



Out of Nowhere: The Kurds of Syria in Peace and War

By Michael Gunter

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Out of Nowhere: The Kurds of Syria in Peace and War By Michael Gunter

In mid-2012 the previously almost forgotten Syrian Kurds suddenly emerged as a potential game-changer in the country's civil war when in an attempt to consolidate its increasingly desperate position the Assad government abruptly withdrew its troops from the major Kurdish areas in Syria. The Kurds in Syria had suddenly won autonomy, a situation that has huge implications for neighboring Turkey and the near independent Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq. Indeed, their precipitous rise may prove a tipping-point that alters the boundaries imposed on the Middle East by the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916.

These important events and what they portend for the future are scrutinized by the renowned scholar of the Kurds Michael Gunter. He also analyses the sudden rise of Salih Muslim and his Democratic Union Party (PYD) - which was created by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and remains affiliated to it - and the extremely complex and deadly fighting between factions of the Syrian Opposition affiliated with al-Qaeda such as the Jabhat al-Nusra jihadists and the PYD, among others.

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Out of Nowhere: The Kurds of Syria in Peace and War By Michael Gunter Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1473640 in Books
- Published on: 2014-11-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 5.70" h x .70" w x 8.80" l, .78 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 176 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"Describing Michael Gunter's book on the Kurds of Syria as timely will not do it justice. As Kurdish fighters are now the 'boots on ground' in the war against the Islamic State (ISIS, ISIL or Daesh), Gunter's book is a necessity." -- Yaniv Voller, *Middle East Policy*

"Gunter's slim volume is an informative and necessary intervention into what is an extremely fluid situation. Author of 11 books on the Kurdish question and the secretary general of the EU Turkey Civic Commission, he is a sympathetic observer. *Out of Nowhere*, though, avoids romanticism. It is not a paean to the Kurdish struggle but is, instead, a hard-headed analysis of the realities on the ground." -- *LSE Review of Books*

"Michael Gunter has made an important and timely contribution to the limited literature on the Kurds in Syria. This is one of the first analyses of the momentous development of Kurdish autonomy in 'Western Kurdistan' and is essential reading for understanding the Syrian war and the country's future. Explaining Kurdish politics in Syria is not easy but Gunter skilfully examines the complex factors affecting Kurdish efforts to achieve improved rights and security. He also uses his extensive knowledge of Kurdish politics in Turkey and Iraq to give an understanding of these critical dynamics." -- Robert Lowe, Middle East Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science

"Little known before the advent of the Syria Revolution, the Kurds of Syria have shown themselves to be adept at managing their fissiparous internal affairs, capable of representing themselves to the wider region and international community, and ferocious fighters in the face of challenges from a range of deadly opponents that have emerged in the Syrian civil war. Michael Gunter presents a much needed analysis of the situation of the Kurds in Syria, bringing to the subject his many decades of experience as an observer of the group. Posing key questions, this book performs an invaluable role for those seeking to build as comprehensive a view as possible of a tragic civil war that continues to be as opaque in its dynamics as it is deadly." -- Professor Gareth Stansfield, Al-Qasimi Chair of Arab Gulf Studies at the University of Exeter and Director of Middle East Studies at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)

"This is an extremely informative evaluation of the causes and consequences of the sudden autonomy acquired by the Kurdish communities in Syria as a result of the civil war there. It is particularly apposite because it sets the situation of Syria's Kurds in the wider context of how regional events since the end of the Cold War have created a new set of opportunities for the Kurds in Iraq and Turkey as well. Nor are the interests of other key states ignored, particularly those of the United States, Turkey and Iraq. In short, this is a very insightful comment on the Kurdish problem and its implications for the region in the light of Syria's civil war." -- George Joffé, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Cambridge

"In recent decades, the Kurds have become important players in Middle East politics. In particular, the establishment of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) has given them a significant platform to advance their demands. ...The Syrian Kurds, however, have hitherto remained relatively invisible to the outside world. The Syrian uprising catapulted the Kurds and their role in the evolving imbroglio in that country into the forefront of the discussion about the future of Syria. Michael Gunter, a prolific writer on the Kurds and a well-known scholar in the field of Kurdish studies, has written a highly informative and timely volume explaining the evolving role of the Kurds in Syria and their future prospects. ... This is a must-read book for specialists and informed citizens alike" -- Nader Entessar, Professor of Political Science, University of South Alabama, and author of Kurdish Politics in the Middle East

"Out of Nowhere is the latest of Michael Gunter's many important studies of the Kurds. This timely book puts the dramatic developments of the last two years in Syria's Kurdistan in historical, geopolitical and socio-cultural context. Essential reading for anyone who wishes to understand the dynamic role of the Kurds in a changing Middle East." -- Ofra Bengio, Head of the Kurdish Studies program at the Moshe Dayan Center, Tel Aviv University

About the Author

Michael M. Gunter is a professor of Political Science at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee. He is the author of many critically praised scholarly books on the Kurdish question, the most recent being *The Kurds Ascending: A Historical Dictionary of the Kurds* and, with Mohammed M. A. Ahmed, *The Kurdish Spring*.

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