



The Ba'thification of Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Totalitarianism

Aaron M. Faust

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Saddam Hussein ruled Iraq as a dictator for nearly a quarter century before the fall of his regime in 2003. Using the Ba'th party as his organ of meta-control, he built a broad base of support throughout Iraqi state and society. Why did millions participate in his government, parrot his propaganda, and otherwise support his regime when doing so often required betraying their families, communities, and beliefs? Why did the "Husseini Ba'thist" system prove so durable through uprisings, two wars, and United Nations sanctions?

Drawing from a wealth of documents discovered at the Ba'th party's central headquarters in Baghdad following the US-led invasion in 2003, *The Ba'thification of Iraq* analyzes how Hussein and the party inculcated loyalty in the population. Through a grand strategy of "Ba'thification," Faust argues that Hussein mixed classic totalitarian means with distinctly Iraqi methods to transform state, social, and cultural institutions into Ba'thist entities, and the public and private choices Iraqis made into tests of their political loyalty. Focusing not only on ways in which Iraqis obeyed, but also how they resisted, and using comparative examples from Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia, *The Ba'thification of Iraq* explores fundamental questions about the roles that ideology and culture, institutions and administrative practices, and rewards and punishments play in any political system.

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