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## The Life and Death of Saddam Redux

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**Abstract.** This article updates a previous IBPP analysis on the significance of whether Saddam Hussein is alive or dead.

The May 6, 2003 Issue of IBPP contained an article, “The Life and Death of Saddam and Osama,” that addressed the question of Saddam Hussein’s and Osama bin Laden’s ultimate fate. Did it matter if Saddam was alive or dead? At the time the answer was no.

If Saddam were alive, his power as head of a national government would still be gone. If Saddam were alive, he still would have no functional location—inside or outside the Iraq—to make a political and military comeback. If Saddam were alive, such a fate for such a malignant narcissist might even be worse than death.

If Saddam were dead, his fate could be employed by the United States Government (USG) and its compliant allies as a warning to other dictators, terrorists, and reified malcontents who defy the script for the Good and Just. And whether alive or dead, Saddam could be useful to the most divergent of political actors. Terrorists, humanitarian organizations, and national governments—even if such entities could be rigidly and validly differentiated—could and would take the image of an alive or dead Saddam and construct a discourse serving respective political needs.

However, several events have occurred since the writing of the May 6th article that merit qualifying its analysis. First, the mass media narrative of the US President declaring an end to hostilities followed by continued hostilities serves as a kernel of fact around, from, and onto which fantasies, dreams, fears, and willful agendas can be overlaid, grown, and projected. Second, the mass media narrative continues to be reinforced of the US President claiming that Saddam will be found dead or alive even as the latter has not been found or (for Saddam fans) continues not to be found. The third event, the coup de grace, comprises statements by US military officers and USG civilian representatives that the fate of Saddam Hussein does matter after initial statements that it didn’t. Fourth, US representatives asserting the import of Saddam Hussein’s fate are attributing this import to his being possibly alive as a source of inspiration for Baathists who are behind the continued hostilities—even as one can make a strong case that the hostilities have much less to do with this than with many political, economic, social, and cultural segments of the Iraqi population attempting to take advantage of the situation for their respective needs.

Saddam Hussein—alive or dead—didn’t and shouldn’t matter any more. But it does now. (See Hoshmand, L.T. (2003). Can lessons of history and logical analysis ensure progress in psychological science? *Theory & Psychology*, 13, 39-44; Neuman, Y., & Levi, M. (2003). Blood and chocolate: A rhetorical approach to fear appeal. *Journal of Language & Social Psychology*, 22, 29-46; Schildkraut, D. J. (2002). The more things change...American identity and mass and elite responses to 9/11. *Political Psychology*, 23, 511-535; Schmitt, E. (June 26, 2003). Further attacks on allies predicted by U.S. general. *The New York Times*, p. A14; The life and death of Saddam and Osama. (May 6, 2003). *IBPP*, 14(15);

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