



The Regime of Saddam Hussein: Short-Term Success, Long-Term Foreign Policy Disaster

By: Samson Cain

Iraq's recent history has been characterized by a struggle for stability, security, and political legitimacy amidst sectarian divisions, external interventions, and the ongoing threat of extremist violence.

Saddam Hussein was a dictator from Iraq, and he ruled the country from 1979 until 2003, when he was overthrown. He was born on April 28, 1937, in the town of Al-Awja, Iraq. He rose through the ranks of the Ba'ath Party, and Hussein eventually took power in a coup in 1979. This made him the President of Iraq.

Hussein's regime featured authoritarian rule, including human rights abuses and fierce suppression of enemies. He took aggressive measures regarding his foreign policy decisions. For example, his invasion of Iran in 1980 and the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, which eventually led to the Gulf War.

Saddam Hussein's regime was also infamous for its use of chemical weapons against Kurdish civilians in the late 1980s, resulting in thousands of deaths in what is known as the Anfal campaign.

Following the 9/11 attacks and amid unfounded allegations of possessing weapons of mass destruction, the United States invaded Iraq. The U.S. intervention quickly led to the collapse of Hussein's regime. He was captured by U.S. forces later that year. Then, in 2006, he was tried by the Iraqi Special Tribunal for crimes against humanity. He was found guilty and executed by hanging on December 30, 2006.



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Saddam Hussein was a key political figure in the Middle East, but what was it like to live under his regime? To answer this question, I talked with Mr. Raed Salman, an Iraqi banker:

“Saddam Hussein actually governed Iraq for 24 years. His presidential reign was filled with war and international sanctions. He did manage to improve literacy, improve education, and send Iraqis abroad to study in Europe, America, Japan, and more. He created a good healthcare system, making Iraq a destination for foreign talent. These people would come to work in Iraq, and thus Iraqis benefited economically from this situation. He worked hard to transform Iraq into an industrial base, establishing giant industrial facilities and large scientific research centers. He built giant dams to improve irrigation and sustain agriculture in Iraq. He also created a strong army that could curb the other greedy countries. He managed to benefit from the financial avenues of the oil resources.”

“On the other hand, he caused many wars. Some of them ended with diplomatic efforts, but he often opted for more violent approaches. I would like to say that these crises could have been ended diplomatically and resolved without the need for armed conflicts, but he preferred the decision of war. Most countries supported him in his first war with Iran, particularly Arab countries. However, when the war with Iran stopped, he invaded Kuwait. Kuwait was a country that supported him against Iran because of some financial and border issues.”

“This invasion made Iraq prone to very fierce international sanctions, starting in August of 1990, which remained 13 years. After invading Kuwait, the USA and its allies started a war to drive him out from Kuwait. Iraq remained under the sanctions, which caused the killing of a tragically high number of Iraqi children over the thirteen-year period. In the period of international sanctions, Iraq fell behind and suffered from lack of food and medicine. The



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education system also became worse, the health care system collapsed, and corruption broke out in society. The Iraqi army became very weak. He did not know how to reform diplomatic relations with the USA. He was arrogant, and this caused Iraq to come under USA invasion. He was a dictator, and he did not care how many people were executed. He forced Iraqis to participate in his political party despite most people not believing in it. Overall, his first round of governance from 1979 to 1990 was kind of beneficial. However, his second one, from 1990 to 2003, was very bad.”

Eventually, the Americans, under the Bush Administration, toppled Hussein’s regime. However, the regime that followed was far worse and even less sympathetic to the Western world. Saddam Hussein was a Sunni Muslim. However, upon the collapse of his regime, the Shi’ite Muslims took control of Iraq. The new ruling class was even more dangerous and even more anti-American. The toppling of Hussein’s regime is widely regarded as one of the great American foreign policy failures of the 21st century and has subsequently led to fewer incidents of American interventionism.