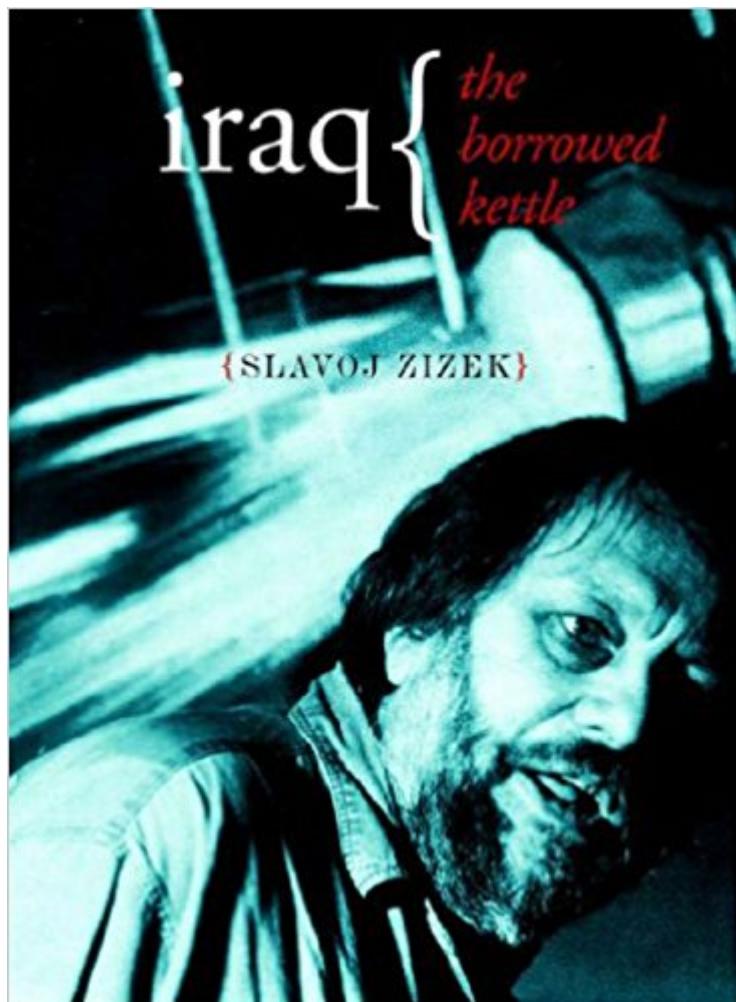


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# Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle



## Synopsis

In order to render the strange logic of dreams, Freud quoted the old joke about the borrowed kettle: (1) I never borrowed a kettle from you, (2) I returned it to you unbroken, (3) the kettle was already broken when I got it from you. Such an enumeration of inconsistent arguments, of course, confirms exactly what it attempts to deny—*that I returned a broken kettle to you ...* That same inconsistency, &#142;i&#158;ek argues, characterized the justification of the attack on Iraq: A link between Saddam's regime and al-Qaeda was transformed into the threat posed by the regime to the region, which was then further transformed into the threat posed to everyone (but the US and Britain especially) by weapons of mass destruction. When no significant weapons were found, we were treated to the same bizarre logic: OK, the two labs we found don't really prove anything, but even if there are no WMD in Iraq, there are other good reasons to topple a tyrant like Saddam ... Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle analyzes the background that such inconsistent argumentation conceals and, simultaneously, cannot help but highlight: what were the actual ideological and political stakes of the attack on Iraq? In classic &#142;i&#158;ekian style, it spares nothing and nobody, neither pathetically impotent pacifism nor hypocritical sympathy with the suffering of the Iraqi people. Praise for Welcome to the Desert of the Real: &#142;i&#158;ek is a stimulating writer; with a knack for turning scenes from movies into little parables, and he is adept at spotting other people's nonsense. &#142;i&#158;ek's book is perhaps particularly helpful in understanding the &#142;e we wished for it, &#142;i&#158;ek from his reading of the terrifying predictability of the American response. &#142;i&#158;ek parallax

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As Slovenian public intellectual and provocateur Zizek puts it in his pungent sequel to *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, a major motivational problem with the U.S.'s Iraq adventure has been "too many reasons for the war." As each pretext collapsed in the face of events, another rose to take its place. Thus, he says, the "war" has been as much on logical consistency as on Iraq. As piercing as Zizek can be about the rhetorical excesses of the Bush administration—his Lacanian reading of Rumsfeld's infamous "known knowns" speech is a tour de force—he doesn't spare what he sees as the smug complacencies of "Old Europe" and the left, putting them under the general rubric of convenient pacifism and selective outrage. Structured as an essay with two long appendixes, Zizek's book is consistently funny, engaging and accessible whether discussing Hitchcock or Heidegger. If some of the philosophical excursions in the book's second half threaten to derail the cogency of its arguments, they generally reward patience. And if the sheer exuberance of Zizek's biting invective acts as something of a tonic, the sobriety of his basic message—that we have entered a permanent, Orwellian "state of emergency" that threatens the very freedoms we are supposedly defending—is never lost. Simultaneously invigorating, depressing and maddening, Zizek's book reveals him to be an intellectual made for these times, a mixed blessing if ever there was one. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"Hopping from peak to peak, and periodically descending into the valley of present-day culture for refreshment, *i&ek* outlines a topology of activity that recovers revealed truths. •Counterpunch" &ek will entertain and offend, but never bore. •The Stranger

An early book by the most dangerous philosopher in the world. Much smaller than *Less* than *Nothing* this book requires less capital to purchase and much less strength to tote around. This was a timely piece then and serves mostly as a historical reference to the ongoing dialog that occurred. Does it still have relevance other than a brief exposé of how human we all are?

Great book

Bought this book for an essay I had to write in school. For anyone who has read Zizek before - this book is classic Zizek. Love it or hate it, his style is provocative and incredibly insightful. As he admits in the first few pages, this book is not exactly about Iraq. Rather, it is about everything that happened around Iraq. Expect a lot of psychoanalysis, Hegel, and Zizek's jokes from the Soviet era.

I think it's interesting to note that the irony of the two comments above, who claim that Zizek is actually wrong in the book since now they found those old shells with sarin residues, perfectly reinforces the logic of the book. The War was not about the weapons, and neither is the book, as its focus was rather the pretexts under which modern war can be waged. The actual weapons here were irrelevant (plus finding a few artillery shells with expired toxins surely don't qualify as the thousands of liters of deadly chemicals that were promised to us before the invasion) - and yes Saddam did have WMDs at one point, we should know, we sold it to him - the focus of the book is on the status of "reality" and "truth" in the modern media culture, which are very disturbing. Rather the book explores the implications and fallout of what might be considered a grand political experiment that was tried by the Bush administration on America and the world: make up a fake reason for war and handouts, break international law, put the media machine to reinforce your claims, see it be proven false, don't even bother covering ass but just change the topic (WMDs > Freedom), refuse to talk about a blatant lie, get reelected, and then watch the world leaders come to make amends. This is what the Left is ignoring, and this is the challenge to "reality" that needs to be addressed. So yes put down the New York Times, and read this book.

...A long yarn consisting of provisional conclusions about the state of global politics from a critical theorist's perspective. The first part of the book directly relates to the war in Iraq, introduced by the very appropriate question "They Control Iraq, But Do They Control Themselves?" ... A question that only a theorist schooled in psychoanalysis would ask, perhaps, but a very interesting question nonetheless. In addressing this question, Zizek observes that "the problem... was that there were TOO MANY reasons for the war," and goes on to say "I should emphasize that Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle is not a book about Iraq - but the Iraqi crisis and war were not really about Iraq either" (but rather about the stakes of international politics). The first third of the book (first 66 pages) is interesting and thought-provoking, although some of Zizek's analyses of the global context of war become superficial after a few pages. The second two parts ("appendices"), which comprise the

majority of the book, don't really have anything to do with the war per se. Zizek takes the opportunity of the Iraq war to go off on a psycho-marxist rant about ethics and global affairs for 110 pages in these two appendices. A few thought-provoking ideas, here and there, but the profound conclusions that the reader expects never arrive. Again, the conclusion of the book is quite interesting, but how and why the reader has arrived there is so obscured by the morass of allegories that Zizek employs that it is not clear whether such a path even exists. As a work of political theory, this book is testament to the vain, undisciplined character of much contemporary "critical" thought. Are there no rigorous taskmasters at Verso? Zizek needs one. I wouldn't really bother with this book unless you are already interested in Zizek and/or you have a close familiarity with Marx (and Hegel), Freud, and Lacan (and maybe a little Foucault and Derrida). Otherwise, forget it. I already did. If you are just interested in what Zizek has to say about the Iraq war, his articles are splayed all over the Internet. Just type "Zizek and Iraq" into a search engine.

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