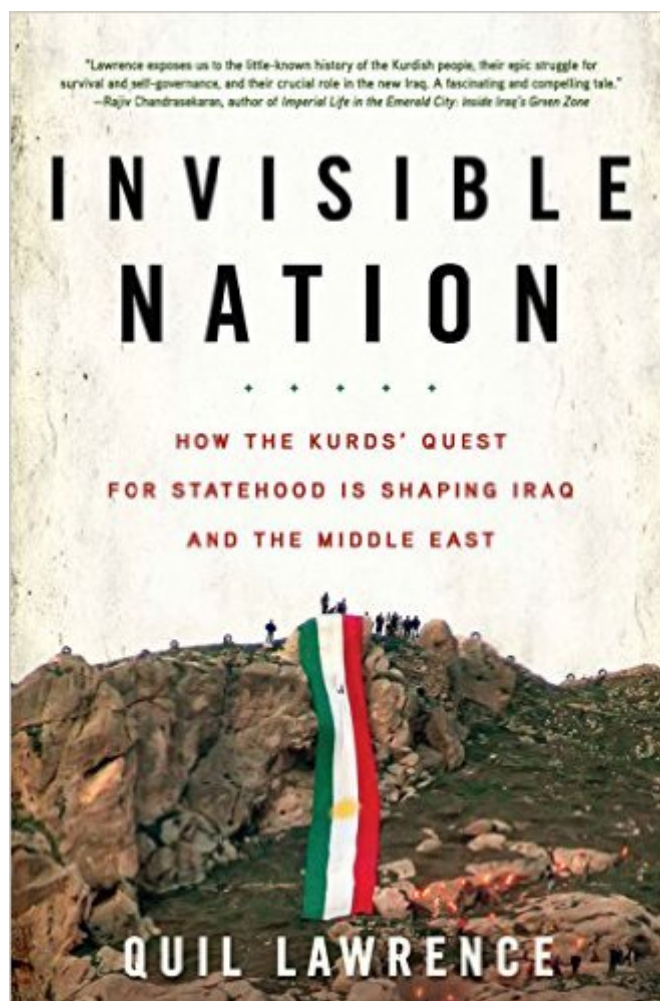


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Invisible Nation: How The Kurds' Quest For Statehood Is Shaping Iraq And The Middle East



Synopsis

The American invasion of Iraq has been a success - for the Kurds. Kurdistan is an invisible nation, and the Kurds the largest ethnic group on Earth without a homeland, comprising some 25 million moderate Sunni Muslims living in the area around the borders of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Through a history dating back to biblical times, they have endured persecution and betrayal, surviving only through stubborn compromise with greater powers. They have always desired their own state, and now, accidentally, the United States may have helped them take a huge step toward that goal. As Quil Lawrence relates in his fascinating and timely study of the Iraqi Kurds, while their ambition and determination grow apace, their future will be largely dependent on whether America values a budding democracy in the region, or decides to yet again sacrifice the Kurds in the name of political expediency. Either way, the Kurdish north may well prove to be the defining battleground in Iraq, as the country struggles to hold itself together. At this extraordinary moment in the saga of Kurdistan, informed by his deep knowledge of the people and region, Lawrence's intimate and unflinching portrait of the Kurds and their heretofore quixotic quest offers a vital and original lens through which to contemplate the future of Iraq and the surrounding Middle East.

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Customer Reviews

This book does two specific things: 1. Provides modern history of the Kurds, mainly the Kurds inside Iraq. This is not an all-encompassing Kurdish history book, although it does touch on some collective Kurdish events. 2. Provides needed perspective on U.S. operations in Iraq: post-1991 and the 2003- invasion. It shows the Kurdish opinion of U.S. intervention. If you're looking for this scope of information, this is an excellent read. If you are looking for a complete history of all Kurds everywhere, this is not the book. Having said this, Quil's writing style engages the reader and jumps to related events when necessary to help bring clarity. This is not a read that stiffly follows a chronological time line. Some takeaways from this book: 1. Iraqi Kurds are independent as a nation already within "Kurdistan," probably since 1991, and we simply have not "officially" recognized them within an international venue (such as UN). 2. The coming choice for the international community will be to either ignore this, or take a leap and recognize the nation of Kurdistan, even if its borders are only within the confines of Iraq.

As a producer/director for British and American TV I have made numerous films in and about Iraq over the last five years, but *Invisible Nation* is a revelation to me. Like most people covering the tragedy, I have been distracted by the carnage in the south and Lawrence's book fills a gaping hole. He has been a regular visitor there since shortly before the US invasion and, as well as providing a potted history of Iraqi Kurdistan, he paints a vivid picture of the country, its people and its leaders. There is a wonderful breezy energy to his prose and by the end we feel not only informed but also emotionally involved in what happens there. Lawrence was an eye-witness to many of the key events he describes and he talks us through the strange parallel history that has unfolded. As Sunni and Shia Iraq have descended into anarchy, the Kurds, largely un-noticed, have established the prosperous, peaceful, functioning democracy (rough and ready though it may be) that was supposed to be the goal all along. The paradox is that it is only the weakness of their southern neighbours that has enabled them to do so and, should the US succeed in restoring stability in the rest of Iraq, Baghdad will almost certainly try and re-establish its traditional control. The Sunnis can look for support to Saudi Arabia, the Shias to Iran. The Kurds have no-one to shake a stick on their behalf other than us, and we have always betrayed them in the past. The truly unforgivable final act in this tragedy, as we scuttle away from the disaster we have inflicted, would be to do so again as the price of peace. Richard Sanders

This is a somewhat quick summary of recent (before 2009) events of the Kurds' attempt to survive in the Mid-East, battling Arab dictators, Turkey, and their tricky alliance with the U.S., and their eventual goal of establishing the state of Kurdistan. In some ways it parallels the establishment of the state of Israel, with the crucial difference being that the Israelis had the consistent "overt" support of the U.S., and the Kurds only had the "covert" consistent support of the U.S., due to Turkey's consistent opposition to the U.S. support of the Kurds. I took away a star because the writer provides too little continuity between events, jumping from one to another, making it difficult to follow them and for us to keep track of where we are and why. The Kurds are a very colorful people, and we need to know more of their interrelationships with each other and get closer to the main characters, as a historian would, so that they can come to life. But Mr. Lawrence writes like a newspaper man. He just reports the who, what, where, and when : just the facts. It would be a much better read if he had more of a narrative historian's touch to provide the "why" certain developments occurred precisely when they did. - Clearly he likes the Kurds, but one wishes his view wasn't as detached as it is.

Lawrence's insightful look at this little understood nation will open your eyes to events that led to America's invasion of Iraq. His first hand knowledge and in-depth research will introduce you to a cast of characters that underlay America's invasion and continue to influence events in the region. This eminently readable book will be referred to by historians for decades to come as America's misadventure is studied. Lawrence's travels have clearly given him a great fondness for the region. In vivid language, Lawrence gives you a feel for the landscape and people of Iraqi Kurdistan. Several times while reading Invisible Nation I found myself thinking that I wanted to travel there. No other person has made me want to visit Iraq. Buy this book!

Appears to be a good, objective story of the Kurds struggle for recognition. The author's bias toward previous administrations is very clearly and while the prior administration may or may not have made strategic errors, the author's bias is clearly evident and colors his view of the handling. That being said, the author does a good job of describing the struggle of the Kurds as a whole and describes well the struggle between the various Kurdish factions. I'd love to read a follow on edition describing the Kurds and their current struggles such as the struggle with ISIS/ISIL.

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