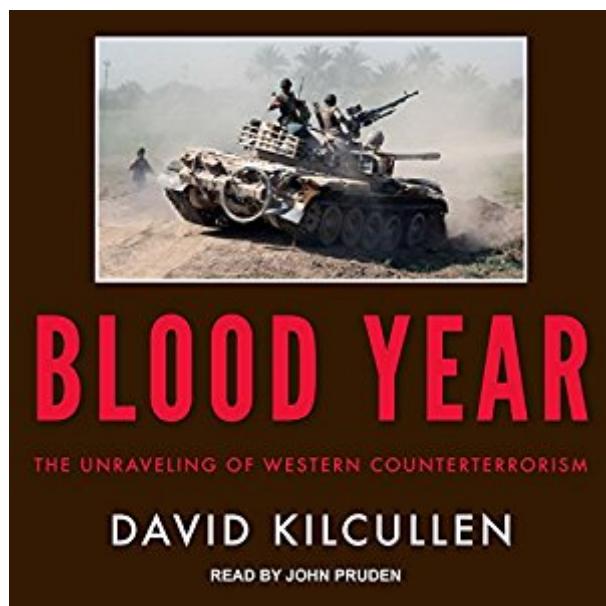


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Blood Year: The Unraveling Of Western Counterterrorism



Synopsis

2014 has the potential to go down as a crucial year in modern world history. A resurgent and bellicose Russia took over Crimea and fueled a civil war in Eastern Ukraine. Post-Saddam Iraq, in many respects a creature of the United States because of the war that began in 2003, lost a third of its territory to an army of hyper-violent millennialists. The peace process in Israel seemed to completely collapse. Finally, after coalescing in Syria as a territorial entity, the Islamic State swept into northern Iraq and through northeastern Syria, attracting legions of recruits from Europe and the Middle East. David Kilcullen was one of the architects of America's strategy in the late phases of the second Gulf War, and also spent time in Afghanistan and other hotspots. In *Blood Year*, he provides a wide-angle view of the current situation in the Middle East and analyzes how America and the West ended up in such dire circumstances. This is an essential book for anyone interested in understanding not only why the region that the US invaded a dozen years ago has collapsed into utter chaos, but also what it can do to alleviate the grim situation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Blood Year stands out amongst the burgeoning literature on both the Iraq War (2003-2011) and the ISIS threat (2014-onward) for its insightfulness on the road that led to the current juncture and its ability to provide relevant guidance without bogging down in heavy academic writing. First and foremost, *Blood Year* is a 'mea culpa' from a policy insider who, as much as any other single figure,

helped craft US counterterrorism policy from 2005 onward. Kilcullen's "Disaggregation Theory" served as a critical corrective to US policy which had up until its formulation sought to tie the world's jihadists together under the single umbrella of terrorist, magnifying the threat rather than diminishing or defeating it. Yet as Kilcullen is the first to admit, this strategic framework also served to focus the US too closely on Al-Qaeda Central in Pakistan (especially after the start of the Obama Administration in 2009), and ignored the rise of al-Qaeda's erstwhile junior affiliate in Iraq. This, combined with the US invasion of Iraq (which Kilcullen describes as the worst strategic blunder since Hitler's 1940 invasion of the USSR) set the stage for disaster. Kilcullen goes on to chronicle how, with US forces out of Iraq and no longer applying pressure to Iraqi PM Nuri al-Maliki to maintain an inclusive government, Iraq began a swift descent into sectarian civil war, as well as the rise of ISIS from the remnants of Al-Qaeda in Iraq combined with former Ba'athist officers and Sunni tribes disenfranchised by Maliki's increasingly pro-Shi'a policies. The result is a swift, incisive read that stands out as the best yet written on the rise of ISIS.

This book is excellent. It will answer the questions swirling around in your mind from the news of the Middle East. This book connects the dots to explain the headlines you see today.. He explains why things are such a mess there. If you look closely he explains what is going to happen in the near future. David Kilcullen authority on the Middle East is known all over. He has been an adviser to both General Petraeus during the surge, Secretary Rice, to name just a few. He explains in the book the surge. Then he goes to explain how we got from the surge to the present trouble with ISIS. Through that you can see ISIS was a product of a political situation. So even if the west kills all of ISIS, which they are doing quite well right now there is an underlying problem. That problem will create new messes after ISIS is gone if it isn't dealt with. He gives you great detail not listed anywhere else to prove his points. His analysis covers both Iraq and Syria. Anymore you can't discuss one without the other. A must for sure for any government official.

I recommend this book. It is a reasonably fair and quite interesting account of the conduct of middle eastern wars and the rise of ever more extreme terrorist groups. It is written for western eyes so there is not too much that would upset the garden furniture. He dislikes Putin and has doubts about the French so no problems there. As for the Iranians, Syrians, Iraqis, Turks, etc; Less said soonest mended. If any impressed him he didn't say. His view of war is that of a military man, yet he is smart enough to know that that doesn't work too well when the wars in question are being lost. He faults both Bush and Obama for their policies and why not? Both have been on the low side of average as

US presidents go. Should we expect more from Trump or Clinton? The book shines when he writes about the details of war. He has an organised mind and converts the fog of war into clear positions and actions that are easy to understand and that one relate to. One can see why those in power would consult him. He recognises that there are a few short-comings in the way that these wars have been conducted, mostly by the USA. He does not however mention the complete absence of any political strategy that would enable them to be fought and won in a vaguely coherent manner. His answer to the question, "Where to now?" is disappointing but I suspect he is holding back. Why tell ISIS the winning move? He advocates more and better warfare, but I have my doubts and I suspect he does to. When you are pruning your bush into the shape of an aircraft and it all goes wrong, it is often better to try again next spring. I have reviewed this book with a querulous tone. It is worth reading, but I never got over the feeling that Kilcullen was writing to please a particular audience, but that the facts didn't serve.

First half of book is fast moving, easy to read. He's been close to many of the anti-terrorist efforts as an Aussie military adviser (former Aussie Colonel) to U.S and other anti jihadist forces. Later he gives a lot detail about very recent jihadist activities and relates some to their antecedents in recent history. He believes the Bush-directed invasion of Iraq was a huge mistake, leading to many of our troubles in the middle east. He agreed with the belated Bush-Petraeus surge in 2007. He believes the laxity of the Obama actions Iraq and Syria since 2012 allowed some situations to get even worse and more dangerous. He concludes that the jihadist problems being created by both ISIS in several locations and by the Taliban in Afghanistan will continue to get worse if the U.S does not take a much larger role in leading the opposition. He fears that if the problems are allowed to grow so much that the U.S. and its allies become much more threatened in their homelands, there will be a strong tendency for U.S and other democratic government to become much more authoritarian in response and thereby lose freedoms. A similar view about the Iraq intervention is expressed by a concurrent author, American former Army colonel and professor Andrew Rackovich in his book "Americas War," but that writer seems to believe we should let the middle east countries deal with their problems with less western help.

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