

Topic Page: [Hussein, Saddam, 1937–2006](#)

Summary Article: **Hussein, Saddam**

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Iraqi leader, in power from 1968, president 1979–2003. He presided over the Iran–Iraq war 1980–88. In 1990 he annexed Kuwait but was driven out by a US-dominated coalition army in the 1991 Gulf War. This defeat led to unrest in Iraq, and both the Kurds in the north, who were seeking independence, and Shiites in the south, rebelled. His savage repression of both revolts led to charges of genocide. In the 2003 Iraq War US-led forces invaded Iraq on the grounds that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and was in contravention of UN resolutions requiring Iraqi disarmament. Saddam went into hiding and was captured by coalition forces in December 2003. He was tried by an Iraqi court and sentenced to death in November 2006 over the killings of 148 Shiites in the 1980s, and was executed in December.

Saddam joined the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party in 1957 and soon became involved in revolutionary activities. In 1959 he was sentenced to death for the attempted assassination of the head of state, General Kassem, and took refuge in Syria and Egypt. He returned in 1963, following a coup which overthrew Kassem, but in the following year was imprisoned for plotting to overthrow the new regime. After his release he took a leading part in the 1968 revolution, removing the civilian government and establishing a Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). Initially, he wielded influence from behind the scenes, but he progressively eliminated real or imagined opposition to become president in 1979. He governed autocratically, supported by a clique of loyal supporters drawn from his home region and secret police who ruthlessly suppressed dissent. In all, an estimated 300,000 suspected political opponents were killed during his 24 years in power.

Saddam was born in Tikrit, north of Baghdad, into a peasant family. He saw himself as a historic leader, drawing inspiration from Nebuchadnezzar, king of ancient Babylonia, and developed an all-pervading personality cult. As a secular Arab nationalist, Saddam was initially seen by the West and pro-Western Arab states as a useful bulwark against the threat posed by Islamic fundamentalism in Iran to the Arab states and their oil supplies. He was popular in Arab countries for his commitment to the fight against Israel. However, from the late 1980s he forfeited Western support because of his atrocities against his own people and his actions in Kuwait.

Despite investing much of Iraq's oil wealth in military development, Saddam failed to secure lasting military success. The 1980 war against Iran encountered unexpectedly fierce resistance and, despite using chemical weapons and receiving US economic aid and weapons from the USSR and France, the eight-year war ended in stalemate. His 1990 annexation of Kuwait followed a long-running border dispute and was prompted by the need for more oil resources after the expensive war against Iran. It was almost universally condemned as a flagrant breach of international law and Iraqi forces were soon overwhelmed by superior Western aerial and tank firepower.

In 1988 Saddam launched a military campaign against Kurds in northern Iraq who resisted his rule. Poison gas was used on cities and 100,000 civilians were killed, 4,000 villages destroyed, and 1 million people displaced. When the Kurds rebelled again in 1991, along with Shiite Muslims in southern Iraq, after Saddam was expelled from Kuwait, he sent the remainder of his army to crush them, massacring 30,000, bringing international charges of genocide against him and causing hundreds of thousands of

Kurds to flee their homes in northern Iraq. His continued indiscriminate bombardment of Shiites in southern Iraq led the UN to impose a 'no-fly zone' in the area in 1992. In September 1996, the USA retaliated against Saddam's encroachment into UN-protected territories in northern Iraq, carrying out missile attacks on Iraqi military bases in the area.

Saddam tried to avert the US-led war against Iraq in 2003 by allowing UN arms inspectors to inspect sites where it was alleged that weapons of mass destruction were being held or developed. In early March 2003, Saddam agreed to destroy missiles which went beyond the 150-km range allowed in UN resolutions. However, the USA was dissatisfied with the level of cooperation provided by Iraq and remained concerned that Saddam was hiding WMD and supporting international terrorists. On 20 March 2003, the USA, supported by UK troops, launched a massive military offensive, which by 9 April 2003 had overthrown Saddam. He went into hiding but was tracked down and captured by coalition forces in December 2003, who found him hiding alone in a pit under a hut belonging to his former cook. He was tried in Iraq on charges of abuse of power and genocide against Kurds, Shiites, and political opponents during his period in power. His two sons, Uday and Qusai, were both killed while escaping capture by US forces in July 2003.

Subsequent in-depth searches in Iraq for WMD failed to uncover any significant stockpiles, leading to the proposition that Saddam had sought to bluff his neighbours and the West.

documents

Bush, George: War with Iraq

APA

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Hussein, Saddam. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. Abington, UK: Helicon. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/hussein_saddam_1937



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