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Abstract of paper to be presented at the conference.

For details of the conference programme go to www.iraqistudies.org

Speaker: Achim Rohde, Lecturer at Asia-Africa-Institute, Hamburg University.

Title: Assessing the Impact of War: Iraqi Gender Policies in the 1980s

Abstract:

Regarding its stated political agenda, the Ba'th regime placed gender issues at centre stage throughout the years of its rule, albeit with changing connotations. Departing from its earlier modernism, the regime's policies regarding women became more ambivalent in the late 1980s, when a notable swing occurred in the regime's rhetoric on the subject of women's role in society, away from education and work towards procreation and motherhood. This paper suggests that the backlash against women occurred mainly as a consequence of the prolonged war and its demoralising effects on the Iraqi population. For all its rhetorical fervour, however, this did not trigger a noticeable decline in women's share in the wage labour force, nor was there a dramatic rise in the country's fertility rate. In sum, the regime's handling of gender policies seemed guided more by changing political conditions than by a consistent ideology. The regime lacked either the resolve or the ability to decisively enforce either one of the conflicting agendas.