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Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies

How to deal with difficult heritage sites from Nazi Germany to the Baathist Regime in Iraq

Research Department

Al-Bayan Center Studies Series

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Abstract

Monuments and buildings are a physical connection to our past. They represent our history and through their public presence tell a story, which over time enshrines itself into our identity and our being.

As such, statues, monuments and heritage sites have long been used as political tools to represent leaders and their ideology. Particularly during the times of authoritarian rules, the building of representative structures becomes a tool to create loyalty and bind the population to its head of state.

The following report pursues the question of how to deal with physical heritage remaining from authoritarian regimes upon their demise. On the example of the Baathist regime under Saddam Hussein in Iraq, the report will analyse past and current happenings in the country with regards to heritage maintenance, reconfiguration, removal and destruction and will propose a best way forward.

To do so, the report will look at the idea and intent behind monuments and buildings constructed under Saddam as well as the response towards them following the collapse of the Baathist regime in 2003. These events and decisions will be contrasted with the work done in countries in similar circumstances several decades previously, such as Germany and the former USSR. Using the experience from other parts of the world in conjunction with theoretical knowledge on the subjects matter, while taking into account Iraq's individual situation, possible next steps will be proposed.

The report will close by looking at new monuments constructed in Iraq and their meaning for the representation of this ancient civilization.

Introduction

Monuments, memorials and sites of cultural heritage represent our history. They are symbols of our past. Their physical presence allows us to connect with our ancestors in a touch and as part of this passes on a story, which over time becomes part of our cultural identity.

Political regimes and persons of power have long realised the importance of such physical symbols and reminders. Around the world and across time, leaders have used monuments and buildings as visible markers of their reign, with the very public presence of heritage sites or monuments functioning as the ideal canvas to convey ideological messages to the people.

The question of preservation and creation of cultural objects is consequently a highly political one, with decision makers selecting heritage to be passed on to future generations depending on whether or not the object in question fits with their own narrative of past events and ideological framework.¹ As such it is argued that heritage can never be apolitical.²

The value put by leaders on using cultural objects as a method of communicating narrative and values to their citizens becomes particularly apparent at a time of political transition. Memorials of the past are destroyed and new ones built, to physically demonstrate a fresh set of cultural and political norms.³ Examples of such actions taken are manifold and can be found in every country, every century and across the political landscapes, from monarchs to communist regimes.

Just as the rest of the world, Iraq has seen many changes in power during its history and with that, changes in the landscaping of its major cities. Most recently the personality cult created by Saddam Hussein and his followers led to a mushrooming of newly created politically motivated monuments and buildings, such as statues of Saddam Hussein himself, his palaces as well as Baath party

1. Buckland, Michael 'Cultural Heritage (Patrimony): An Introduction', pp 11-25 in: Records, Archives and Memory: Selected Papers from the Conference and School on Records, Archives and Memory Studies, University of Zadar, 2013, p.2

2. McDowell, Sara (2008) 'Heritage, Memory and Identity', 2, Ashgate Research Companion, p.43

3. Bellentani, Federico (2018) 'Monuments and Memorials in Changing Societies: A Semiotic and Geographical Approach', Semioticon, <<https://semioticon.com/semiotix/2018/03/monuments-and-memorials-in-changing-societies-a-semiotic-and-geographical-approach/>>, last accessed 11 Aug 2018.

buildings, with the aim to create an omnipresent picture of the leader, to enshrine loyalty for the regime in the people and to communicate the new ideology through publicly visible landmarks.

After the fall of the regime in 2003, the tearing down and destruction of representing symbols was an immediate response, with a picture of the toppling of Saddam's statue on Firdos Square going around the world to represent the changes happening in the country.

At the same time many physical reminders remain of the decade long reign, which is remembered fondly by some but reminds many others of a repressive regime, that had inflicted pain and suffering on its people.

So how shall we deal with these visible remains of a difficult past? Should we destroy heritage sites which symbolise discrimination, violence and hatred for others? Would we be erasing part of our history? Might the preservation of such symbols increase the chances of future generations identifying with values similar to those of the regime? Or might it lead to forgetting about the past and its victims?

These and more are all questions to be considering when assessing on how to deal with monuments and memorials of a controversial past, while keeping in mind the responsibility we have towards future generations when deciding upon the fate of remainders of their ancestors, whether bad or good.

Iraq is not alone in having to find appropriate answers to these questions and other countries who found themselves in similar political situations several decades earlier can lead as examples as to how the process of monument destruction and preservation is viewed by the people generations after the regime in question lost power.

This report aims to provide a comprehensive – while not all-inclusive – overview of how Iraq has dealt with memorials, monuments and buildings remaining from the Saddam regime, and to contrast this with approaches of how Germany, the US and countries from the former USSR have dealt with their difficult heritage, in order to lead to conclusions on a constructive way forward for Iraq in the area of heritage preservation.

Saddam Hussein's creations and Iraqi national heritage

Iraq in general, and Baghdad – as its capital city – in particular, has over the centuries seen makeovers reflecting the various identities and ideologies of its leaders and invaders. From the Abbasid dynasty and Abu Ja'far al-Mansour to the Ottoman Empire, every new ruler invented a new version of the city and changed its appearance accordingly. In the late 1950s and 1960s a modernist dream of a cosmopolitan Baghdad led to a master plan to reflect European modernity in the city, which was manifested in numerous buildings and public spaces, such as the architect Walter Gropius' University of Baghdad administration building and Le Corbusier's gymnasium and athletic center. Just as his predecessors, Saddam Hussein aimed to put his stamp on the city, and the country as a whole, initiating a grand campaign in the early 1980s to dress the city in an imperial guise suited to the scope of his ambition.⁴

Saddam Hussein himself knew of the symbolic power of monuments and spent his reign creating a staggering number of physical representations of his power throughout the country. Next to the construction of public buildings, he supported the building of dozens of luxurious palaces, as well as countless monuments, memorials and statues. He knew of the influence of culture in shaping a country and aimed at the 'baathification' of culture, with writers and artists, who did not fit into the picture, forced to flee the country.⁵

4. Shabout, Nada (2013) 'A Makeover, Baghdad, the 2013 Arab Capital of Culture', Middle East Research and Information Project, MER266.

5. Anton, Sinan (2010) 'Bending History', Middle East Research and Information Project, MER257.



PICTURE 1 THE INSIDE OF ONE OF SADDAM HUSSEIN'S PALACES⁶

As analysed by Paul Cooper, Saddam Hussein further followed leaders like Mussolini and Hitler in appropriating ancient ruins to tell a gratifying story about his own authoritarian regime. Rather than destroying past artefacts, Saddam determined to use the antiquities as part of his plan to build a cult of Iraqi supremacy, with him at its head. As a result, in the decade after the Baath Party seized power in Iraq, the budget for the Iraqi Department of Antiquities increased by more than 80 per cent, archaeologists were one of the first groups met by Saddam after coming to power, and archaeological sites such as Nineveh, Hatra, Nimrud, Ur, 'Aqar Quf, Samarra and Ctesiphon underwent heavy reconstruction under his rule. Saddam built one of his most opulent palaces above the ruins of the old Babylon, allowing the visitors to the palace to view the greatness of the past and implying that Saddam's own legacy would be equally great. The ruins of the old city of Babylon also underwent reconstruction in a quite unusual way, as Saddam decided to raise its wall to a historically improbable 11.5m and to have his name stamped into Babylon's bricks. The ambitious project cost the people of Iraq millions of dollars at the height of the Iran-Iraq war and is still visible today.⁷

6. Mosse, Richard in Owen Vince (2016) 'Architecture After Excess: The Palaces of Saddam's Baghdad', <https://failedarchitecture.com/architecture-after-excess-the-palaces-of-saddams-baghdad/>, last accessed 14 Nov 2018.

7. Cooper, Paul (2018) 'Saddam's Disney for a despot': How dictators exploit ruins', BBC News, <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20180419-saddam-disney-for-a-despot-how-dictators-exploit-ruins>, last accessed 15 Oct 2018.



PICTURE 2 SADDAM HUSSEIN'S PALACE, BABYLON⁸

Saddam combined the old and the new to manifest the supremacy of Iraq and the 'spirit of victory' in the solid forms of monuments, murals and statues. As part of this decade long project, two of Baghdad's most recognizable landmarks, the Martyr's Monument, and the Victory Arch, were constructed at the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war, which will be further discussed below.

Finally, Saddam turned the country's cities into canvases to glorify him as the head of state, with monuments and murals of himself depicted all around. With his descent from power, it should also mean the end of his artificial recreations of himself.

8. Froelich, Paula (2014) 'Inside Saddam Hussein's ruined Babylon palace', New York Post, <https://nypost.com/2014/07/31/inside-saddam-husseins-ruined-babylon-palace/>, last accessed 14 Nov 2018.



PICTURE 3 A NOW-DESTROYED TILE MURAL OF SADDAM HUSSEIN IN THE CITY OF KARBALA⁹

Debaathification and the destruction of heritage

While a certain initial phase of destruction seems to be the norm at a time of regime change, particularly after the fall of an authoritarian and violent regime, destruction in Iraq seems to have gone further than average, leading to voices which warn of future regret if anymore artefacts are to be destroyed.

More precisely, after the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, Iraq saw three phases of cultural and historical destruction. Immediately after the political change, the chaos and mob violence following the fall of the Baath Regime led to a wave of demolition, particularly of statues, murals and frescos depicting Saddam Hussein all over Iraq, with the tearing down of Saddam's statue on Firdos Square

9. Walt, Vivienne (2018) <http://time.com/5205636/saddam-image-iraq-anniversary/>, last accessed 11 Nov 2018.

becoming a symbol of the liberation of Iraq from the dictator.



PICTURE 4 SADDAM HUSSEIN'S STATUE ON FIRDOS SQUARE, BAGHDAD¹⁰

Such an immediate reaction is a common response to the fall of a dictator and can be explained and understood as an emotional reaction to the end of years of political oppression of parts of the population. What followed was a continued period of looting and arson, which saw many more general cultural and historical sites destroyed, such as the Iraq National Museum, the Iraq National Library and archive, Iraq's Museum of Modern Art or the Hashemite Parliament House. Furthermore, numerous Iraqi civilians and foreigners became involved in black market activities, looting sensitive archaeological sites across Iraq to smuggle the antiquities out of the country and receive a high price abroad. The continuing hostility between the different factions in Iraq also had ruinous consequences for the country's cultural heritage with monuments, symbols and artefacts destroyed in the crossfire or deliberately targeted by opposing groups.¹¹ While greatly regretful, this might be considered collateral damage at a time of instability and change. But what happened later was far less understandable.

10. Time, (2003) '<http://time.com/4394274/iraq-kadhimi-al-jabbouri-saddam-hussein-statue-toppled-baghdad/>' last accessed 11 Aug 2018.

11. Isakhan, Benjamin (2010) 'Destroying the Symbols of Baathist Iraq', 5/2, Taarii Newsletter, The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq.

The decision holders of the coalition forces took it upon themselves to destroy or to occupy monuments and buildings attributed to the Baathist regime, seemingly without consideration of their meaning for Iraqis or potential value for future generations. As a consequence, the coalition forces *inter alia* set up a military base in Saddam's various palaces and Baghdad's Martyr's Memorial or used the mausoleum of Michel Aflaq, 'Father of Pan-Arabism' and co-founder of the Baath Party as quarters for their soldiers.¹² No consideration was given to the Iraqi labour used or Iraqi money spent to erect such and other monuments. There was further no consideration as to potential Iraqi feelings towards such places. Next to using – or misusing – these cultural remains of the previous regime, the coalition forces were active in supporting the removal and destruction of Saddam's monuments, particularly those depicting the old leader's face. As a result for example Saddam's Giant Heads on the Palace of the Republican Guard were taken down by the coalition forces and later melted as scrap metal.



PICTURE 5 SADDAM HUSSEIN'S GIANT HEADS FROM THE PALACE OF THE
REPUBLICAN GUARD, BAGHDAD¹³

12. Isakhan, Benjamin (2017) 'Destroying the Past: Targeting the Symbols of Baathist Iraq', APH Essay, Australian Policy, www.apf.org.au/destroying-the-past-targeting-the-symbols-of-baathist-iraq, last accessed 15 Oct 2018.

13. Michael John Grist (2009) '7 Bizarre Monuments of Saddam's Iraq', <http://www.michaeljohngrist.com/2009/10/7-bizarre-monuments-of-saddams-iraq/> last accessed 15 Nov 2018.

The final phase of destruction was initiated by Iraq's new government. Post 2003, it was decided that the country's visual landscape had to be 'debaathified'. Consequently, in 2005, a Committee to Remove the Remains of the Baath Party and Consider Building New Monuments and Murals was appointed by then Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. It had a hit list of more than 100 artefacts from the Saddam era. The committee consisted of ten members representing Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds, but did not include any art historians, artists or other experts related to the field.¹⁴ As the name entails, it was the committee's main aim to remove remaining Baathist symbols, and arguably went about this goal without the consultation or inclusions of citizens. When monuments depicting symbols of prosperity and power under Saddam Hussein, such as a fountain shaped like a ship in Baghdad's Museum Circle, or sculptures of a helmeted soldier, a sheaf of wheat and a cluster of people holding up sunflowers, as well as the statue of an Iraqi soldier, his arms tied between two vehicles pulling them out of their sockets, in Palestine Street started to be dismantled and disappeared, the general population was first not aware that this was done upon political order.¹⁵

The examples demonstrated the fact that the dealing with Saddam's old monuments was not transparent. The Debaathification Committee drew up the edict on the monuments, labelled Document 900 in secret and the list of memorials to be removed was not disclosed. Most monuments perceived as being offensive have previously been destroyed. The Ministry of Culture later announced a move to remove such monuments and relocate them to museums, although such museums are to date not publicly known.¹⁶

14. Anton, Sinan (2010) 'Bending History', Middle East Research and Information Project, MER257.

15. Spinner, Jackie (2006) 'Hussein-Era Symbols Disappear Under Edict', Washington Post, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/01/08/AR2006010800820.html>, last accessed 16 Oct 2018.

16. Shabout, Nada (2013) 'A Makeover, Baghdad, the 2013 Arab Capital of Culture', Middle East Research and Information Project, MER266.



PICTURE 6 SWORDS OF QADISIYAH, HANDS OF VICTORY, BAGHDAD¹⁷

As part of the *debaathification* process, two of the biggest monuments erected under Saddam, the Victory Arch, Qaes al-Nasr, and the Martyr's Monument, or Nusb al-Shahid, were announced to be destroyed or taken down. Both are still standing today, with neither action having gone through a known public consultation process. According to the New York Times in 2007, the committee planned a new statue to replace the Victory Arch, a copy of Saddam's rifle, with the barrel tied in a knot, but this is currently not in place.¹⁸

While there are Iraqi residents who welcome the work of the committee and the removal of these statues to support their individual healing process, to be able to forget about the past or for the belief that it will facilitate the country moving in a different direction in the future, others argue that the monuments are necessary reminders of suffering endured and an important part of the country's history,

17. Weate, Jeremy (2012) 'Swords of Qādisīyah, Hands of Victory, Baghdad, Iraq', Wikipedia, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/97/Swords_of_Q%C4%81dis%C4%AByah_%287112414819%29.jpg last accessed 15 Nov 2018.

18. Semple, Kirk (2007) 'Iraq Confronts Hussein Legacy Cast in Bronze', The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/08/world/middleeast/08monuments.html>, last accessed 15 Oct 2018.

worthy of memorialization.¹⁹ As argued by Saad al-Basri, a professor of sculpture in the College of Fine Arts in Baghdad, in an interview to the New York Times, history cannot be changed and the monuments should be considered as part of archaeology that speak to a specific era in Iraqi history.²⁰

While the various and often contradictory views on how these physical remainders should be dealt with cannot necessarily all be accommodated at all times, the fact that the fate of national heritage, particularly from a difficult part of history, was simply decided upon without public consultation, is troubling.

Decisions with regards to national heritage, whether good or bad, are deeply sensitive ones, which can have a wide reaching impact on society today as well as on future developments in the country. Within this context Benjamin Isakhan, Associate Professor of Politics and Policy Studies at Deakin University posed the important question of what it means for national identity and social cohesion in Iraq to have these monuments destroyed.²¹

Particularly in the Iraq of today, with its geographical, social, ethnical and religious frictions, dealing with reminders of the past has to be done in a well thought through, comprehensive and cautious way, which should include all factions involved.

To keep or to remove? Learning from examples

While every situation is unique in its own way, Iraq is not alone in having to face challenges such as the one mentioned above. All around the world and across time, there have been countries emerging after the rule of authoritarian leaders which had created a personal cult around them, which they manifested in the erection of monuments and statues, and which later generations were forced to deal with. Two of the most widely known and well documented examples are the Nazi era and the consequential fall of Adolf Hitler in Germany, as well as the demise of the former USSR.

19. Semple, Kirk (2007) 'Iraq Confronts Hussein Legacy Cast in Bronze', The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/08/world/middleeast/08monuments.html>, last accessed 15 Oct 2018.

20. Semple, Kirk (2007) 'Iraq Confronts Hussein Legacy Cast in Bronze', The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/08/world/middleeast/08monuments.html>, last accessed 15 Oct 2018.

21. Isakhan, Benjamin (2017) 'Destroying the Past: Targeting the Symbols of Baathist Iraq', APH Essay, Australian Policy, www.aph.org.au/destroying-the-past-targeting-the-symbols-of-baathist-iraq, last accessed 15 Oct 2018.

Germany and Adolf Hitler

Just as for Saddam Hussein, it was Adolf Hitler's aim to create monuments and buildings which would serve as manifestations of his perceived greatness and grandeur for centuries to come. The result was the creation of impressive structures, such as the Nazi Party Rally Grounds in Nuremberg, Berlin Olympia Stadium, the tourist resort Prora in Rugen and many more, as well as numerous buildings for general use, such as offices, schools and military barracks, next to statues and memorials, as well as buildings used to interrogate, torture and kill the system's victims.

Upon the regime's demise, the different sites have over the years been dealt with in a variety of ways. Some of them were destroyed, some removed, others neglected and again others were renovated, put to new use or reimagined as museums, depending on their importance, ideological value, ability to evoke emotions and location. As a result of the sheer number of buildings created during the Nazi era, a considerable number of these sites still exist today. Many continued to be used such as the 'Führer's building' in Munich, which houses institutes and a music school, or the central airport Berlin-Tempelhof, which was in use as an airport until 2008, when it started housing events. Further administrative buildings, such as Göring's aviation ministry or the 'house of ministries' in the former GDR, also continued their functions in a variety of ways. At the same time there were other structures, such as the Zeppelin Field in Nuremberg, which were destroyed, some of them with the clear intent to prevent them from becoming cultic sites. As argued by Wolfgang Benz, it is better for buildings and sites which would mainly or solely serve the purpose of sensationalism, such as the bunker underneath the Reich Chancellery, in which Hitler died, to disappear. He continues that when considering if a relict of the past is supposed to stay or not, it is not only important to consider its authenticity and historical value, but equally its importance as a centre of learning as well as its value as a symbol of the previous reign of violence. For buildings which are particularly difficult to deal with, as both maintenance and destruction do not seem viable options, simple neglect might sometimes be a solution. But at the same time it is vital, as noted by Benz, to find ways to break the staged force of these buildings and to use them in the active memory seeking of the dictatorship.²² While the majority of relicts

22. Benz, Wolfgang (2013) 'Errichtet, um zu verführen und zu unterwerfen', Tagesspiegel, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/wissen/wolfgang-benz-ueber-ns-grossbauten-errichtet-um-zu-verfuehren-und-zu-unterwerfen/8582534.html> , last accessed 15 Oct 2018.

from the Nazi era have by now found their appropriate place, it might come as a surprise how long it took for the different acceptable solutions to be found. Discussions on how some of these historically relevant and representative places best serve their place in today's world without forgetting the past, can persist for a long time to come, as visible in the case of Hitler's birth house, which up until last year – 72 years after Hitler's death – was subject of a court dispute between the owner and the Republic of Austria, which ended in the dispossession of the owner and the house being put under the control of the Republic of Austria, with the aim for the building to adopt an appropriate purpose.²³



PICTURE 7 ADOLF HITLER BIRTH PLACE, BRAUNAU, AUSTRIA²⁴

23. Felke, Catharina (2017) 'Hitler stoert', Zeit Online, <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2017-06/ns-architektur-oesterreich-hitlerhaus-deutschland-umgang>, last accessed 16 Oct 2018.

24. Thomas Ledl - Eigenes Werk (2015), CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=42914661>, last accessed 15 Nov 2018.

It has been documented that particularly in previous Nazi strongholds, such as Germany and Austria, commemorative culture of the time has throughout the decades been dealt with in an ambiguous fashion, resulting in disputes flaring up today. Over seventy years after the demise of the regime, examples can be found particularly in rural areas, where memorials from the Nazi times have been redesigned but specific symbols of Nazism kept without additional explanation. The discovery of such symbols by outsiders have led to disputes time and time again, with local community leaders arguing for the monuments to remain as they are, with experts calling for change and for a consistent culture of remembrance.²⁵ The general population often cannot see the problem and does not wish for their memorial to be changed. While change of a site the people have become used to in their surroundings and feel attached to can stir up emotions, as will be further visualized below, it is vital to remember that monuments are there to stay. They will persist in the decades or possibly centuries to come and the symbol they represent has the power to influence future generations. As such it is only advisable to find a coherent way from the start and to deal with the changing or removing on monuments as early as possible, to avoid problems persisting a century after the demise of the old regime. How to deal with individual relicts and sites may thereby be contested.

Examples of buildings in Germany, which are successfully used today, where the old architecture was kept, but at the same time a modern style was added, and the past was not forgotten, include the Brown House in Munich which houses a documentation centre today, the Berlin Olympia stadium, today's Ministry of Finance in Berlin or an Adolf Hitler School near Sonthofen, which is still in use today, but the name of which was changed to Ludwig Beck, the head of the military resistance against Adolf Hitler.²⁶

25. See for example: Krenn – Aichinger, Michaela (2017) 'Schlampiger Umgang mit NS-Vergangenheit', OoeNachrichten, <https://www.nachrichten.at/oberoesterreich/wels/Schlampiger-Umgang-mit-NS-Vergangenheit;art67,2572418>, last accessed 14 Oct 2018.

26. Kellerhoff, Sven Felix (2015) 'Das sind die groessten Relikte der Nazizeit', Welt, <https://www.welt.de/geschichte/zweiter-weltkrieg/article141184283/Das-sind-die-groessten-Relikte-der-Nazizeit.html>, last accessed 16 Oct 2018.



PICTURE 8 OLYMPIA STADIUM, BERLIN²⁷

To come to such positive conclusions is not an easy process and can take a considerable amount of time. In Germany questions on how to deal with monuments and other physical remains of the Nazi era troubled the German public for decades after the demise of Hitler's regime. Until today there is a divide on how to deal with buildings and sites which served the Nazi party, as the various viewpoints are directly connected to the individual's concept of German national identity²⁸ as well as their vision for the future of the country. Two main strands have developed, with the one side standing up for the destruction of Nazi heritage and the other side supporting the preservation of the same. The former group is convinced that excessive fixation on the past is obstructing Germany from moving forward and from creating a stable identity of a self-confident, sovereign state; while the latter group argues that continuous and active critical

27. Leisten, Rebecca (2013) ‚Das Berliner Olympiastadion im September 2013‘, Eigenes Werk, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=51963059>, last accessed 16 Nov 2018.

28. Schmitz, Michael (2005) ‚Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit, Das Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas im Kontext deutscher Erinnerungspolitik‘, 1, Kritische Berichte, p.53

engagement with the difficult past is vital to create a self-reflective people.²⁹ The two strands are consequently highly contradictory in nature, with both having their valid points with a need to be assessed on a case to case basis.

As argued by Catharina Felke, it is fully comprehensible and reasonable that not all buildings constructed under the Nazi regime are protected as historic monuments. Many schools or barracks built under the Nazis are still used in their same function today. But it is arguably important to preserve those buildings which were erected for ideological reasons to represent the regime. Countries struggle with these decisions, as can also be seen in Germany, where for example one of the most colossal Nazi builds, the planned tourist resort Prora on Rugen, which became the sixth longest building in the world, clearly visible on its location next to the sea, was long left in ruins and only recently sold to private investors, who sold it on without noting or protecting the original built, purpose and history of the building. Also the House of Art in Munich, a museum complex for 'pure German', i.e. racist art, remained undocumented for decades. It took 50 years from the fall of the Nazi regime to hang up a plaque remembering the building's past.³⁰

29. Schmitz, Michael (2005) 'Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit, Das Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas im Kontext deutscher Erinnerungspolitik', 1, Kritische Berichte, pp.54/55

30. Felke, Catharina (2017) 'Hitler stoert', Zeit Online, <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2017-06/ns-architektur-oesterreich-hitlerhaus-deutschland-umgang>, last accessed 16 Oct 2018.



PICTURE 9 TOURIST RESORT PRORA ON RÜGEN³¹

As visible in Germany, it is easier to invest in and protect sites, which speak for the victims, such as the former concentration camps – Auschwitz being the most well-known example –, rather than sites which represent the regime and perpetrators. From a pedagogic perspective, both places are vital to feed our cultural memory. Eye witnesses from the time are slowly disappearing and it is only the buildings that remain, which physically tell the story of how these regimes came to power, acted and persisted.

31. Lambernd, Jochen (2011) ,Prora - Der "Koloss von Rügen"“, <https://www.ndr.de/kultur/geschichte/schauplaetze/Prora-Der-Koloss-von-Ruegen.prora113.html>, last accessed 16 Nov 2018.



PICTURE 10 ENTRANCE OF AUSCHWITZ CONCENTRATION CAMP, POLAND³²

In the case of Germany it could be observed that the issue of how to deal with the physical remains of the Nazi regime led to intense debates with historians, politicians and citizens disagreeing upon the best way forward. Particular difficulties arose when it came to the question on how to deal with locations where perpetrators enacted their power, such a buildings in which the heads of the regime planned and ordered mass crimes, but did not actually execute them. The most horrendous crimes were thought of and ordered in these buildings, but as they were not executed there, the visible connection to the consequential victims is missing. This fact in connection with the often impressive architectural design of these places, the buildings risk to become places of fascination, underlined by a positive connotation, and identification.³³

As can be seen in day to day life in Berlin, Vienna, Moscow and other cities and places around the world, where statues and monuments were constructed by authoritarian rulers in the past, fast forward a few decades and people's feelings

32. CTS (2011) ,Rubano reperti da Auschwitz, condannati due studenti inglesi', <http://www.ctsnotizie.it/rubano-reperti-da-auschwitz-condannati-due-studenti-inglesi/>, last accessed 16 Nov 2018.

33. Esche, Alexandra (2011) Täterorte. Zum schwierigen Umgang mit Relikten der NS-Vergangenheit, Bericht über die Tagung des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte, München – Berlin und des Bayerischen, Landesamts für Denkmalpflege in der Dokumentation Obersalzberg.

change towards individual places. As the memory and the experiences change, so does the type of attachment change towards individual places. In a study conducted by Sharon MacDonald on why people visit the former Nazi Rally Grounds in Germany and their feelings towards them, the results showed that the majority of people went there to relax and to enjoy the beautiful open space and greenery as well as to use the variety of sports facilities available. At the same time MacDonald noted that even though the majority of visitors did not come with the specific aim to visit Nazi heritage, every person interviewed knew about the site's history and had on previous occasions visited an exhibition or attended a tour about the site's history or intended to do so in due course.³⁴



PICTURE 11 ZEPPELIN FIELD, NAZI PARTY RALLY GROUNDS, NUREMBERG, GERMANY³⁵

Through the continued existence of these places, people can be enticed to remember. While there will always be a few who remember positively and who will be proud to walk in the previous leader's footsteps, if informed correctly, the majority of people will see the buildings and reflect upon their meaning, while still being able to live a modern life on and around their grounds.

For people to be physically present at a place feels significantly different from learning about it through books or in school.³⁶ People need to engage with objects

34. Macdonald, Sharon (2009) *Difficult Heritage, Negotiating the Nazi past in Nuremberg and beyond*, Routledge: New York, p.168

35. Wagner, Stefan (2004) 'Zeppelinfeld, main tribune', Own work, CC BY-SA 2.0 de, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=25023>, last accessed 16 Nov 2018.

36. Macdonald, Sharon (2009) *Difficult Heritage, Negotiating the Nazi past in Nuremberg and beyond*, Routledge: New York, p.169

in order to keep memory alive. And as noted by Sharon MacDonald as part of her research, seventy years on from the atrocities of the Nazi era, Germans visiting the Rally Grounds were mostly in favour to keep memorials to remember, in order to ensure that similar events never happen again.³⁷

While it is certainly necessary to keep and preserve some difficult heritage sites to function as a ‘Mahnmal’,³⁸ i.e. for future generations to remember and being able to visualize the horrors of the past and as such prevent them from repeating themselves, the removal or demolition of other monuments might be an important symbol to support the healing of parts of the population who were wronged by the previous regime, as well as to take a clear stance that it is unwanted that people, current or future generations identify themselves with or glorify the previously conducted acts and resurrect the violence and hatred committed by the regime in the future.

This is of particular concern in Germany and Europe as a whole today, where right wing nationalists are once more rising in power. While the destruction of old monuments will certainly not put a stop to the development of extremist ideologies, the appropriate handling of tangible remains of a dark past at the time of reconstruction might support the building of a progressive, peaceful and all-inclusive society, which might in turn make it more difficult for the old powers to be revived later on and might minimise the normalisation or glorification of the destructive regime. Removing physical reminders of the past will change how this part of history will be felt and remembered by generations to come and will thus influence a society’s cultural memory. Removing such symbols can be a painful process for the societies involved as the monuments often have different meanings to different people. A powerful example could recently be observed in Charlottesville, USA, where violence was used by right-wing extremist protesters, who were dissatisfied with the city’s plans to remove the statue of General Robert E. Lee, a statue, which symbolises the honouring of America’s slave history.³⁹

37. Ibid.

38. The term ‘Mahnmal’ is sometimes translated as ‘memorial’, carries a connotation not only of being a ‘reminder’ of the past but, as it contains the roots of the word for ‘to admonish’, also as a kind of warning for the future.

39. Guttormsen, Torgtim Sneve (2018) ‘Is it right to destroy monuments over our dark past?’, Science Nordic, <<http://sciencenordic.com/it-right-destroy-monuments-over-our-dark-past/>>, last accessed 11 Aug 2018.



PICTURE 12 GENERAL LEE STATUE, CHARLOTTESVILLE, U.S.⁴⁰

It is not possible to live in the past and a country has to move forward, also with buildings that house difficult memories, as shown in Germany at the previous airport Berlin-Tempelhof or the Nazi party rally grounds in Nuremberg, which are both used today to house modern day festivals and sports events. At the same time it is arguable that their dark past should not be fully forgotten. Current and future generations should be able to go to these places and be able to learn and remember the happenings which took place there.⁴¹ In Germany it took until the 1980s that places of documentation were erected,⁴² which resulted in an educational loss with regards to the happenings of the regime, for an entire generation post-Hitler.

40. Cville dog, (2006) 'Lee Park, Charlottesville' - Own work, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=21113526>, last accessed 11 Nov 2018.

41. Benz, Wolfgang (2013) 'Errichtet, um zu verfuehren und zu unterwerfen', Tagesspiegel, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/wissen/wolfgang-benz-ueber-ns-grossbauten-errichtet-um-zu-verfuehren-und-zu-unterwerfen/8582534.html>, last accessed 15 Oct 2018.

42. Felke, Catharina (2017) 'Hitler stoert', Zeit Online, <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/2017-06/ns-architektur-oesterreich-hitlerhaus-deutschland-umgang>, last accessed 16 Oct 2018.

Today, efforts are made to build new memorials, which recognise and remember the difficulties of the past, while sending a warning to the present and future generations. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is such an example. Constructed in Berlin in 2003/4 this modern memorial works towards making the memory of the Holocaust into an integral part of a reflected and critical national identity, and encourages its visitors to carry out a processual experience of remembering.⁴³



PICTURE 13 MEMORIAL TO THE MURDERED JEWS OF EUROPE , BERLIN⁴⁴

In comparison, in Vienna, Austria, for example, various organisations pulled together to put a plaque with the names of Hitler's known victims on or in front of the house they were last known to have resided in. This small but effective action makes it possible for people to follow and realize the scale of Nazi destruction of human life and further ensures that no individual victim is ever to be forgotten.

43. Schmitz, Michael (2005) 'Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit, Das Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas im Kontext deutscher Erinnerungspolitik', 1, Kritische Berichte, p.60

44. Orator (2016) 'Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, View from South to Memorial' - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=56502968>, last accessed 16 Nov 2018.



PICTURE 14 ‘STONES OF MEMORY’, VIENNA, AUSTRIA⁴⁵

Remainders of Communism in the former USSR

While some monuments of the Nazi era are still in place today, Germany and the surrounding countries have clearly taken the general stance to distance themselves from their Nazi past. Hitler’s picture cannot be seen in public anymore today, to the point that a law was introduced in Germany and Austria, which makes the usage of Nazi slogans or signs as well as any public re-engagement in National Socialist activities an offence, punishable by law. The remaining physical representatives of Hitler’s reign are nearly exclusively marked as such with public condemnation of the regime’s actions inscribed on plaques.

But this course of action is not the only possible route to dealing with difficult heritage. The situations of countries of the former USSR demonstrate different options:

During the Soviet era, succeeding leaders’ intent on leaving their mark led to the building of thousands of monuments to their power. As part of the dissolution

45. Gryffindor(2007) ‘Steine der Erinnerung, Leopoldstadt 2007’ - Eigenes Werk, CC BY 2.5, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=1608256>, last accessed 16 Nov 2018.

of the USSR in 1991, the Russian government made it one of the conditions of their troops' withdrawal that Red Army monuments were to be preserved. Yet the different countries emerging from Soviet rule have dealt with the legacy in various ways. In those countries, which remained close ties with Moscow, Soviet monuments are protected and clearly visible in public places.⁴⁶ Not all are happy with the remaining physical reminders of the Soviet rule. In Bulgaria, the Soviet Army monument in central Sofia has regularly been painted or defaced and as part of the most recent overthrowing of the government in Ukraine, more than 100 Lenin statues are said to have been dismantled.⁴⁷ In Russia itself monuments were taken down, but it is said that there is a much more lenient approach towards persisting communist monuments and signs on buildings. The communist past is considered part of the national heritage, which, while necessary to be educated about, does not need to be hidden.

An interesting approach has been found to deal with the statues, which were removed from public places:

In countries, which chose to move towards the west, most of the statues and memorials were pulled down and destroyed. Those which survived were placed in special zones or theme parks, such as Grutas Park in Lithuania or Szoborpark in Budapest.⁴⁸ In Lithuania, Grutas Park is an example of how the power of controversial monuments can be diminished while they are still accessible for the public and not destroyed. Home to 86 relics of the Soviet era, Grutas Park is a sculpture garden, which was used in lieu of a museum to house the statues of prominent communist leaders and figures, after they had been pulled down by the citizens when Lithuania declared its independence from the Soviet Union. Also in Moscow, many statues and monuments from the communist era now reside in a section of Museon Arts Park. It is asserted that by grouping them together, it is possible to put them into historical and cultural context. In addition, through strategic curation, the statues which were previously meant to honour and glorify authoritarian leaders and their regimes, are given new meaning.⁴⁹

46. Pyzik, Agata (2014) 'Why Soviet monuments should be protected', *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/29/soviet-ussr-monuments-should-be-protected>, last accessed 16 Oct 2018.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

49. Glaser, James (2017) 'What Russia can teach the US about what to do with Confederate statues after Charlottesville', *Independent*, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/charlottesville-protest-confederate-statue-taken-down-what-to-do-a7892856.html>, last accessed 16 Oct 2018.



PICTURE 15 BUSTS AND STATUES OF LENIN, AT GRŪTO PARKAS, LITHUANIA⁵⁰

Whether politicians and/or populations wish to maintain or remove old statues of an ambiguous past depends greatly on how they wish their country to be seen in the present as well as in the future. Agata Pyzik, cultural critic and journalist, thereby argues that current problems should not be confused with the past and that it is wrong to destroy such monuments as they serve as a reminder of the people's sacrifice made during previous wars.⁵¹ Such a stance overlooks the very nature of people's relationships with these monuments, in as they are highly emotional and greatly forfeit rational consideration. There is a reason why Russia has insisted on the monuments to stay in their place. They should demonstrate the continuing connection between the individual countries with Russia. While parts of the population will agree and value this connection and consequently have positive feelings towards the metal and stone structures representing the relationship, others wish to remove these symbols of dependency and oppression,

50. Adriaio (2012) 'Busts and statue of Vladimir Lenin ', Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=20638464>, last accessed 16 Nov 2018.

51. Pyzik, Agata (2014) 'Why Soviet monuments should be protected', The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/29/soviet-ussr-monuments-should-be-protected>, last accessed 16 Oct 2018.

as they see it. Red Army monuments are also still present in other countries, such as Vienna and Berlin, where they remain without harassment. In these cases the continuance in place of these memorials does not necessarily mean the support of the Stalinist rule, but rather a current lack of emotional attachment and as a result a lack of interest by the population and their representing politicians.

Remembering the past – Saddam’s remaining relicts and their use

Also in Iraq – while the prolonged instability in the country together with the debaathification process has resulted in the destruction of a vast number of statues and memorials erected under Saddam Hussein’s rule – a number of buildings and landmarks remain, with their usages varying significantly today.

Most noticeable, two of Baghdad’s most recognisable landmarks: the Hands of Victory and the Martyr’s Monument were constructed during the Saddam regime. Post 2003, there were persistent talks to dismantle the two monuments, but to date they are both still defining Baghdad’s skyline. It thereby has to be noted that the two landmarks are intrinsically different, despite both being constructed during the same political period.

The Martyr’s Monument or Nusb al-Shahid was completed in 1983. Designed by the Iraqi sculptor Ismail Fattah al-Turk (1934-2004), the 130-foot high, halved blue Abbasid dome sits on a circular platform surrounded by an artificial lake. A sculptured Iraqi flag rises up into the dome, symbolizing the rise of the martyr’s soul at the moment of death. The dome is split in two as to allow the soul’s release. After the war, hundreds of thousands of names of fallen soldiers were inscribed in the wall surrounding the museum, which is included on an underground level beneath the dome.⁵² The central narrative of the Martyr’s Monument is the sacrifice for the nation. Apart from a short text about martyrdom attributed to the ruler, Saddam Hussein, he is absent from it.

52. Anton, Sinan (2010) ‘Bending History’, Middle East Research and Information Project, MER257.



PICTURE 16 MARTYR'S MONUMENT, BAGHDAD⁵³

Within the population there seems to be a general positive connotation towards the monument, with Iraqis standing proudly to have their pictures taken and it even being used in advertisement. Since the fall of Saddam, the museum underneath the monument has been put to new use. While the museum housed artefacts about Saddam and the Iran-Iraq war during Baathist rule, today it is said to honour the victims of the Saddam regime, although it was not possible to verify this, due to the monument and museum not being open to the general public and difficult to access in late 2018.

53. Mondalawy (2010) 'نصب الشهيد في بغداد للفنان الراحل اسماعيل عبد الفتاح الترك' Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=40074703>, last accessed 20 Nov 2018.

In contrast, the Victory Arch, projects an intrinsically different political ethos. Qaws al-Nasr features two pairs of crossed swords, held by two bronze fists, the contours of which were taken from Saddam Hussein's own hands. Nets holding 5000 helmets of Iranian soldiers surround the base of each arm. It is further said that Saddam conceived and sketched the monument himself.⁵⁴

As noted earlier, the Committee to Remove the Remains of the Baath Party and Consider Building New Monuments and Murals initially took the decision to remove both monuments. They started to dismantle the Victory Arch in 2007, but work was halted and once again without a public announcement or consultation process the decision was reversed, the Arch restored⁵⁵ and can today be seen in its full glory when driving past the Green Zone in Baghdad.

The Victory Arch symbolises Saddam's ideology in its purest form and even represents his physical features. While there are grounds to argue that such monuments should be preserved, they should be used as an educational tool and be explained within their historic context. This is to date not the case with the Victory Arch.

Next to big and small monuments erected during his reign, Saddam Hussein financed the construction of more than seventy luxurious palaces. Damaged and used as operational centres by foreign armies after the Baath rule, some of the palaces have now started to be reused. In Basra, Saddam's former riverside palace was transformed into a museum and has for the last two years been open to the public to showcase the region's historical treasures. With regards to the museums difficult past, Mahdi Aloosawi, who managed the renovation, conceded that the past has been heavily weighing on his mind for some time, but he later realised that Saddam Hussein is now part of Iraqi history and that the palaces were built with the 'blood of Iraqi people' rather than by the man himself. Finally he is quoted saying that by housing a museum in one of his palaces, civilisation prevailed over dictatorship.⁵⁶

54. Anton, Sinan (2010) 'Bending History', Middle East Research and Information Project, MER257.

55. Myers, Steven Lee (2011), 'Iraq Restores Monument Symbolizing Hussein Era', New York Times, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/06/world/middleeast/06iraq.html>>, last accessed 5 Oct 2018

56. Skarlatos, Theopi (2016) 'Basra Museum: How Saddam's palace was given to the people', BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-37550027>, last accessed 14 Oct 2018.



PICTURE 17 BASRAH MUSEUM⁵⁷

Similar arguments are brought forward in the case of the Al Faw palace near the airport in Baghdad, which is due to house the American University of Iraq – Baghdad.

While the palaces were constructed for Saddam's comfort, entertainment and demonstration of power, they were built using the money and manpower of the Iraqi population, which would be troubling to make into rubble. Furthermore, the palaces can serve as educational tools, showing current and future generations the methods deployed by authoritarian leaders. Using them in a positive way today by housing museums, educational or social facilities within them is certainly the best purpose these buildings can fulfil, but it should thereby not be forgotten to provide the population with possibilities of learning and to document the places' past, as done in the examples of Germany, like the Nuremberg Nazi Rally Grounds, which fulfils a modern purpose as a recreational area for the local population, but also houses a museum and documentation centre. For these reasons, it seems regretful to entirely neglect some of the bigger palaces

57. PersianDutchNetwork (2016) 'Basrah Museum in Iraq in 2016 Photo: Persian Dutch Network' - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=54586492>, last accessed 14 Nov 2018.

constructed, such as Saddam's palace in Babylon.

Next to impressive structures, such as the palaces, general buildings, such as schools and others were constructed under Saddam, many of which are still in use today. While not every building can or should become a symbol for past atrocities and remembrance, it might be considered in the future to account for the past of some of these buildings, and to publicly take note of past happenings.

This should be particularly the case for places of suffering for victims of the regime. Baath party buildings were manifold during the old regime and many of them, together with interrogation centres, prisons and more were places of harm, inflicted on actual or supposed opponents to the regime. While some of the buildings were burned to the ground during the time of looting following 2003, others were reused and house other facilities today. But only one, the Amna Suraka Prison in Sulimaniyah has to date been turned into a museum, in remembrance of the victims.



PICTURE 18 AMNA SURAKA PRISON, SULIMANIYAH

With regard to Saddam's remaining monuments and buildings, Iraq still seems to have a long way ahead of finding appropriate solutions and a clear line in dealing with the relicts. While efforts have been undertaken to transform old monuments and to use them as learning centres about the old regime, as in the case of the Martyr's monument, this has arguably not been done enough to date. Other monuments, which were ideologically closely linked to Saddam were simply kept, such as the Hands of Victory and again other sites, particularly the places of suffering for the regime's victims, have to date been fully ignored in the process of coming to terms with the past. Furthermore, Iraqi decision makers still need to decide on how to deal with smaller remaining symbols of the Saddam era and especially with the results of acts of madness, such as Saddam's name stamped into Babylon's bricks.

Looking towards the future – Thoughts on next steps to take

When considering how the remaining relicts of Saddam Hussein's era should be dealt with, a combination of theoretical material and comparisons of the situation in Iraq with that of other countries can be a helpful tool in determining next steps to consider.

In Europe today there is a tendency to keep and protect historical places of all sorts. It seems to be a characteristic of our time that people wish to remember and to keep physical reminders for future reference. Particularly since the end of the Second World War, visible markers of the past, such as information boards, plaques or museums have increasingly come to populate the land- and cityscape. Such focus on the past cannot be observed at all places and times, and every country needs to find its own way and the most appropriate way for its people.

As noted by Guttormsen, 'cultural heritage management is as much about what should not be preserved as it is about what should be, and is being, preserved. Destruction, whether by conscious demolition or natural decline, is a legitimate part of the practice of cultural heritage management.'⁵⁸ Taking down statues can be a political tool to visibly demonstrate change and to lead the country in a different direction.

58. Guttormsen, Torgtim Sneve (2018) 'Is it right to destroy monuments over our dark past?', Science Nordic, <http://sciencenordic.com/it-right-destroy-monuments-over-our-dark-past>, last accessed 11 Aug 2018.

When it comes to the question of possible destruction of difficult heritage sites, two forces can generally be observed to appear within the population, with one side being pro-destruction, for reasons of wanting to ‘move forward’ or to counter the potential negative symbolic power of the buildings and monuments and to ‘demystify’ it, and the other side being against the destruction, as they see this as forgetting or repressing the past, considering remembrance vital in working against the horrors of the past repeating themselves and wishing for memorials of the past to remain visible.⁵⁹

In Iraq it is arguable that the destruction of past relicts has already gone too far. Nevertheless, some of the memorials erected by Saddam with the aim to enshrine fear and loyalty as well as to build the country according to his own nationalist beliefs still exist today. Now the nation needs to figure out whether to save these objects as memorials to history or wipe them out. The debate goes to the core of a country’s effort to redefine itself and reconcile with its painful past.

It always has to be remembered that monuments are more than the stones they are built from. They tell us a story, represent an ideology and connect us to the past. As far as monuments and buildings constructed under Saddam Hussein go, they were built with a particular agenda in mind. It is today well known that he had a ‘project to re-write history’, using cultural campaign as a method to link the successes of the past to Iraq’s potential as a united and prosperous state. It was his aim to have a unified Iraq – with him on top. Whenever it is the goal to create a homogenous society of any sort, there is necessarily marginalisation of minority groups, as most clearly visible in the Arabization processes in areas mainly occupied by Kurds.⁶⁰

This heritage, which is represented by the remaining monuments and is thus ideological as well as physical in nature, needs to be dealt with and one way of doing so is by appropriately handling the remaining relicts of the time, which serve as a symbol of the regime.

59. Macdonald, Sharon ‘Unsettling memories: Intervention and controversy over difficult public heritage’ in Anico, M., Peralta, E., Hooper-Greenhill, E. & Kaplan, F. (Eds.) (2009) *Heritage and Identity: Engagement and Demission in the Contemporary World*. (Museum Meanings). Routledge: London, New York, pp.97/98

60. Isakhan, Benjamin (2010) ‘Destroying the Symbols of Baathist Iraq’, 5/2, Taarii Newsletter, The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq.

Benjamin Isakhan argues that by destroying monuments erected during the Baathist regime, one also destroys the brand of nationalism created by the Baath party, which declared it as its aim to create a unified Iraqi national identity.⁶¹ While different groups will consider this as positive or negative, the importance of monuments in this respect is undeniable.

As put by Benjamin Forest and Juliet Johnson: ‘Official memorials, monuments, and museums play a unique role in the creation of national identity because they reflect how political elites choose to represent the nation publicly.’⁶² As such, decisions on how to deal with the remaining heritage sites of the Baathist regime will directly influence ideological development in Iraq in times to come.

As noted before, this is a challenging undertaking, not least as different parts of the population will feel differently towards the various monuments, but also towards the ideology and past represented by these monuments. Despite these difficulties, the subject matter should be approached sooner, rather than later, as examples in the US, as well as in Germany have shown that monuments which were ignored or forgotten can in the long run create a split in society, which can lead to confrontation at any given point in the future. It is thus vital to take an all-encompassing, clear and holistic line of actions.

In Iraq, efforts have been under way to move away from the past and *inter alia* to memorialize those persecuted under the rule of Saddam Hussein and to purge many symbols of his rule, such as can for example be seen in the transformation of the Martyr Monument. Iraqis nevertheless still grapple with their country’s new identity and how much of the former dictator’s legacy should be destroyed and how much kept. Following the emotional attachment to monuments and their meaning for people’s individual feelings of identity, how to deal with the physical remains of the past is a balancing act to ensure the satisfaction of all parts of society. This is particularly important in Iraq, where sectarian relations are still strained and the country’s minorities feel marginalized in the current majority Shia led government.

But the past needs to be dealt with and sometimes it is necessary to not maintain the buildings as they were. One does not want to have these buildings

61. Isakhan, Benjamin (2011) ,Targeting the Symbolic Dimension of Baathis Iraq: Cultural Destruction, Historical Memory, and National Identity’, 4, Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication, p.258

62. Ibid.

as places of pilgrimage, to be used by future generations who wish to identify with the previous regime. For this reason, it is sometimes ‘chosen to forget’ the buildings and their importance. History and memory are not the same. We do not need a statue of Saddam to remind us of the history; removing a memorial does not remove history, but the act changes how it will be remembered.⁶³ It is for this reason that for example no picture or statue of Adolf Hitler can be found in any public place in Germany. As described before, this is different in parts of the former USSR, where statues of some of the former communist leaders still stand tall today.

It is questionable, if this is appropriate. As the current case of Charlottesville in the US demonstrate, the maintenance of such statues might centuries later inflict pain on those whose ancestors suffered under the oppression inflicted.

But also those who supported the previous regime have to be considered. It always has to be remembered that ‘disturbing’ a person’s or group’s memory can be highly unsettling. People tend to think that their individual experiences reflect the experiences of society as a whole. If this is not the case and it becomes visible by specific symbols, such as statues, memorials and monuments, being taken away, this can be a highly painful process, which should be supported by education and learning environments.

But instead of destroying the monuments, they themselves can also be used as tools to initiate critical public debate about the difficult past they represent to achieve reconciliation and tolerance. As noted by Guttormsen, what should be done depends on an assessment of the extent to which dialogue and constructive debate are reached or if the attention only reinforces the conflict.⁶⁴

Monuments can serve as reminders. People forget and in order to come to terms with the past, it has to remain visible. At the same time it is vital for the observable signs to be connected to learning, with the inclusion of museums and documentation centers as in Germany or the stones of memory in Austria.

Difficult questions remain, such as in how far we serve the dictator’s aim to leave a legacy, when keeping and reconstructing the buildings he left behind. This will not be the case, if the buildings and monuments become a point of

63. Guttormsen, Torgtim Sneve (2018) ‘Is it right to destroy monuments over our dark past?’, Science Nordic, <http://scienordenordic.com/it-right-destroy-monuments-over-our-dark-past>, last accessed 11 Aug 2018.

64. Ibid.

learning. It is possible to have positive social projects in former Ba'ath buildings, put plaques in memory of the victims, have museums to remember, educate the children and generations to come.

The way it's kept will depend greatly on the type, purpose and symbol of the building or monument.

Art is often seen as a way to build bridges – to not forget the old, but include a modern concept and a new purpose. In the case of buildings, demolition, reconfiguration or keeping the old form are generally seen as the three possible options. While the former two might mean the destruction of physical reminders of the time, the latter might seem like the preservation and banalization of values of the old regime. In situations where these options do not seem suitable or pose problems for parts of society, as a result of the sensitivity of the place concerned, art might be a form to circumvent problems related to the two extremes.

Some monuments, particularly those which have become landmarks over the decades, are likely to have themselves enshrined with people's identity. People have lived next to these monuments their entire lives and connect a variety of memories with them, mostly probably entirely unrelated to politics or the ideological message behind the original built of the site. Monuments can as such change their meaning with time and researchers in the past have for this reason been surprised by the unexpected and unpredictable views civilians express towards landmarks of a difficult past.⁶⁵ It is for this reason particularly important to consult the public and to not take decisions based on presumptions.

When considering to destroy, remove, maintain or change a monument, the sentiments of the population as well as the artistic and historical value of the monument has to be considered. While actions taken today might be taken with good intentions, they seem unplanned and not thought through. An erasure of culture and history is a potential consequence. Even more importantly, Iraqi citizens seem excluded from the debate. They need to have a say in what is to be done with their resources, their future and what remains of their past. Monuments are physical reminders of our past and as such are of a sensitivity that touches deeply upon our collective memory.

When considering next steps to take with Saddam's remaining relicts,

65. See for example Iacono, Francesco and Kellici, Klejd (2016) 'Exploring the public perception of Communist Heritage in Post-communist Albania', 1/1, EX NOVO Journal of Archaeology, pp.55-69.

critical engagement and learning opportunities should be at the forefront of the consideration. Minorities, which were excluded under the regime, should now be included; victims have to be remembered, as well as those who fought against the regime. At the same time, the people who supported the regime cannot be fully left behind, but should rather be included in the critical engagement process with the remaining physical representations. It is vital to think forward and consider the path the country wishes to take and how it wants to be represented to the outside world. The remaining monuments are going to outlive the eye witnesses of the era and will thus be the message we send to future generations.

Creating new monuments in Iraq today

The civil war following the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 as well as the long lasting insecurities and the war against IS, have made it difficult for modern day Iraq to rebuild itself and to realize new projects, but just as in other areas in similar circumstances, Iraq is wishing to redefine itself as part of this new political era and people are longing for novelty. As a result certain efforts have been undertaken to construct new buildings as well as monuments.

New monuments have been planned, with the aim to symbolise the arrival of peace and the variety of Iraqi society. In 2010, the Mayor of Baghdad commissioned the sculptor Mohammed Ghani Hikmat, who previously created the pair of statues of Queen Scheherazade and King Shahryar on the banks of the Tigris River, to complete a series of four monuments as part of a Baghdad Culture Program. The first to be completed was Al Fanous El Sehri (Magic Lantern) inaugurated in 2011. The remaining three works, Ashaar Baghdad (Baghdad's Poetry), a fountain featuring Arabic script; Timthal Baghdad, (Baghdad's Statue) a column featuring the city as a beautiful girl, wearing traditional Abbasid costume and Enkath El Iraq (Saving Iraq's Culture), a Sumerian cylindrical seal in the hands of an Iraqi citizen were all inaugurated in 2013.

The monuments can be seen to concentrate on Iraq's cultural achievement and glory, taking material from the past to reinstate them in present time.



PICTURE 19 TIMTHAL BAGHDAD (BAGHDAD'S STATUE) IN AL ANDALUS CROSS-SECTION IN BAGHDAD BY MOHAMMED GHANI HIKMAT⁶⁶

66. Mahmoudalrawi (2014) 'Basrah Museum in Iraq in 2016 Photo: Persian Dutch Network'- Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=35065328>, last accessed 24 Nov 2018.

The scheme for urban transformation continued as part of the project of the renewal of 21 squares in Baghdad, which is currently underway and includes striking monuments, which are clearly visible in the urban landscape, as for example the recently completed ‘Shield monument’ by Abbas Ghadir, which seems to represent the country’s past and culture through the poetry inscribed as well as Iraq’s resilience and ability to survive:



PICTURE 20 SHIELD MONUMENT BY ABBAS GHADIR, 2018, KARADA, BAGHDAD

The decision takers have further concentrated on developing Iraq’s city, concentrating greatly on people’s entertainment, for example through the construction or planned construction of football stadiums, malls, waterparks, cinemas, fun fairs and the like.

To date there are no known monuments for Saddam’s victims in Baghdad. This is different in Halabja, where the Halabja Memorial Monument was constructed to commemorate the victims of the Halabja chemical attack of 1988.



PICTURE 21 HALABJA MEMORIAL MONUMENT, HALABJA

Even though one has to consider the above mentioned difficulties, the country was forced to face since the demise of the Baath regime, the redevelopment of Iraq's major cities, left alone the countryside, seems poor considering that regime change took place over fifteen years ago, in particular the lack of memorials for the victims of the Saddam regime from all sides.

Plans for new sites and monuments to be erected have been underway for the previous ten years, but they are neither comprehensive nor coherent. Cultural projects, from an opera house to theatre festivals and the construction of up to one hundred new statues and memorials in Baghdad alone, have been promised to the public.⁶⁷ While new buildings and monuments are being erected, the choice of when to create what seems arbitrary, with many promises being left unfulfilled. In this sense the state of Baghdad's and Iraq's current cultural makeover represents the existing political situation in the country, which is disjointed, estranged and without a clear plan.

67. Shabout, Nada (2013) 'A Makeover, Baghdad, the 2013 Arab Capital of Culture', Middle East Research and Information Project, MER266.

Conclusions and recommendations

The question of how to deal with monuments of our more difficult past raises core questions on how a nation wants to redefine itself and in which way it aims to reconcile with its painful past. Each country and its people have a choice of eliminating or engaging with the symbols of the past.

As part of this report, we looked at the monuments and buildings constructed in Iraq under the rule of Saddam Hussein, we noted the immediate consequences for these relicts resulting after the fall of the Baathist regime and we established the path in dealing with these monuments taken in Iraq to date. Furthermore, the situation of Germany and other countries in similar situation was laid down, followed by an analysis of possible future steps. Finally, we considered the newly constructed monuments in Iraq and their meaning for the re-establishment of Iraq as a nation.

It followed from the different analyses and observations that Iraq is still at the beginning of dealing with Saddam Hussein's physical reminders. The great destruction, which happened post 2003 in conjunctions with the challenges the country faced in the years after, seem to have moved the concern to establish a coherent and inclusive monument maintenance and reorganisation scheme to the back of decision takers' minds. While some efforts have been undertaken to remember the victims of the Saddam regime, such as Anna Suraka prison in Sulaymania or the Martyr's Monument Museum in Baghdad, these are few and far apart. Other buildings of ideological importance are in the process of being reused, such as Basrah Museum or Al Faw Palace in Baghdad, which will house the American University of Iraq, Baghdad, but the majority of buildings seems to be neglected or their connection to Saddam ignored. Other obvious ideological symbols of the Saddam era have been left unchanged and undocumented to this date, as can be seen on the example of the Victory Arch of the ruins of Babylon.

While it is easy to criticise developments in Iraq to date, it has to be remembered that coming to terms with a difficult past and the physical reminders which represent it, is a long process. As seen on the cases of Germany, the former USSR and America, it takes decades or even centuries to find appropriate solutions.

But the illustrations of the other countries also show us successful examples as well as possible pitfalls and can be used as a guideline to achieve the wanted result quicker and without repeating the same mistakes as countries previously.

As noted often throughout this report, there will not be one solution fitting all.

While some monuments have to be destroyed or removed, others should be reused or retained for learning opportunities.

Finding the right balance on how to deal with difficult past artefacts is a trying process, as the symbolic meaning of the object is intrinsically linked to individuals' personal identities, but as such is of vital importance in moving a country forward and in supporting a common national identity, which recognises and includes all.

The following recommendations can be derived from the analysis:

- Realize the importance and meaning of past monuments and buildings.
- Ignoring or erasing the past is no solution. It is part of the people's history and will be of significant importance for generations to come.
- Relicts have to be dealt with on a case by case basis, depending on their importance, ideological value, ability to evoke emotions and location.
- Different solutions have to be found for the different types of buildings and monuments, but it is vital to move towards a common goal and work on realizing this goal across the entire country.
- Relicts which are likely to be used purely for idealisation are better to go.
- Buildings which were erected for general use, such as offices, factories, schools etc. should be kept, used and go with time, but it should be considered to visibly mark their connection to the past in the form of plaques to achieve learning opportunities.
- Constructions which were built purely for ideological purposes are important to keep and to use for learning, by establishing museums and documentation centres.
- As part of constructing new monuments, the past as well as the future should be considered, for example by including the victims of past atrocities.
- It is beneficial for society to deal with physical reminders of the past sooner rather than later. People need to know about their past to be able to deal with

societal problems resulting from it.

- Include the people. It is their country. They have a need to come to terms with the past and a right to be included in shaping the future.

Saddam Hussein's remaining monuments are now part of the country's history and Iraq should find a way to use them as a positive force to support and unify its people. If done in a reflective manner, the creating, keeping, removing or altering of heritage sites, provides us with a chance to contribute to shaping the memory process and consequentially the identity of future generations in a positive way. It is vital to do so responsibly, as our work today will shape future generations.

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