transforming governance mechanisms and evolving civil society actors. It builds on a conference held at the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA) in Hamburg in March 2023 and portrays emerging avenues for research as well as new perspectives on long running debates.

Historiography, Multidirectional Memory, and Non-Memory

Historiography as a scholarly discipline, in particular the field of modern and contemporary history, is accompanied in recent years by the rapidly evolving neighboring discipline of memory studies, which focuses on the producers of cultural and collective memory as well as on the receiving audiences of memory making and their cultural contextualization.[2] Important methodological and conceptual differences notwithstanding, scholars in both epistemic communities acknowledge that understandings of the past are necessarily prefigured by contemporary "spaces of experience" and "horizons of expectation." Ideological premises might have an impact on how we understand a historical event, a document, a monument, or a witness account. As much as we struggle to produce empirically sound and politically detached scholarship, we constantly remold past events in a coherent narrative along contemporary concepts of time and space that also shape the ways in which the future is imagined.[3] In this sense, the past is constantly evolving, is renegotiated through transgenerational transmission and "(re)invented" in historical narratives and cultural

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[1] Marc Lynch, "Is This Really Why We Invaded Iraq?" Abu Aardvark's MENA Academy, 20 March 2023, https://abuaardvark.substack.com/p/is-this-really-why-we-invaded-iraq.

[2] Wulf Kansteiner, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies," *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (2002): 179–97; Marek Tamm, "Beyond History and Memory: New Perspectives in Memory Studies," *History Compass* 11, no. 6 (2013): 458–73.

[3] Reinhardt Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989).

practices. Each generation or generational unit, understood here as communities whose members are formed through similar experiences due to major historical events or socio-structural changes, reassesses and adapts the existing historical accounts in scholarly works as much as in novels, poetry, ego-documents, music, films, or museums and monuments. Cultural and collective memory is per se political and multidirectional, all the more so in conflict settings and post-conflict societies like Iraq, often prompting powerful practices of non-memory, as Pedro Almodóvar showed in his moving documentary "The Silence of Others" on the exhumation of mass graves of the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), which still remains politically controversial eighty years after the events.[4] Political ruptures such as occurred in Iraq in 2003 will eventually trigger what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have first described as processes of de-territorializing and re-territorializing collective identities, including reconfigurations of "intermediate places," "transition spaces," and "third spaces" of cultural memory and production.[5]

Explanations of the Iraq War and Its Aftermath

As a heavily mediatized and controversial global event, the Iraq War of 2003 is remembered across the globe in multifaceted ways and will remain a focus of scholarly scrutiny for decades to come. Proponents of the invasion used the past to mobilize global audiences in support of the war by presenting the removal of Saddam Hussein from power as akin to the 20th-century war against fascism.[6] Alluding to the case of West Germany post–World War II, they forecasted that Iraq would rise like a phoenix out of the ashes of dictatorship and develop into a model democracy for the whole MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. Today, the Bush administration's self-righteousness about removing a dictator who had ceased to serve US interests and its reckless optimism concerning the effects of externally enforced regime change in Iraq seems at best inexplicable naivety. Others regard it as a set of conscious lies designed to give a semblance of legitimacy to an illegal war of aggression and a glaring example of imperial hubris. There is today an overwhelming consensus that the war was a failure, with catastrophic long-term results. But what exactly went wrong, and who is responsible for the blunder that cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis as well as of thousands of American and British military personnel, shifted the regional power balance in favor of Iran, helped create ISIS, ripped a black hole in the US treasury, and undermined the credibility of a rules-based international order?

Former cheerleaders of the war alliance repent, a bit, portraying it as an "honest mistake" fueled by exaggerated threat perceptions that were sincerely felt based on the intelligence available at that time.[7] Regarding the failed reconstruction of Iraq after 2003, some put most of the blame on Saddam Hussein's legacy of oppression and divisive rule.[8] Others point to the perceived structural deficiencies of the Iraqi nation-building project, that is, the country's diverse ethnic, communal, and religious makeup.[9] Some protagonists of that period still claim the invasion was morally legitimate in its intention of removing Saddam Hussein, yet poorly planned and executed, with an equal share of the blame being handed to the post-2003 Iraqi political elite for spreading corruption and sectarian violence.[10]

[4] Efrat Ben-Ze'ev, Ruth Ginio, and Jay Winter, eds., *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[5] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Continuum, 2004).

[6] Achim Rohde, *State-Society Relations in Baʿthist Iraq: Facing Dictatorship* (London: Routledge, 2010).

[7] Melvyn P. Leffler, *Confronting Saddam Hussein: George W. Bush and the Invasion of Iraq* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2023).

[8] Aaron M. Faust, *The Baʿthification of Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Totalitarianism* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2015), 188–92.

[9] Hamid Alkifaey, *The Failure of Democracy in Iraq: Religion, Ideology and Sectarianism* (London: Routledge, 2020).

[10] Wisam Alshaibi, "The Making of Regime Change in Iraq," presented at the conference "Iraq 20 Years after the US Invasion: Memory Politics, Governance, Protests," 29 March to 31 March 2023, Hamburg, Germany.

Europeans remain largely silent on the issue—the Iraq invasion was a mistake they can disavow. They did not participate or only provided token military support and withdrew early. The UK was the only European power that participated substantially in the war effort, but it has done its soul searching already over a decade ago with the Chilcot Report and the public ostracizing of Tony Blair. Compared to the intensity of scholarly and public interest in Iraq in the 1990s, the issue faded into the background in Europe after the invasion and resurfaced only when its negative long-term consequences became impossible to ignore in the form of refugees arriving at Europe's shores, or drowning on the way while trying to escape sectarian war. Yet the legacy of the Iraq War of 2003 is with us to stay, as became evident when many countries in the Global South refrained from condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, dismissing Western leaders' insistence on international law as selective and self-serving.

Assessing contemporary developments in Iraq requires a longitudinal perspective that takes into account the effects of Baʿthist rule, structural and economic factors, and external shocks.[11] Internationally the Iraq War of 2003 constituted a "critical juncture" that shifted power to Iran and other regional actors.[12] Politically there was institutional rupture with the dissolution of the Baʿth party and the Iraqi army, but the Baʿthist period, its sociopolitical conditions, and the politics of the returning exiled opposition deeply shaped the transition toward a hybrid system that exists to this day: a reconstructed authoritarianism with formally democratic features and the sectarian overtones of the consociational *muḥāṣaṣa* system, which distributes positions and power according to an ethno-sectarian key.[13] In the economic sphere considerable path dependency of institutions persisted, ranging from the oil sector to the Public Distribution System that procures and allocates subsidized food and still exists today.[14] The reconfiguration of the Iraqi political elite and the further fragmentation of an already weakened central state contributed to the traumatic civil war after the invasion. Iraq's depleted infrastructure and the long-standing grievances over corruption and the lack of basic services such as electricity and fresh water informed political protests between 2019 and 2021. The country's mobilized younger generation moved from identity politics to issue politics, decrying the dysfunctionality of the political system that was established after 2003 under American tutelage and demanding profound change.[15]

Reconfiguring Iraqi Collective Memories after 2003

Beyond questions of accountability and debates about the invasion's consequences and the factors that shaped its bloody aftermath, the fall of Saddam Hussein has decisively changed the parameters for the historiography of Iraq and opened new avenues for studying the evolving cultural and collective memory of Iraqi society.[16] The removal of the iron cage of dictatorship and sanctions in which Iraqis had been imprisoned for so long, followed

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[11] Amatzia Baram, Achim Rohde, and Ronen Zeidel, eds., *Iraq between Occupations: Perspectives from 1920 to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Lisa Blaydes, *State of Repression: Iraq under Saddam Hussein* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

[12] Louise Fawcett, "The Iraq War 20 Years On: Towards a New Regional Architecture," *International Affairs* 99, no. 2 (2023): 567–85.

[13] Toby Dodge, *Iraq: From War to a New Authoritarianism* (London: Routledge, 2013); Zaid al-Ali, *The Struggle for Iraq's Future: How Corruption, Incompetence and Sectarianism Have Undermined Democracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014).

[14] Eckart Woertz, "Iraq under UN Embargo, 1990–2003: Food Security, Agriculture, and Regime Survival," *Middle East Journal* 73, no. 1 (2019): 92–111.

[15] Faleh A. Jabar, "The Iraqi Protest Movement: From Identity Politics to Issue Politics," trans. Abdul Ilah Nuaimi, LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series 25, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2018; Balsam Mustafa, "All about Iraq: Re-Modifying Older Slogans and Chants in Tishreen [October] Protests," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 58, no. 3 (2023): 401–20.

[16] Jordi Tejel, Peter Sluglett, Ricardo Bocco, and Hamit Bozarslan eds., *Writing the Modern History of Iraq: Historiographical and Political Challenges* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2012).

by the wholesale destruction of the centralist Iraqi state and traumatic episodes of sectarian civil war, entailed the emergence of new actors and a multiplicity of Iraqi voices that had hitherto been silenced and isolated. To some degree, these developments echo events in post–Arab Spring societies and constitute a further example for a gradual renegotiation of historical narratives in MENA countries in recent years. This resulted in a growing visibility of marginal groups and a weakening of homogenizing identity discourses that had been characteristic of postcolonial MENA nation–states and buttressed their authoritarian rulers.

Mirroring these developments, a growing interest in minoritized groups has been registered in the field of Middle East studies.[17] Scholars have revisited Iraq's history prior to the Ba'thist period to identify legacies of pluralism and participatory rule that might serve as a reference for rebuilding Iraq today.[18] Groundbreaking works have been published that inscribe women's voices in the historiography of Iraq (see Balsam Mustafa's essay in this roundtable).[19] Increasingly, scholars have turned to the history and experiences of Iraq's cultural and religious minorities, or to the cultural memory of the country's more diverse and cosmopolitan past.[20] This recognition of and increased scholarly interest in Iraq's minoritized communities is long overdue; it adds nuance and substance to the historiography and sociology of Iraq. On the other hand, the emergence of new disciplinary containers, most visibly Kurdish studies, signals a fragmentation of the field of Iraq studies into separate epistemic communities. This development comes at the risk of overlooking commonalities and entanglements between the various regions and communities that form part of modern Iraq, whose history and contemporary experiences remain inextricably interwoven.[21] An interdisciplinary approach and adherence to the principle of multiperspectivity might be a viable path for studying (and teaching) the tormented conflictual history of modern and contemporary Iraq, including the accounts of diasporic Iraqis around the globe.[22]

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[17] See, for example, the roundtable section "Minoritization and Pluralism in the Modern Middle East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 50, no. 4 (2018).

[18] Adeed Dawisha, "Democratic Attitudes and Practices in Iraq, 1921–1958," *Middle East Journal* 59, no. 1 (2005): 11–30; Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009); Johan Franzén, *Red Star over Iraq: Iraqi Communism before Saddam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Güldem Baykal Büyüksaraç, "Unheard Voices: State-Making and Popular Participation in Post-Ottoman Iraq," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38, no. 14 (2015): 2551–68.

[19] Nadje Sadig al-Ali, *Iraqi Women: Untold Stories from 1948 to the Present* (London: Zed Books, 2007); Noga Efrati, *Women in Iraq: Past Meets Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Zahra Ali, *Women and Gender in Iraq: Between Nation-Building and Fragmentation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[20] Hamit Bozarslan, "États, communautés et marges dissidentes en Irak," *Critique International* 34, no. 1 (2007): 17–27; Michiel Leezenberg, "Transformations in Minority Religious Leadership: The Yezidis, Shabak, and Assyrians in Northern Iraq," *Sociology of Islam* 6, no. 2 (2018): 233–60; Ronen Zeidel, "On the Last Jews in Iraq and Iraqi National Identity: A Look at Two Recent Iraqi Novels," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 17, no. 2 (2018): 207–28; Majid Hassan Ali, "The Identity Controversy of Religious Minorities in Iraq: The Crystallization of the Yazidi Identity after 2003," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 47, no. 5 (2020): 811–31; Vicken Cheterian, "ISIS Genocide against the Yazidis and Mass Violence in the Middle East," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 48, no. 4 (2021): 629–41; Alda Benjamen, *Assyrians in Modern Iraq: Negotiating Political and Cultural Space* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2022); Saad Salloum, *At Crossroads: Iraq's Minorities after ISIS* (Sulaimaniyah, Iraq: Heartland Alliance International, n.d.).

[21] Illustrating the emergence of a separate epistemic community, the journal *Kurdish Studies* was founded in 2013; Kurdish Studies (website), accessed 22 June 2023, https://kurdishstudies.net. Schluwa Sama, in "War and Capitalism in the Gara Mountain," presented at the conference "Iraq 20 Years after the US Invasion," calls for a comparative study of the political economy of rural regions in different parts of Iraq and neighboring war-torn countries. See also, Stephanie Cronin, ed., *Subalterns and Social Protest: History from Below in the Middle East and North Africa* (London: Routledge, 2008).

[22] Malek Khouri, "Memory and the Reconciliation of Diasporas: Cinematic Trace of Arab National Identity in the Film *Forget Baghdad*," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 30, no. 1 (2010): 85–91; Oula Kadhoum, "Nation-Destroying, Emigration and Iraqi Nationhood after the 2003 Intervention," *International Affairs* 99, no. 2 (2023): 587–604.

New Sources, "Other-Archives," and Iraq's *Nischengesellschaft*

A further important development in the field of Iraq studies following 2003 concerns the question of sources. The post-invasion looting and subsequent civil war episodes (2005–8, 2014–17) destroyed invaluable cultural treasures and sources for historical research. Only partial reassembling of Iraq's globally significant cultural heritage will take time and effort.[23] On the other hand, the invasion led to the discovery of archives of the Baʿth party and security services and an extraordinary collection of audio files with recorded meetings of Saddam Hussein and members of the former political and military elite. These sources were subsequently transferred to the US and offered opportunities for scholars, resulting in a series of recent historical works on the Baʿthist period, before being returned to Iraq (see Michael Brill's essay in this roundtable). Official sources from within an authoritarian regime are rare; work with those documents produced important insights into the inner workings of the Iraqi surveillance state and the Baʿth party bureaucracy. It added nuance and detail to previous scholarship based on open sources and emphasized the centrality of the dictator, the twin techniques of repression and co-optation, and the pervasive mechanisms of bureaucratic control.

Ideological mobilization of the Iraqi population through the tireless dissemination of propaganda is also deemed an important factor in explaining the regime's longevity.[24] But propaganda is most effective when lies and fake news are wrapped around kernels of truth, when it manages to tap into existing popular sentiments and manipulate them, rather than imposing radically different views from above. When it came to ideology, the Iraqi Baʿth regime proved to be flexible over the three and a half decades of its rule. By trading modernism and state feminism for neotribalism and social conservatism and later on religious revivalism, it adjusted its posture to changing circumstances and sought to simultaneously shape them (see David Jordan's essay in this roundtable). A fresh reading of Iraqi print media of the late 1980s and throughout the sanctions period has demonstrated that the regime installed, simulated, and tolerated spaces of contestation on issues like participatory rule, good governance, and the rule of law. This discursive strand was an exercise in strategic communication by the regime. It aimed at manipulating society into acquiescence to its continued rule and at demobilizing domestic opposition.[25] To be effective, it had to partly acknowledge existing concerns and dissenting voices. Therefore, it was necessarily ambiguous and far from a mobilizing ideological discourse in the spirit of the "Baʿthist trinity" of leader, party, and nation.[26]

Such findings resonate with scholarship on the history of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) that portrays the fragmentation of East German society into a *Nischengesellschaft* (a society of social niches), creating spaces for different kinds of nonconformist social behavior and displays of political dissent.[27] Sources from within the former Iraqi ruling party and the presidential apparatus and secret police reports reflect specific elite perspectives, intra-elite relations, and bureaucratic processes. Despite their extraordinary value for the historiography of Baʿthist Iraq, they do not easily disclose reliable

[23] Lawrence Rothfield, *The Rape of Mesopotamia: Behind the Looting of the Iraq Museum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Roger Matthews, Qais Hussain Rasheed, Mónica Palmero Fernández, Seán Fobbe, Karel Nováček, Rozhen Mohammed-Amin, Simone Mühl, and Amy Richardson, "Heritage and Cultural Healing: Iraq in a Post-Daesh Era," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 26, no. 2 (2020): 120–41.

[24] Among others, see Kevin M. Woods, David D. Palkki, and Mark E. Scott, eds., *The Saddam Tapes: The Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime, 1978-2001* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Joseph Sassoon, *Saddam Hussein's Baʿth Party: Inside an Authoritarian Regime* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Faust, *Baʿthification of Iraq*; and Blaydes, *State of Repression*.

[25] Achim Rohde, "Echoes from Below? Talking Democracy in Baʿthist Iraq," *Middle Eastern Studies* 53, no. 4 (2017): 551–70.

[26] Faust, *Baʿthification of Iraq*, 9–10, 57–62.

[27] See, for instance, Thomas Lindenberger (Hrsg.), *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der SED-Diktatur: Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1999); and Karsten Timmer, *Vom Aufbruch zum Umbruch: Die Bürgerbewegung in der DDR 1989*, Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft, Bd. 142 (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenoeck & Ruprecht, 2000).

information regarding the dynamics of state-society relations, dysfunctionalities within the Baʿth regime's hierarchy of power and the state apparatus, or the implementation of regime policies on the ground (see the discussion by Alissa Walter on local governance in this roundtable). They are best studied in combination with other kinds of sources that may provide different or complementary perspectives. Unfortunately Iraq, like other MENA countries, lacks organized and accessible archives of state ministries, local governorates, civil society organizations, professional associations, and the like. Partly making up for this loss, "other-archives" have become accessible since the fall of Saddam Hussein that are likely to provide a more comprehensive and multifaceted picture of life in Iraq under Baʿthist rule, most importantly ego-documents and data accrued through oral history approaches.[28] Memory studies, but also studies of arts and literature (see Hawraa al-Hassan's essay in this roundtable) as well as film and media studies provide important tools for studying recent Iraqi history and patterns of Iraqi cultural and collective memory.[29]

Memory, Reconciliation, and Transformative Justice

For a host of reasons the formative legacy of the Baʿthist period remains a difficult topic in today's Iraq. Living in Iraq under Saddam Hussein's rule inevitably meant becoming part of the system, at least to some degree. Sweeping this legacy under the rug can be a matter of convenience and opportunism, but also a precautionary measure to protect one's personal safety. Yet, at least for the generation that has lived through the Baʿthist period, the past provides powerful motives that shape political behavior today, even if this past is hardly recognized in explicit terms and left simmering in a space of non-memory.[30] For decades, the Iraqi state invested heavily in shaping the cultural and collective memory of Iraq.[31] Much of this Baʿthist legacy has fallen into oblivion since 2003, but many material remnants, such as monuments (with the exception of Saddam Hussein's statues), have been left intact.

New cognitive frameworks for remembering the past, including the victims of state violence and fallen soldiers of Iraq's disastrous wars, are only beginning to evolve.[32] With no post-conflict bridging narrative in sight, conflicting memories continue to divide the various subgroups that constitute Iraqi society (see Amir Taha's essay in this roundtable).[33] More than one million Iraqis have died in four decades of wars and violence. The exact numbers remain unknown, as archival evidence is scant, and the approximately 250 mass graves identified to date are only a tiny fraction of all mass graves that exist across Iraq, including those of the victims of

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[28] Brahim El Guabli, *Moroccan Other-Archives: History and Citizenship after State Violence* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2023).

[29] Lucia Sorbera, "History and Fiction in the New Iraqi Cinema," in *Writing the Modern History of Iraq*, Tejel et al., 423–44; Katalina Kopka, "Cultural Hauntings: Narrating Trauma in Contemporary Films about the Iraq War," *Ex-Centric Narratives: Journal of Anglophone Literature, Culture and Media* 2 (2018): 103–20; Pelle Valentin Olsen, "Iraqi Cinema beyond the Screen and the Archives of Leisure," *Regards—Revue Des Arts Du Spectacle* 26 (2021): 129–41; Marta Bellingreri, "Tarkib's Contemporary Arts Festival in Baghdad: Women Artists Play and Perform Memories and New (Hi)stories of Iraq," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 18, no. 3 (2022): 424–32.

[30] For instance, the wish to redeem oneself from involvement in the Iran–Iraq War motivates veteran members of Shiʿi militias fighting in Iraq, as shown by Roma Sendyka in "Non-Memory: Remembering beyond the Discursive and the Symbolic," *Memory Studies* 15, no. 3 (2022): 523–38; and Younes Saramifar "Blood Washes Blood: Remembering the Saddam Era with PMF's Seasoned Shia Fighters," presented at the conference "Iraq 20 Years after the US Invasion."

[31] Amatzia Baram, *Culture, History, and Ideology in the Making of Baʿthist Iraq* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991); Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005).

[32] Stefan Milich, Friederike Pannewick, and Leslie Tramontini, eds., *Conflicting Narratives: War, Violence, and Memory in Iraqi Culture* (Wiesbaden: Ergon, 2012); Dina R. Khoury, *Iraq in Wartime: Soldiering, Martyrdom, and Remembrance* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[33] Falk Pingel, "Can Truth Be Negotiated? History Textbook Revision as a Means to Reconciliation," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 617, no. 1 (2008): 181–98.

ISIS atrocities.[34] Establishing basic facts is a necessary precondition for enabling processes of mourning and digesting these traumatic events as well as determining material assistance for survivors and victims' families. Putting the former dictator on trial was only a first step on the way to achieving transformative justice in Iraq. Moreover, the trial was not implemented in the most adequate juridical setting and partly violated established legal standards, diminishing its legitimacy in the eyes of Iraqis who harbored sympathies for the Baʿthist regime.[35]

Coming to terms with Iraq's recent and ongoing history of wars, violence, trauma, and genocide will be a painful and jarring process. Healing will take generations.[36] Eventually, establishing mechanisms and institutional frameworks for granting Iraqi citizens access to relevant archival documents that shed light on a history of state oppression might be useful for facilitating such processes. The Stasi Records Archive, responsible for the safekeeping, utilization, and accessibility of all records of the GDR's Ministry for State Security (1950–90) might offer hints for a future Iraqi state institution of this kind.[37] In fact, the Iraq Memory Foundation, founded by prominent Iraqi exiled scholar Kanan Makiya, had sought to initiate the creation of a similar institution.[38] But the foundation later ceased its activities amid controversy over Makiya's justification of the war effort and the air-lifting of the above-mentioned Baʿthist archives to the US in 2005, which limited the availability of funding.[39] Commemorative sites may be helpful as venues for accommodating the victims' families, descendants, and survivors, and might also serve as sites for historical learning, eventually helping to reconcile Iraq with itself. In this vein, a memorial site for Anfal victims has been created by Anfal surviving women in collaboration with a German NGO in Rizgary in Kurdistan-Iraq, cofinanced by the German foreign office.[40] The Lower Saxony Memorials Foundation in Germany, where a sizable Ezidi community resides, has created a documentation and memorial project on the Ezidi genocide at the hands of ISIS in 2014 in collaboration with Ezidi activists and survivors.[41] It will be up to Iraqis of all the country's different subgroups and communities, including those whom circumstances have pushed into the diaspora, to determine ways for tackling the country's torturous recent history. The predominance of Western institutions in safeguarding Iraq's cultural heritage is justifiably being challenged as a colonial legacy, and Iraqi scholars, activists, and artists are increasingly developing their own accounts.[42] In sum, the historiography and the politics of memory are in a state of flux in Iraq today. They encompass a widening array of perspectives and cultural expressions, which might eventually facilitate transformative justice processes in a country that deserves a better future.

[34] Zouhair Atieh, "Identifying the Missing in the Quest for Transitional Justice in Iraq," presented at the conference "Iraq 20 Years after the US Invasion." See also International Commission on Missing Persons (website), accessed 22 June 2023, https://www.icmp.int/where-we-work/middle-east-and-north-africa/iraq.

[35] Mark S. Ellis, "The Saddam Trial: Challenges to Meeting International Standards of Fairness with Regard to the Defense," *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* 39, no. 1 (2007): 171–93.

[36] Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

[37] Stasi Records Archive (website), accessed 22 June 2023, https://www.stasi-unterlagen-archiv.de/en. See also Joseph Sassoon, "The East German Ministry for State Security and Iraq, 1968–1989," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 16, no. 1 (2014): 4–23.

[38] "Vergangenheitsbewältigung: Die Birthler-Behörde von Bagdad," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 11 May 2010.

[39] Wisam H. Alshaibi, "Weaponizing Iraq's Archives," *Middle East Report* 291 (2019), https://merip.org/2019/09/weaponizing-iraqs-archives.

[40] Haukari e.V. Association for International Cooperation (website), accessed 22 June 2023, https://haukari.de/erinnerungsforum-anfal.

[41] Ferman—Documentation and Education Project on the Genocide of the Yazidis. Accessed 14 July 2023, www.ferman.eu.

[42] Arbella Bet-Shlimon, "Preservation or Plunder? The ISIS Files and a History of Heritage Removal in Iraq," Middle East Research and Information Project, 8 May 2018, https://merip.org/2018/05/preservation-or-plunder-the-isis-files-and-a-history-of-heritage-removal-in-iraq.