

Iraq in Wartime

When U.S.-led forces invaded Iraq in 2003, they occupied a country that had been at war for twenty-three years. Yet in their attempts to understand Iraqi society and history, few policy makers, analysts, and journalists took into account the profound impact Iraq's long engagement with war had on the Iraqis' everyday engagement with politics, with the business of managing their daily lives, and on their cultural imagination. Starting with the Iran-Iraq war, through the First Gulf War and sanctions, Dina Rizk Khoury traces the political, social, and cultural processes of the normalization of war in Iraq during the last twenty-three years of Ba'athist rule. Drawing on government documents and interviews, Khoury argues that war was a form of everyday bureaucratic governance and examines the Iraqi government's policies of creating consent, managing resistance and religious diversity, and shaping public culture. Khoury focuses on the men and families of those who fought and died during the Iran-Iraq and First Gulf wars. Coming on the tenth anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, this book tells a multilayered story of a society in which war has become the norm.

Dina Rizk Khoury is Associate Professor of History and International Affairs at The George Washington University. Since 2005, she has been writing on the contemporary history of Iraq, particularly on violence, sectarian politics, and war and memory. She is the author of *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge 1997).

Iraq in Wartime

Soldiering, Martyrdom, and Remembrance

DINA RIZK KHOURY

The George Washington University, Washington, DC



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
 978-0-521-88461-7 — Iraq in Wartime
 Dina Rizk Khoury
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521884617

© Cambridge University Press 2013

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2013

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Khoury, Dina Rizk.

Iraq in wartime : soldiering, martyrdom, and remembrance / Dina Rizk Khoury.
 pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-88461-7 (hardback) – ISBN 978-0-521-71153-1 (paperback)

1. Politics and war – Iraq – History – 20th century. 2. War and society – Iraq – History – 20th century. 3. Iraq – Politics and government – 1979–1991.
 4. Iran-Iraq War, 1980–1988 – Political aspects – Iraq. 5. Iran-Iraq War, 1980–1988 – Social aspects – Iraq. 6. Persian Gulf War, 1991 – Political aspects – Iraq. 7. Persian Gulf War, 1991 – Social aspects – Iraq. 1. Title.

DS79.7.K46 2013

956.7044-dc23 2012040130

ISBN 978-0-521-88461-7 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-71153-1 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

In Memory
of
Adel Rizk, whose remembrance of Nabatiyye nourished him
through years in the desert, war, and debilitating illness
And for Iraqis
May memories of a place sustain them wherever they may be

The neutron bomb is highly intelligent.
It distinguishes between
An “I” and an “Identity.”

And now
I remember trees:
The date palm of our mosque in Basra, at the end of Basra
a bird’s beak,
a child’s secret,
a summer feast.
I remember the date palm.
I touch it. I become it when it falls black
without fronds,
when a dam fell, hewn by lightning.
And I remember the mighty mulberry
when it rumbled, butchered with an ax ...
to fill the stream with leaves
and birds
and angels
and green blood.
I remember when pomegranate blossoms covered the sidewalks.
The students were leading the workers parade ...

The trees die
pummeled.
Dizzied,
not standing, the trees die.

from “America, America” by Saadi Youssef

Contents

<i>List of Illustrations, Maps, and Table</i>	page ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
<i>Note on Translations and Transliteration</i>	xv
1. Introduction	I
<i>War as Governance</i>	3
<i>The War Experience and Memory</i>	9
<i>Sources and Methodology</i>	12
Government Documents	12
Interviews	17
2. Iraq's Wars under the Ba'ath	20
<i>The Iran-Iraq War</i>	28
<i>The First Gulf War and the UN-imposed Embargo</i>	35
<i>Conclusion</i>	45
3. The Internal Front: Making War Routine	48
<i>Managing the War</i>	49
<i>The Internal Front</i>	55
Managing the War Story	56
Managing the Social Repercussions of the War: Cohabiting and Perpetuating Ties	67
Managing Dissent and Desertion	73
The General Federation of Iraqi Women	77
<i>Conclusion</i>	80
4. Battlefronts: War and Insurgency	82
<i>Conscripts in an "Ideological Army"</i>	83
The Directorate of Political Guidance	86

“I Have Become a Hero Despite Myself”: Reward, Survival, and Punishment	94
Prisoners of War: Ideology, Conversion, and Betrayal	103
<i>Managing Territories of War and Insurgency</i>	110
<i>Conclusion</i>	121
5. Things Fall Apart	123
<i>The Mother of All Battles and the End of Days</i>	126
<i>The Intifada and its Aftermath in the South</i>	133
<i>Between Charity and Mercy</i>	145
<i>Conclusion</i>	158
6. War’s Citizens, War’s Families	161
<i>Defining Martyrdom</i>	163
<i>Regulating Families</i>	172
<i>Conclusion</i>	178
7. Memory for the Future	181
<i>The Iconography of the War Experience</i>	185
<i>The Language of the War Experience</i>	195
<i>Remembrance and the War Experience</i>	204
<i>Conclusion</i>	216
8. Commemorating the Dead	219
<i>The Invention of the Cult of Martyrs</i>	221
<i>Commemorating the Heroes of Qadisiyat Saddam</i>	225
<i>Commemorating the Victims of the Mother of All Battles</i>	233
<i>Conclusion</i>	243
9. Postscript	245
Appendix I: Distribution in Percentage of Ba’th Party Members, “Friends of Saddam,” and Martyrs in Fifteen Iraqi Provinces, 1998–1999	255
Appendix II: Percentage of Ba’th Party Membership among Matriculating Students (Sixth Secondary) in Ten Iraqi Provinces, 1987–1988	259
Appendix III: Report Issued by Ali Hasan al-Majid, Head of the Northern Bureau of the Ba’th Party to the General Secretariat, August 1987	260
<i>Sources and Bibliography</i>	261
<i>Index</i>	271

Illustrations, Maps, and Table

Illustrations

2.1. A group of Iraqi soldiers tears an Iranian flag after overrunning the city governor's office in Khorramshahr, Iran, November 1, 1980 (AP photo/Zuhair Saade)	page 30
4.1. Iraqi soldiers on the southern front in Iraq, along the border with Iran, June 18, 1984 (AP photo/Don Mell)	87
4.2. Cartoon by Khdeir, "Abu Tahrir," <i>Alif Ba'</i> , March 5, 1986	91
4.3. Cartoon by al-Karkhi, "Keys to Heaven," <i>Alif Ba'</i> , November 5, 1980	92
4.4. Cartoon "The Mulla's Meal," <i>Alif Ba'</i> , October 29, 1980	93
4.5. Cartoon "The Khomeini Mentality," <i>al-Jumhuriyya</i> , October 26, 1980	94
4.6. Iran-Iraq war: Situation between Amara and Basra (Jacques Pavlovsky/Sygma/Corbis)	104
4.7. Iran-Iraq war: Iraqi prisoners of war (Jean Guichard/Sygma/Corbis)	107
5.1. Iraqi rebels atop a captured Iraqi armored vehicle, March 15, 1991 (Mohammad Sayyad/AP photo)	134
7.1. Rahim Hasan photo: Soldier on attack, Najman Yasin, <i>al-Insan wa al-Harb, Qadisiyat Saddam fi 'A'mal Rahim Hasan</i>	190
7.2. Rahim Hasan photo: Soldiers marching in al-Ahwar, Najman Yasin, <i>al-Insan wa al-Harb, Qadisiyat Saddam fi 'A'mal Rahim Hasan</i>	191
7.3. Rahim Hasan photo: Iraqi soldier aiming his weapon, <i>al-Jumhuriyya</i> , October 2, 1980	192

x	<i>Illustrations, Maps, and Table</i>	
7.4.	Rahim Hasan photo: Soldier smiling with missiles in the background, Najman Yasin, <i>al-Insan wa al-Harb, Qadisiyat Saddam if 'A'mal Rahim Hasan</i>	193
7.5.	Rahim Hasan photo: Iranian prisoner of war, Najman Yasin, <i>al-Insan wa al-Harb, Qadisiyat Saddam fi 'A'mal Rahim Hasan</i>	194
8.1.	Iraqi children visit Martyr's Monument, February 1998 (Eric Marti/AP photo)	226
8.2.	Martyr's pin, private collection	230
8.3.	Martyr's medallion, adapted from cover of <i>Alif Ba'</i> , December 12, 1984	231
8.4.	Child lighting a candle at the al-'Amiriyya shelter, February 1998 (Eric Marti/AP photo)	239
8.5.	Umm Ghayda' at al-'Amiriyya shelter, September 1996 (John Moore/AP photo)	241
8.6.	Stamp commemorating the martyrs of Umm al-Ma'arik, private collection	242

Maps

1.	Iraq: Provinces and principal cities	xvi
2.	Distribution of Army Corps during Iran-Iraq war	xvii
3.	Iraq: Principal southern towns and marshes	xviii

Table

6.1.	Classifications used in school registers	180
------	--	-----

Acknowledgments

This book was born, more than six years ago, out of a lunch conversation in Foggy Bottom with my Cambridge University Press editor, Marigold Acland. I did not know at that time that I would, as I was writing the histories of Iraqis at war, embark on a journey that evoked my personal history. I am thankful for Marigold's patience as I am to Sarika Narula for seeing the book to production.

I would not have been able to write this book without the stories of Iraqi men who fought in the Iran-Iraq and First Gulf wars. I am grateful for their willingness to be interviewed and for their generosity in sharing their experiences. I have changed their names to protect their privacy. Many will only read this book when it is translated into Arabic. Although I have not reproduced the words of each one of them, their collective experience has shaped the book's narrative of war. I only hope that if, as Joan Didion says, all writers sell someone out, I have not done so in a manner that makes their stories unrecognizable to them.

A significant part of my research entailed stays in Amman and Damascus, where a large number of displaced Iraqis have settled. I was able to conduct research, make contacts, and altogether organize my life with the help of a number of individuals. Hala Fattah, a historian, friend, and facilitator for all researchers of things Iraqi who flocked to Amman after the U.S. invasion, provided me with entry into the community of Iraqi exiles and intellectuals. Geraldine Chatelard, then head of the French Institute of the Near East in Amman, answered my many questions about the displaced Iraqi community. Lucine Taminian, senior researcher at The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq's Jordan office, helped with contacts and with information based on her rich

experience in conducting research in the oral history of Iraq. Sundus Shakir and her family made concrete to me the meaning of survival and resilience in the face of sanctions, war, and dispersal. Sundus provided me with contacts, fed me, and insisted, despite all evidence to the contrary, that she and her family could lead “normal” lives in Jordan. Awad Ali spent hours telling me his story, transcribing interviews, and educating me on the state of the first Iraqi refugees in Jordan. Ali Bader shared his experience and his insights into the generational politics of Iraq and introduced me to a vibrant community of artists and intellectuals of the nineties. Conversations with Awwad and Ali, together with Haider Saeed and Dhiaa Najm al-Asadi, all men who came of age in the late seventies and eighties, proved crucial for my understanding of the cultural politics of Iraq. Last but not least, my stay in Amman would not have been half as pleasurable without the hospitality and conversations provided by Aysar Akrawi and the late Adnan Habboo; Jenny and Mustafa Hamarneh, who sheltered me in their lovely Madaba home and whose friendship has been one of the constants in my life; and Nasri and Zeena Khoury, who found a space for me in their Amman home and who shielded me from family obligations.

In Damascus, Ziad Turkey al-Jazzaa and Roula Atallah found Iraqis willing to talk to me and introduced me to the alternative cultural life of Damascus. Ziad, a cinematographer and photographer, told me his story and answered my question on the implosion of media and visual culture during the Iran-Iraq war. Peter Harling, whose work on Iraq in the nineties remains among the best available to researchers, alerted me to the complicated politics of Iraqi Ba‘thist refugees in Syria. I am grateful for Gabe Huck and Theresa Kubasak for including me in their work with Iraqi students through the Iraqi Student Project as well as their visits to Damascus churches and Syrian monasteries. Samar Hamarneh was a great companion as well as educator in the cultural and social life of Damascus. She, Hala, and George Farah guided me through the elusive specialness of Damascus, particularly its older neighborhoods.

Despite the centrality of oral interviews to the story this book seeks to tell, it would not have been possible to write without the access to the unique archive of the Ba‘thist state available at the Iraq Memory Foundation, now housed in the Hoover Institution. I owe a debt to Peter Sluglett, who vouched for me when I first started my research in early 2007, when the archive was just becoming available to scholars outside the intelligence and human rights communities. I deeply appreciate his friendship and unfailing support over the years. I am grateful

Acknowledgments

xiii

to Kanan Makiya for his support and to Hasan Mneimneh for his help in tackling the enormous archive of the Iraq Memory Foundation. At the Hoover Institution, where the archive was moved in 2009, I am indebted to archivists Ahmad Dhia and Haidar Hadi, who are working at developing a reasonable cataloguing system, and to the librarians in the reading room who continue to accommodate researchers working on the archive. Thanks to invitations by Paul Gregory, two summer workshops on comparative analysis of authoritarianism organized by him and Mark Harrison allowed me to conduct research and to engage scholars working on the Soviet Union. I am also grateful to a number of research assistants who have helped me over the past five years. Chief among them is Mustafa Hadji, who toiled for hundreds of hours to tabulate the school registers. Maria Kornalian and Christine Murphy, both students of George Washington University, also provided materials for different parts of the book. My thanks go as well to sociologist Faleh Abdul Jabar and cultural critic Fatima Mohsen for their insights into the politics and culture of Ba‘thist Iraq. Muhsin al-Musawi was kind enough to answer questions about cultural policy during the Iran-Iraq war. Ziad Turkey al-Jazzaa and Anas Yousef helped transform the scanned images of Iraqi newspapers and publications into better resolution printable images.

The breadth of scholarship and intellectual exchanges among my colleagues at the history department at The George Washington University where I have taught for the past twenty years created an environment that allowed me to move between early modern history where my earlier expertise lay, to the history of the recent past, the period covered in this book. I am particularly grateful to Bill Becker, who as chair was supportive of my work and of my requests for leave from teaching to complete it. Discussions with my comrades in reading, Mona Atia, Johanna Bockman, Elliott Colla, Ilana Feldman, Melani McAlister, and Andrew Zimmerman, have enriched the analyses in this book in innumerable ways. Long conversations with Joseph Sassoon about the content of the archive, the organization of the Ba‘th, and the frustrations of research have often helped make the project less overwhelming. Najwa al-Qattan and Larry Trittle have listened and offered insight at various stages of the research and writing of this book. Virginia Aksan has read most of the chapters of the manuscript and has offered valuable suggestions. My deepest thanks go to Kate Rouhana, my copy editor, who tamed my prose and insured that I did not go on unnecessarily.

A number of organizations were generous enough to fund this project. A John Simon Guggenheim fellowship for the year 2007–8 allowed me

to begin research in the Iraq Memory Foundation archive. Two travel grants from The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq, in 2007 and 2009, funded my research in Amman and Damascus. The Institute of Middle East Studies at The George Washington University underwrote a trip to the Hoover Institution and the cost of illustrations for the book.

Alfred, Zayd, and Waleed have each in his own way contributed to this book. They have listened to me when I could think and speak of nothing else and have endured the narrowing of my world and their exclusion from it. They are, as imm Adel used to say, “*hasheeshet ‘umri.*”

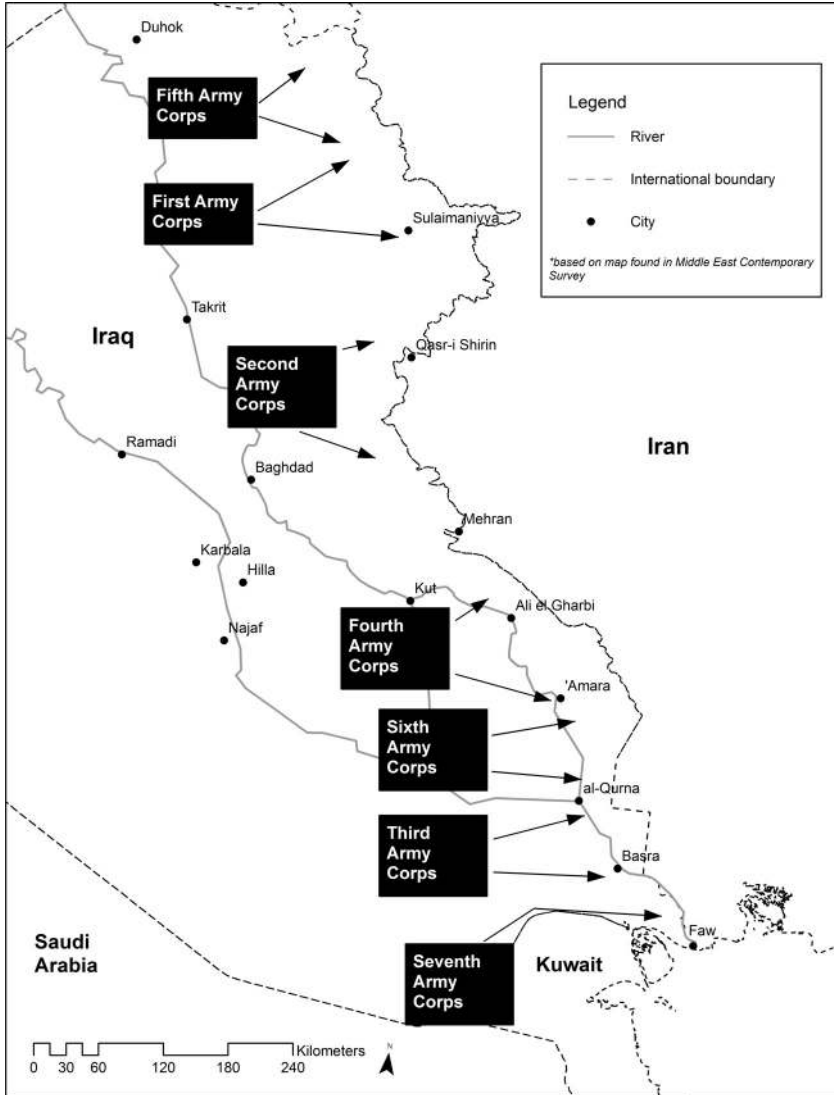
Note on Translations and Transliteration

This book is meant as much for a general reader as it is for a specialist. I have avoided the use of Arabic terms as much as possible and included a translation in the text whenever an Arabic term is mentioned.

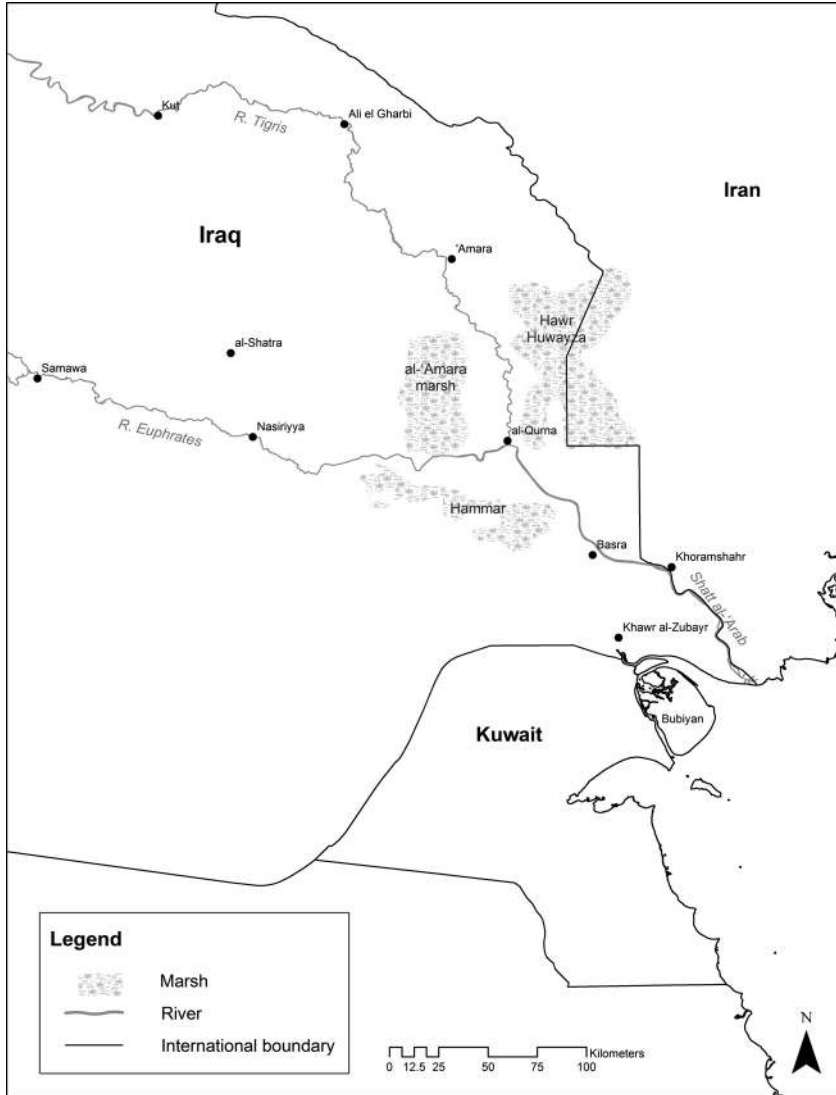
I have generally followed the transliteration guidelines of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* but have not used diacritical and long vowels marks. I have also avoided adding the symbols of “alif” and “ayn” when these appear at the beginning of personal and place names unless it is necessary. This will mean that readers of the English text who know Arabic might find it difficult to translate the English back to Arabic. I apologize for the inconvenience, but my choice will make it easier for non-Arabic speakers to follow the text.



MAP 1. Iraq: Provinces and principal cities. Designed by Ryan Sloan.



MAP 2. Distribution of Army Corps during Iran-Iraq war. Adapted by Ryan Sloan from Middle East Contemporary Survey.



MAP 3. Iraq: Principal southern towns and marshes. Designed by Ryan Sloan.