



Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography

By Efraim Karsh, Inari Rautsi

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Over ten years after his armies were routed in Desert Storm, the world continues to deal with, and be persistently thwarted, by the menace of Saddam Hussein. Here in this timely biography, authors Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi, experts on Middle East history and politics, have combined their expertise to write what is largely considered the definitive work of one of the century's most reviled and notorious figures.

Drawing on a wealth of Iraqi, Arab, Western and Israeli sources, including interviews with people who have had close contact with Saddam Hussein throughout his career, the authors traces the meteoric transformation of an ardent nationalist and obscure Ba'th party member into an absolute dictator.

Placing Hussein in the larger context of the ancient and modern Arab world and Iraqi history and traditions, Karsh and Rautsi examine the nature of the political system in which he thrived, a system built on blood and fear, betrayal and deceit. Skillfully interweaving a realistic analysis of Gulf politics and history, this authoritative biography is essential for understanding the mind of a modern tyrant.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent war in the Persian Gulf resulted in a number of quick and shallow analyses of Hussein's "mind." Karsh, an Israeli scholar at King's College in London, and Rautsi of the University of Helsinki have provided a detailed and dispassionate account of Hussein's rise to power and the political milieu in which he thrived. Relying on Western, Soviet, Arab, and Israeli sources, the authors meticulously trace the violent history of modern Iraq and the coming to power of the Ba'th Party. They also explain in depth how Hussein skillfully created "plots" that led to the physical elimination of his actual or imaginary opponents. Notwithstanding his ability to outmaneuver his domestic opponents, Hussein's ambitions to become the undisputed Arab leader led him into two catastrophic foreign ventures--the war against Iran, which ruined Iraq's economy, and his invasion of Kuwait, which resulted in the total destruction of Iraq's military and industrial capacity. This much-needed book is thorough, up-to-date, and highly readable. Recommended for scholars of the modern Middle East as well as informed laypersons. Previewed in "The Gulf War in Print," LJ 3/15/91.--Ed.

- *Nader Entessar, Spring Hill Coll., Mobile, Ala.*

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Review

"Karsh and Rautsi have set a standard for evidence and analytical rigor that other biographers will be hard-pressed to match. ... Not only do the full documentation and precise style reflect a long investment in research and writing, but the authors have produced a subtle interpretation of Saddam, which casts him as a man forged by his society even as he sought to reforge it."

Users Review

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