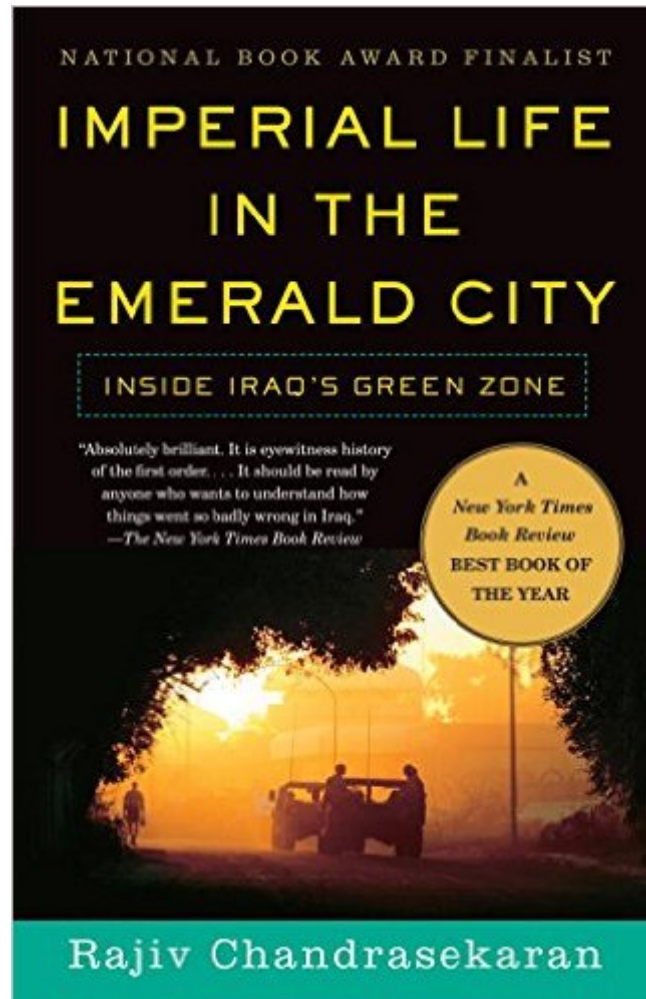


The book was found

Imperial Life In The Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone



Synopsis

The Green Zone, Baghdad, 2003: in this walled-off compound of swimming pools and luxurious amenities, Paul Bremer and his Coalition Provisional Authority set out to fashion a new, democratic Iraq. Staffed by idealistic aides chosen primarily for their views on issues such as abortion and capital punishment, the CPA spent the crucial first year of occupation pursuing goals that had little to do with the immediate needs of a postwar nation: flat taxes instead of electricity and deregulated health care instead of emergency medical supplies. In this acclaimed firsthand account, the former Baghdad bureau chief of The Washington Post gives us an intimate portrait of life inside this Oz-like bubble, which continued unaffected by the growing mayhem outside. This is a quietly devastating tale of imperial folly, and the definitive history of those early days when things went irrevocably wrong in Iraq.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Here's how it works. You have a degree in, let's say, English Literature, and your resume says that your entire work experience has been working on the campaign of Republican senator Schmurtz. You apply for a job working for the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Iraq, and sigh in relief at passing the hardball questions asked of you like, "How do you stand on Roe vs. Wade?", and "Whom did you vote for in the last presidential election?" Finally you end up in Baghdad's green zone, and are put to work designing a new traffic code, or trying to set up a computerized stock exchange. Maybe your name is James Haveman, a 60 year old social worker. I don't know if we

have a job for you. Wait, you are a true party loyalist? How about taking over the Iraqi health care system? Currently we have a gentleman running it named Frederick Burkle, Jr. He's a physician with an MA in public health, postgraduate degrees from Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, and UC Berkeley. He specializes in disaster-response issues, a subject he taught at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. The problem with him is we aren't sure he is a Republican loyalist. So Jim why don't you go over and take his place? I am definitely not making this up. If this were a novel by, say, Carl Hiaasen, it would be the funniest book of the year. Tragically, this is real life. I finished this book right after reading "Fiasco", and don't know if I can take many more recountings of the disaster that is Iraq. The folks that were sent to Iraq to build a new nation made all the wrong decisions at just the right time. They were literally trying to turn Iraq into a little USA. The new traffic codes and the new regulations for the stock exchange? The Iraqis read them through, and carefully filed them in the circular file.

This book was so absorbing that it kept me up past midnight. I had to finish it. It is unique, focusing in a very easy to read way on the terrible errors committed that made Bremer's rule a complete failure. The author documents both the unreality of the Green Zone ("The fear on the faces of American troops was rarely seen by the denizens of the Palace") and the terrible errors that resulted from arrogance, ignorance, and plain bureaucratic in-fighting. The author opens by concluding that most of those serving in the provisional authority simply gave up and went through the motions. He calls them a motley bunch, most qualified by allegiance to the neo-conservative wing of the Republican Party, rather than actually being competent or even relevant. The author makes an informed speculative judgement that fully half of those serving, many callow youths, got their first passport to take the political appointments in Iraq. Great line from one disillusioned staffer: "I'm a neo-conservative who has been mugged by reality." Bremer screwed this up, but it was Dick Cheney who chose him for the job and got General Garner fired. Dick Cheney also personally directed the removal of Tom Warrick, the only person in the US government that actually understood Iraq in all its nuances, from the Garner team, largely to protect Chalabi--a thief and a liar according to CIA and State, a willing accomplice who sucked up to Cheney--and block objections to Chalabi being installed as the leader. The author also reports that Doug Feith kept General Garner ignorant in order to promote Chalabi as the one with the answers.

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