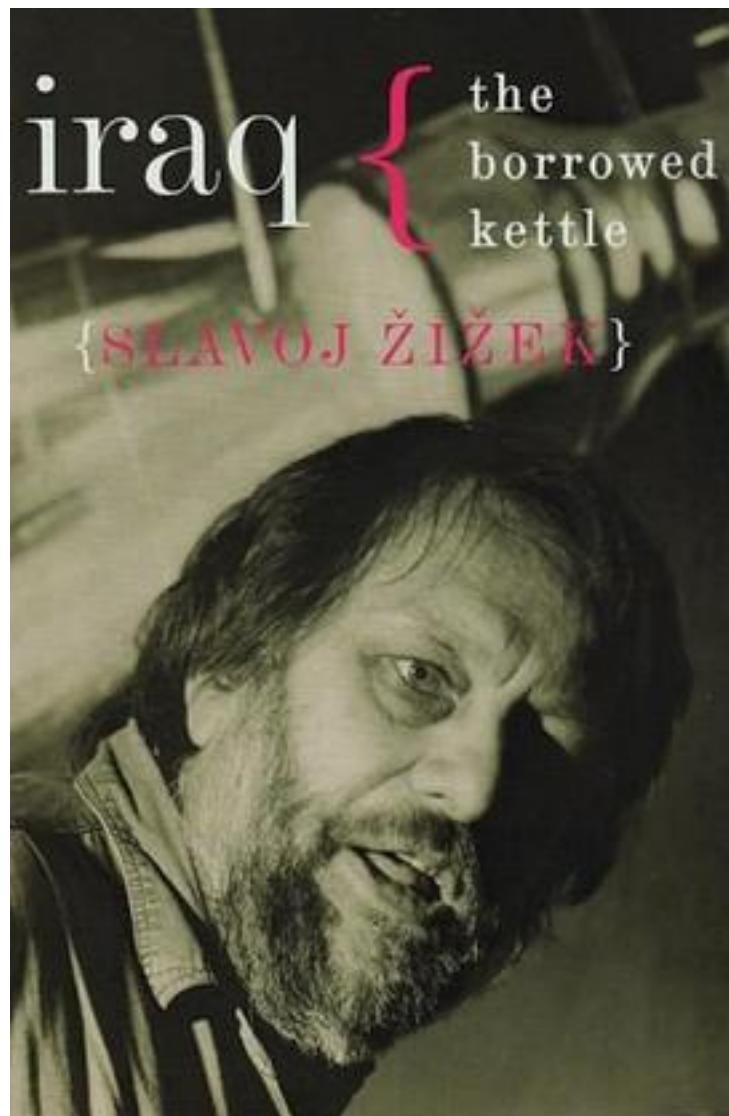


Iraq



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The removal of the regime of Saddam Hussein and the reconstruction of the Iraqi state were critical components of US foreign policy towards the Middle East in the aftermath of 9/11. It was hoped that Iraq, free from the oppression of Saddam's tyranny, would be transformed into a beacon of democracy in the Middle East. Iraq has indeed been transformed, but into a zone of instability.

With Saddam's regime no more, Iraq has turned into a morass of competing ethno-sectarian political and social forces, in stark contrast to the views expressed by Western and Middle Eastern commentators alike before the US-led invasion, who commonly believed in the strength of Iraqi nationalism. Why did this fragmentation occur? Have Sunni-Shii tensions always been present? Are the Kurds seeking secession, or accommodation within the state? What has been the social and political impact of years of dictatorship, war and hardship? And why have US attempts to restructure the Iraqi state resulted in Iraq being on the verge of becoming a failed state, rather than the first democratic domino in the Middle East?

In this timely new book, Gareth Stansfield explores these questions and frames them in an analysis which takes into account Iraq's diverse society, and the geopolitical interventions of regional states and great powers. He concludes with an assessment of Iraq since the removal of Saddam.

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目录:

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