



[Home](#) > Iraq

Iraq

Books Reviewed:

[Iraq](#) [1]

Issue:

[177](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Clive Barnes](#) [3]

Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

This is one of six books in a series which looks at countries in the throes of profound change. It's a rather dry read, considering the passions that this subject raises; the horrors that the Iraqi people have had to endure both during Saddam Hussein's reign and subsequently; the international repercussions of the continuing struggle for power and influence in the oil rich Middle East; and the implications of the American-led Coalition invasion for the rise of radical Islamic movements, the status of the United Nations, and the internal politics of the Coalition partners. A contemporary human tragedy and political dilemma that has dominated the news for the last 20 years is here translated into the matter of fact prose and statistics of a school text. There is, of course, a lot to be said for that. For a characteristic of modern news is a preference for immediacy and sensation; and there is often a failure to fill in the background properly, to cover the story consistently, and to join things up to make a complete picture. Geoff Barker's text does all of this admirably or at least as much as he can be expected to do in under 50 pages. Inevitably, many questions are left unanswered. Some, like why did Saddam Hussein continue to defy weapons inspectors when he had nothing to hide, could only be answered speculatively. Others, like how can as much as 10% of Iraq's oil be lost to smugglers, might just take too much explanation. This is a well researched and organised account with a bibliography which includes mainly adult books, half a dozen websites, and a DVD ? **Iraq in Fragments** ? which might well provide the human dimension missing in the text itself.

Running Order:

1

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[1] <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/iraq>

[2] <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/177>

[3] <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/clive-barnes>