



International Association of Contemporary Iraqi Studies

3rd Annual Conference, 16-17 July 2008

SOAS, University of London

Abstract of paper to be presented at the conference.

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

Speaker: Joseph Sassoon (St Antony's College, Oxford)

Title: 'Iraq's Brain Drain'

Abstract:

The paper explores how the invasion of 2003 prompted a new wave of brain drain from Iraq. Although violence and ethnic cleansing are the predominant factors behind exiting Iraq, other economic and historic issues are playing major roles in the decision-making of the educated. Iraq's brain drain is interrelated with the shrinkage of the middle class. Together, they had serious ramifications for education, health, women and the civil service.

Historically, Iraq experienced the departure of many of its talent and thus it is important to make some comparisons with the past. Economically, the brain drain is influenced by unemployment, inflation and a pervasive corruption that is affecting all aspects of life.

Today in Iraq, corruption and ethnicity, which are intertwined, play a substantial role in the reconstruction process and in economic, health and education decisions. The paper looks in detail at the health sector and attempts to understand the consequences for Iraq and its medical system. It addresses the issue of returning to Iraq: if violence were to cease, would the doctors and engineers return to their country?