



**CHATHAM  
HOUSE**

# **Iraq Initiative Conference 2022**

*Monday 14 November*

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#IraqInitiative**

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*At Chatham House's annual Iraq Initiative Conference, policymakers, analysts, academics and activists will convene in London and online to discuss the last year's developments, and explore the potential trajectory of Iraq's politics, security, economy and society in the context of increasing uncertainty and instability.*

### **On the agenda:**

- Iraq's political crisis
- The new government
- Climate crisis
- Women's rights
- Iraq in the region

## **Iraq Initiative Conference 2022**

Despite the formation of a new government, Iraq remains at precarious point in its statebuilding process. October 2021's elections were meant to provide a reset, and to answer calls for change from widespread protests. In reality, they delivered Iraq's longest and most protracted government formation process, marred by political infighting, violent attacks, protests and counter-protests, and accusations against a politicized judiciary.

Attempts by election winner Muqtada al-Sadr to form a majority government, then his withdrawal from the process, could indicate the beginning of the end for the status quo of consensus government. Or it may simply signify the deployment of new tactics of competition amongst a fragmented elite.

All the while, Iraq's booming young population continue to suffer the consequences of a corrupt system that is ill-equipped to cope with looming climate, economic and societal crises.

# AGENDA

## 09.00 – 10.15 GMT **Session 1: Iraq's political crisis: the end or rebirth of the system?**

Iraq has a new government under prime minister Mohammad Shia al-Sudani. But it is missing a critical element: 2021 election winner Muqtada al-Sadr, who after failing to form a majority government has withdrawn from parliamentary politics and threatens to oppose any government assembled without him. The Shia Coordination Framework, however, is moving forward with the major Sunni and Kurdish parties to form a government and negotiate for senior positions across the state. The country's ethno-sectarian power-sharing system – muhasasa – has delivered a consensus government after every election since 2005, and yet this time, the rules of the game seemed strained. All the while, the Iraqi people continue to suffer as the country's myriad challenges go unaddressed.

This session will explore the most recent political developments in Iraq and discuss what the last year's turmoil means for the future of the post-2003 political consensus.

### **Speakers**

**Abbas Radhi Al-Ameri**, Secretary-General, Coordination Framework

**Dhia al-Asadi**, Former Head of the Sadrist Political Bloc, Iraqi Parliament

**Marsin Alshamary**, Research Fellow, Middle East Initiative, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School

**Toby Dodge**, Professor of International Relations and Director of the Conflict Research Programme, Middle East Centre, London School of Economics; Associate Fellow, Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House

**Chair: Renad Mansour**, Senior Research Fellow and Director of the Iraq Initiative, Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House

## 10.15 – 10.45 GMT **Networking break**

## 10.45 – 12.00 GMT **Session 2: Iraq's climate crisis and its threat to stability**

COP27 in Egypt has put a spotlight on the MENA. In a region that is generally vulnerable to rising temperatures and extreme weather events, Iraq stands out as a country at particular risk. Drought and desertification are causing increasingly frequent severe dust storms, formerly fertile agricultural land is becoming barren, and summer temperatures are reaching over 50 degrees Celsius. What is more, associated social challenges, including electricity and water shortages, illness due to heat and dust inhalation and rapid rural to urban migration are driving unrest and contributing to social instability.

This panel will provide insight into the implications for Iraq and its neighbours of discussions underway in Egypt, and discuss the environmental and social challenge facing the country as the climate crisis continues to escalate.

### **Speakers**

**Hassan Janabi**, Minister of Water Resources (2016-18), Republic of Iraq

**Glada Lahn**, Senior Research Fellow, Environment and Society Programme, Chatham House

**Maha Yassin**, Research Fellow, Clingendael Institute

**Chair: Maryam Nemazee**, News Anchor, Al Jazeera English

## 12.00 – 13.00 GMT **Networking lunch**

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# AGENDA

## 13.00 – 14.15 GMT **Session 3: Iraq in a transforming region**

At Mustafa Al Kadhimi's September 2022 address to the UN General Assembly, the former prime minister put forward his vision of Iraq as a regional mediator. The historic 2021 Baghdad summit offered glimpses of this potential, as Baghdad brought together Iranian, Gulf, and other regional foreign ministers. Kadhimi's successor, Mohammad Shia al-Sudani, and newly instated President Latif Rashid now face the challenge of continuing this progress. However, Iraq continues to be at the whim of its neighbours: in recent months, both Turkey and Iran have launched attacks in its territory, ostensibly in the name of their own national security.

This panel will provide insights into the relationship between Iraq and its neighbours and explore the potential for its role in a region going through a significant shift in its political and security dynamics.

### **Speakers**

**Hamidreza Azizi**, CATS Fellow, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP)

**Alistair Burt**, Minister for the Middle East and North Africa (2017-19), Foreign and Commonwealth Office

**Krikor Der-Hagopian**, Incoming Foreign Affairs Advisor, Office of the Prime Minister, Republic of Iraq

**Jennifer Gavito**, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs, US Department of State

**Chair: Lina Khatib**, Director, Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House

## 14.15 – 14.45 GMT **Networking break**

## 14.45 – 16.00 GMT **Session 4: The struggle for women's rights in Iraq**

Iraqi women have been central to mass protests in recent years that have demanded change and an end to the post-2003 political order. The patriarchal system in Iraq means that the institutions of the state – including government departments, the judiciary and security services – are disproportionately dominated by men, but take decisions on a daily basis that affect the lives of women. The ruling parties have scored political points by taking advantage of the quota system that guarantees women at least 25% of parliamentary seats, and as such, parliament has failed to drive forward laws that improve the lives of women. For instance, the anti-domestic violence bill has languished in parliament for over two years, largely because of the weakness of Iraq's parliament and the barriers holding women back from more senior decision-making roles across the state.

This panel will provide insight into the struggle for women's rights in Iraq and the challenge of furthering reform in a gendered system of power that excludes a majority of the population.

### **Speakers**

**Bushra Al-Obaidi**, Academic, Rafidain University, Former Human Rights Commissioner

**Yanar Mohammed**, Co-founder and President, Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq

**Ala Talabani**, Former Member, Council of Representatives of Iraq; Co-founder, High Council for Iraqi Women

**Chair: Taif Alkhudary**, PhD Student, University of Cambridge

## 16.00 – 16.30 GMT **Networking break**

## 16.30 – 17.30 GMT **Keynote Speech | In conversation with HE Dr Ali Allawi**

**Speaker: Ali Allawi**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (2020-22), Republic of Iraq

**Chair: Bronwen Maddox**, Director and Chief Executive, Chatham House

# SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



## Abbas Radhi Al-Ameri

Abbas Radhi Al-Ameri is a senior political advisor in the Iraqi parliament. He is also the secretary general of the Shiite Coordination Framework and the State Administration Coalition which recently formed the government. Mr Al-Ameri is from Nasiriya and is currently pursuing his PhD in political studies at the University of Nahrain. He held various positions within the Iraqi parliament, political and media institutions in Iraq. Mr Al-Ameri has presented at various conferences and has published widely on the political situation in Iraq.



## Dhiaa Al-Asadi

Dhiaa Al-Asadi is an Iraqi academic and politician. He was the Head of the Al-Ahrar Bloc in the Iraqi Parliament between 2014 and 2018. He was appointed Minister of State in the 2010 Iraqi government, and was also previously Chair of the Iraq-EU Friendship and Cooperation Parliamentary Committee. Al-Asadi has published several articles and critical essays in Arabic and English, and is a regular commentator in local and international media. He holds a Master's in linguistics and a BA in English language and literature.



## Ali Allawi

His Excellency Dr Ali Allawi was Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance between 2020 and 2022. Between 2003 and 2004, he served as Minister of Trade and Minister of Defense in the cabinet appointed by the Interim Iraq Governing Council. Subsequently, he was Minister of Finance between 2005-2006 in the Iraqi Transitional Government. He has authored several books on Iraq and the region: 'The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace', as well as 'The Crisis of Islamic Civilization', and most recently 'Faisal I of Iraq'. Allawi spent several years in the United Kingdom, where he taught at Oxford University and worked in banking in London. He earned an SB in Civil Engineering from MIT and an MBA from Harvard Business School.



## Bushra Al-Obaidi

Dr Bushra Al-Obaidi is a legal expert and a scholar. She teaches at al-Rafidain University, where she specializes in human rights as well as criminal and constitutional law. She earned her doctorate from Baghdad University, where she taught until 2012. Dr Al-Obaidi served from 2012 to 2016 on the Iraqi Higher Commission for Human Rights. In addition, she has advised numerous government and non-government bodies on gender-based violence and human rights issues. She formerly worked with the Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights and a number of civil society organisations. Dr Al-Obaidi has participated in numerous conferences and published dozens of articles on gender-based violence, Iraqi and international law, and human rights.



# SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



## Taif Alkhudary

Alkhudary is a PhD student at the Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Cambridge. She has held various research roles at the LSE Middle East Centre for the past three years, with a focus on topics including, women's rights, social movements, and the post-2003 state in Iraq. Previously, she worked for several human rights NGOs conducting strategic litigation on cases of human rights violations in the Middle East and North Africa region.



## Marsin Alshamary

Marsin Alshamary is a research fellow at the Middle East Initiative at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs with the Harvard Kennedy School, where she is working on her book project: *A Century of the Iraqi Hawza: how Clerics Shaped Protests and Politics in Modern Day Iraq*. She is also a non-resident fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC. Prior to this, she was a postdoctoral research fellow with the Center for Middle East Politics at the Brookings Institution from 2020-21. She has contributed opinion pieces to various outlets including 1001 Iraqi Thoughts, The Washington Post, War on the Rocks and PRI. She holds a PhD in Political Science from MIT and a BA from Wellesley College.



## Hamidreza Azizi

Dr Hamidreza Azizi is a CATS Fellow at German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP). Azizi holds a PhD in Regional Studies from the University of Tehran and has worked as a lecturer at several Iranian universities, including the University of Tehran (2016-2018) and Shahid Beheshti University (2016-2020). Azizi's research interests include security and geopolitical issues in the Middle East and Central Eurasia, Iran's foreign policy, and Iran-Russia relations.



## Alistair Burt

Rt Hon Alistair Burt is the Pro-Chancellor of Lancaster University. He was a Member of Parliament for 32 years between 1983 and 2019. He served as a Minister for 11 years, in the Governments of John Major, David Cameron and Theresa May, including as Minister for the Middle East and North Africa between 2010-2013, and 2017-2019. Since retiring from Parliament, Mr Burt has worked with a variety of foreign affairs think tanks, including RUSI where he is a Distinguished Fellow; Chatham House and the European Council of Foreign Relations. He also works with conflict resolution charity Forward Thinking and the democracy building NGO Global Partners Governance as an Associate, most recently in Baghdad.

# SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



## Krikor Der-Hagopian

Krikor Der-Hagopian is the Incoming Foreign Affairs Advisor at the Office of Iraq's Prime Minister.



## Toby Dodge

Toby Dodge is a Professor in the Department of International Relations, where he is Deputy Head of the Department (PhD and Research). He is also Kuwait Professor and Director of the Kuwait Programme, Middle East Centre, and Iraq Research Director for the Conflict Research Programme. He is also an Associate Fellow at Chatham House and is working on the Iraq Initiative project for the Middle East and North Africa Programme. He has been visiting, researching and writing about Iraq for over twenty years and his main areas of research include the comparative politics and historical sociology of the Middle East, the politics of intervention, the evolution of the Iraqi state, state-society dynamics and political identities in Iraq. He has published several books, four edited volumes and numerous articles, and appear regular in UK and international media.



## Jennifer Gavito

Jennifer Gavito is the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Iran, Iraq, and Public Diplomacy at the US Department of State. Prior to taking on that role she served as the Minister-Counselor for Political Affairs at the US Embassy in London. From 2015-2018, she was the US Consul General in Munich, Germany, where she was the senior US government representative to Bavaria. She previously served as Chief of the Political Section at the US Consulate General in Jerusalem from 2012-2015 and as the Foreign Affairs Policy Advisor to the US Africa Command's Director for Plans, Policies, and Programs (J5) from 2011-2012. Previous assignments have included: Deputy Principal Officer of the US Consulate General in Dubai; Director for Syria and Lebanon on the staff of the National Security Council at the White House; Deputy Director of the Maghreb Affairs Office in the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, and others.



## Hassan Janabi

Dr Hassan Janabi was Iraq's Minister of Water Resources between 2016-18. He was previously Ambassador of Iraq to Turkey and Japan. He served as the Head of many departments in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs including the Department of International Organizations, Department of Human Rights and Department of Africa. Between 2009-2014, he was Iraq's Ambassador to the Rome-based UN agencies (FAO, WFP and IFAD). Previous positions in Iraq include Advisor to the Ministry of Water Resources. He Graduated from the University of Baghdad, College of Engineering. Dr Janabi obtained postgraduate qualifications from the University of Warsaw, Poland and the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia.

# SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



## Lina Khatib

Dr Lina Khatib is director of the Middle East and North Africa programme at Chatham House. She was formerly director of the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut and co-founding head of the Program on Arab Reform and Democracy at Stanford University's Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law. Her research focuses on the international relations of the Middle East, Islamist groups and security, political transitions and foreign policy. She is a research associate at SOAS, was a senior research associate at the Arab Reform Initiative and lectured at Royal Holloway, University of London. She has published seven books and is a frequent commentator on politics and security in the Middle East and North Africa at events around the world and in the media.



## Glada Lahn

Since joining Chatham House in 2004, Glada Lahn has worked on a range of international resource-related projects which intersect with geopolitical, economic and development concerns. Glada has led influential research on energy policy in the Arab Gulf, energy access amongst displaced people globally in 2015, and how climate change and decarbonization affect the prospects and choices for developing country oil and gas producers. From 2002 to 2004, she was senior research fellow at the Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies and has since worked for a number of organizations as a freelance consultant. She has a BA in Arabic and international relations, and an MA in Near and Middle Eastern studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.



## Bronwen Maddox

Bronwen Maddox is Director and Chief Executive of Chatham House. She was previously Director of the Institute for Government. From 2010 to 2016 she was editor and chief executive of Prospect, the monthly current affairs magazine. Before that, she served as chief foreign commentator, foreign editor and US editor at The Times, after a period at the Financial Times where she ran award-winning investigations and wrote economics editorials. Before becoming a journalist, Bronwen was an investment analyst in the City and a director of Kleinwort Benson Securities. Bronwen is a Visiting Professor in the Policy Institute at King's College London, Honorary Governor of Ditchley, an honorary fellow of the British Academy, and a council member of Research England, one of the research councils of UK Research & Innovation. Bronwen has a degree in Politics, Philosophy and Economics from St John's College, Oxford.



## Renad Mansour

Dr Renad Mansour is a senior research fellow and project director of the Iraq Initiative at Chatham House. He is also a senior research fellow at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani, and a research fellow at the Cambridge Security Initiative based at Cambridge University. Renad was previously a lecturer at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), where he taught the international relations of the Middle East and, from 2013, he held positions as lecturer of international studies and supervisor at the Faculty of Politics, also at Cambridge. He was previously a senior research fellow at the Iraq Institute for Strategic Studies in Beirut and was adviser to the Kurdistan Regional Government Civil Society Ministry between 2008 and 2010. He received his PhD from Cambridge University. He is co-author of *Once Upon a Time in Iraq*, published by BBC Books/Penguin to accompany the critically acclaimed BBC series.



# SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



## Yanar Mohammed

Yanar Mohammed is a prominent Iraqi feminist who was born in Baghdad in 1960. She is a co-founder and president of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI), a national women's organization dedicated to rebuilding Iraq on the basis of secular democracy and human rights for all. Ms Mohammed had established the Defense of Iraqi Women's Rights (DIWR) earlier in 1998 and campaigned against the war on Iraq. She received the Gruber Foundation Women's Rights Prize in 2008. Ms Mohammed is also Editor-in-Chief of OWFI's newspaper, Al-Mousawat (Equality), and is a passionate speaker and advocate on behalf of Iraqi women and other marginalized and at-risk Iraqis.



## Maryam Nemazee

Maryam Nemazee is a broadcaster and journalist. She has worked in Europe, the US, the Middle East, and Asia. She covers global news and international politics with a particular focus on the Middle East. Maryam is currently based in London, news anchoring for Al Jazeera English. Previously, Maryam was a London-based anchor and correspondent with Bloomberg Television. She also worked in New York, Hong Kong, and the Middle East. She also attended global events like the G20 summit and the annual World Economic Forum in Davos. Prior to this, Maryam was one of the main anchors with Al Jazeera English based in Doha. She covered news from across the Middle East and Africa, and also spent some time working on location in Lebanon, Malaysia, and field reporting from Washington DC during the election of President Barack Obama. Maryam is a graduate of the University of Durham, and City University in the UK.



## Ala Talabani

MS Ala Talabani is an Iraqi politician and a Former Member of the Council of Representatives of Iraq. She is also Co-founder of the High Council for Iraqi Women.



## Maha Yassin

Maha Yassin is a Research Fellow at the Clingendael Institute. Her work focuses on awareness-raising via policy research and outreach on climate security nexus in Iraq, and the wider Middle East region. Maha manages the Basra Forum (BF) for Climate, Environment and Security, a network of local environmental, climate and security actors in Iraq. Maha holds an MA in communication studies from Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR), where she focused on researching media framing of environmental activism in Iraq. Prior to becoming a researcher, Maha studied Geology (BSc) with focus on environmental degradation.



## IRAQ INITIATIVE

The Chatham House *Iraq Initiative* is a fieldwork-based policy project that rethinks the nature of state-building and governance in Iraq. The project tackles the root causes of state failure to challenge assumptions held in Western capitals about stabilization and peacebuilding and reach a more nuanced approach to navigating Iraq's complex and interlinked political, security, and economic environment. The project uses these field-based insights to inform international policy towards Iraq. Chatham House convenes Iraq Initiative activities in various cities in the Middle East, the UK, the US and Europe.

*The Iraq Initiative is supported by Crescent Petroleum, the Nahrein Network at University College London and the Al-Swaidi Family.*

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