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Denise Natali. *The Kurdish Quasi-State: Development and Dependency in Post-Gulf War Iraq*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2010. 186 pp. \$24.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8156-3217-7.

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The Kurds, an Indo-European people tracing their ancestry back to the ancient Medes, are often the forgotten ethnic community in the Middle East. The Gulf War of 1990 and the autonomy of Kurdish Iraq, protected by postwar no-fly zones, have led this part of the Middle Eastern Kurdish world to develop into a “quasi-state” in northeastern Iraq along the Turkish and Iranian borders. The Kurds are now no longer a forgotten community, and their experience in Iraq has gained increasing recognition, not only in Middle Eastern nations with sizeable Kurdish populations like Turkey, Iran, and Syria, but also internationally. Denise Natali’s *The Kurdish Quasi-State* is a valuable case study of Iraqi Kurdistan over the past quarter century.

The author defines “quasi-states” as “political entities that have internal but not external sovereignty and seek some form of autonomy or independence” (p. xxi). She explores how and why the Kurdish region of Iraq developed differently from the rest of the nation after 1990, stressing especially the role of external aid and varying degrees of international recognition. Chapter 1, “Structural Legacies,” covers the history of Kurdish Iraq from the end of Ottoman control in 1918 to the Gulf War of 1990-91. During this period, aid focused on technical assistance to Iraq as a whole with little thought about development of the agrarian Kurdish region.

The next three chapters cover distinct periods of recent Iraqi history from 1990 to the present. The first period from 1990 to 1996 is covered in chapter 2, “The Relief Phase.” A no-fly zone after 1991 protected the Kurdish region, and foreign aid went directly to the Kurds rather than through the regime in Baghdad. This encouraged the beginning of a quasi-state, but was too short a period

to have a lasting impact.

“From Relief to Rehabilitation,” chapter 3, takes as its starting point the United States’ decision to end its relief funding to the region. The United Nations’ (UN) Oil for Food Program continued aid to the Kurds, allowing ongoing support for economic development. Emphasis, however, turned to rehabilitation, along with efforts to resolve conflicts among Kurdish factions. This shift kept the Kurdish quasi-state alive, but the policies of the United Nations and interested nations continued to focus on Iraq as a nation as a whole rather than on different regions.

The 2003 overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime led to a third phase, a topic covered in the next chapter, “The Democracy Mission.” This phase continues today. Natali concludes that it is still unknown what the future will bring as the Kurdish regime struggles with both ongoing development and dependency on outside help. She argues that the region is still a quasi-state but it is more intimately incorporated into today’s Iraq.

The concluding chapter, “The Dependent Quasi-State,” and a final section, “Conclusions: Sustaining the Kurdish Quasi-State,” discuss future possibilities for the region. The future depends on many factors, such as foreign aid, international economic and political rivalries, the role of minorities in neighboring states with compatriots in Iraq, and the commitment of Iraqi Kurds to Iraq as opposed to complete independence. It also depends on how Iraq deals with the problems of a multiethnic nation, as well as how Iraqi minorities deal with related groups elsewhere. Although these two parts of the book ramble a bit, they show the complexity of this topic, and demonstrate the importance of understanding Iraq and its fu-

ture. These sections also point to how similar research relates to analogous issues elsewhere in the world.

Natali is one of only a few academic experts on the Iraqi Kurds. She holds a PhD in political science from the University of Pennsylvania and has spent many years in the area. She has served as the director of the research center for the American University at Sulaimani and currently holds the Minerva Chair at the Institute for National Strategic Studies of the National Defense University, one of the U.S. Defense Department's senior service institutions for training colonels and future general officers.

Future editions of this work will benefit from efforts to make it more readable. The use of in-text references is distracting and would be better presented as footnotes or endnotes. In addition, the extensive footnotes are expansions of the narrative that could have been included in the main narrative. Many of these notes are as interesting as

the text itself. The in-text references, along with a good bibliography, do lead the reader to a wealth of information. These include numerous interviews conducted by the author of those privy to the events discussed.

This work will be very important for those interested in modern Iraq, especially the Kurdish region. It will also be of interest to anyone studying other regions of the world with circumstances similar to that of the Kurdish quasi-state. One obvious case is the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. For future research, Natali's work will be a springboard for comparing regions teetering among choosing national autonomy, independence, a more intimate relationship with a central government, or complete assimilation into a national state. I hope that Natali continues her work in this area and inspires others to undertake similar research. It is a promising subject worthy of future scholarship. The *Kurdish Quasi-State* is a valuable contribution to the literature on the modern Middle East.

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