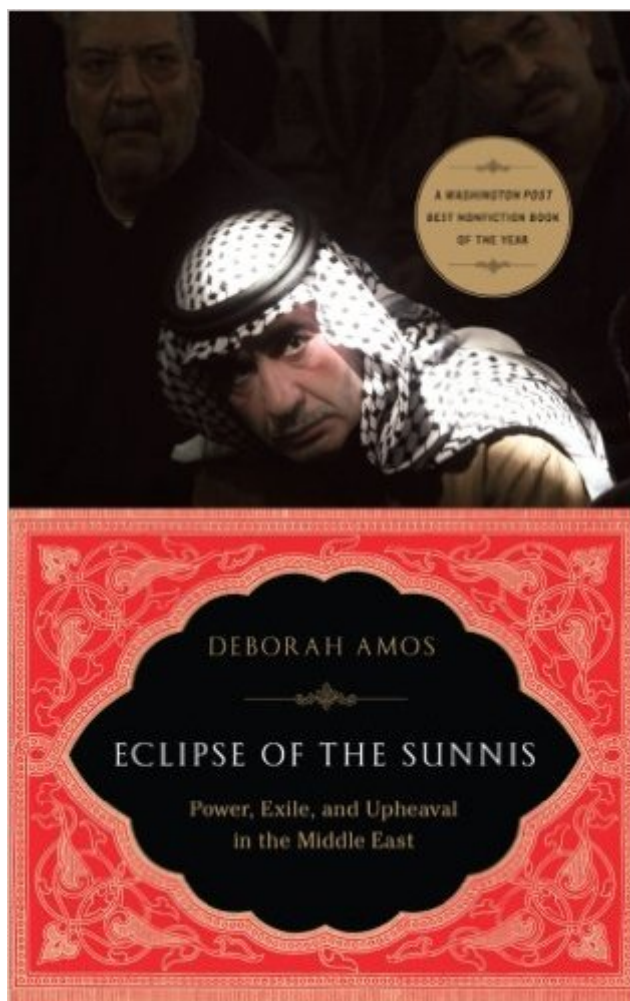


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Eclipse Of The Sunnis: Power, Exile, And Upheaval In The Middle East



Synopsis

From Amman to Beirut and Damascus, award-winning NPR reporter Deborah Amos follows Sunnis living in exile--the largest exile population in postwar history. Husbands are separated from wives, children from parents, and many are cast into a violent and uncaring subculture in which they have few rights and no roots. Even college-educated women are forced to turn to prostitution. The decisions they make illuminate the human side of the post-conflict displacement in the Middle East and give voice to the trauma of the exiles who must choose daily between dignity and survival.

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Customer Reviews

Too often in today's media, we hear of "sectarian conflict" in Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, and many other Middle Eastern countries. Nevertheless, we fail to understand what these conflicts consist of, or why they exist in the first place. In this well researched and written account, Deborah Amos takes us inside the ethnic conflict of Sunni and Shi'a Muslims in Iraq, and educates us about their struggles of resettlement and exile. The depth of Amos' reporting is exceptional, as she was fortunate enough to develop intimate relationships with many Iraqi refugees. This is a worthwhile read for anyone who wants to understand the ethnic conflicts of post-war Iraq.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book; I wanted an objective, non-political description of what has happened to the Iraqi people since the start of the War In Iraq. Ms. Amos covers the plight of Christians, Sunni, Shiite, Baath and other religions in Iraq, with details that made me occasionally put down the book and shake my head. She spends time describing Jordan, Syria, Beirut, Israel,

and Iran as well as Iraq. It is clear she knows the region, and connected with people of all types in order to document the incredible stories in the book. There is a tendency in her writing to counter-point U.S. international policy and military actions with our stated goals but without an overly political lean. After reading this book, I am spurred to read more about the religious and political history of the region. Well done. Touching. A must read.

It took me a couple of chapters to get my mind wrapped around this book since I don't have a quick recall of the order of events as they unfolded during and after the war with Iraq. Once I got my stride I found this to be quite interesting. I had no idea the degree of the exodus of Iraqis, primarily Sunni and Christian, that came as a result of the sectarian fighting that came as a result of the displacement of Saddam and his regime. It made me realize the domino effects that can occur and cause so many impacts to displaced people who become struggling refugees, surrounding countries struggling under the weight of giving them shelter, the gaping hole left in the country they leave, etc. It gave me quite a lot to think about.

An interesting review of the Shiite ascendancy underway in the middle east. The book is somewhat dated since it was published before the start of the Arab Spring and the Syrian civil war. However, to the studious observer this book may yet serve a purpose by showing how decisive sectarianism was in the middle east shortly before the start of the Arab Spring.

After hearing the author of this book share on NPR's Fresh Air with Terry Gross, I was excited to read about the real lives of refugees, particularly women, who had fled the war and ended up in shacks, tent cities, and brothels. Turns out the majority of the book focuses on the Bush administration and the war itself, not quite the human interest story as portrayed by the segment on NPR. I was disappointed to say the least. It is well written and informative if you care about the politics behind the writing, however, if you crave a dive into the lives of the people, you'll only find vague shadowy references and one story to connect with. Too bad this isn't like iTunes and you can buy just the track (chapter) you want.

As Amos mentions, she dwells on the Sunni-Shiite divide in these three countries. In Lebanon, the Shiites have a veto on any change in the government. In Iraq, the Sunnis have either cooperated or gone into exile. In Syria itself, Bashar al-Assad and his Shiite government are waging a fight with Sunni extremists for their very survival. The Sunnis are the predominant faith of the Middle East, so

despite what Amos states, they are not in decline. Many have turned to extremism, where other faiths like Christianity are being pushed out of these countries. Islam and the realities on the ground in the Middle East have ensured that other religions cannot practice their faith safely. The Shiites will still exert majority power in the new Iraq and Lebanon, but became a minority faith in Syria. This is a nice thoughtful book about the reality of religion in the Middle East. The continued conflict between Shiite and Sunni will continue to plague the world for many years.

I read this book immediately after having read "The Forsaken". Although "The Forsaken" deals with Gulag prisoners in Stalinist Russia and "The Sunni Eclipse" deals with Iraqis in exile what is similar to both works is the fact that what is always lost and or forgotten in Geo-Political conflicts are the very entity that those conflicts publicly voice concern for...the people. And, while this scenario has and probably will be repeated again and again...Ms. Amos adds a fresh voice to this particular narrative. I have always respected her as a journalist (both on TV and on NPR) and she does not disappoint in print. Drawing from a series of interviews with Iraqis in exile and a concise reference to historical context...this book is jam packed with information...much more so than I would have thought possible in just over 200 pages...which speaks to Ms. Amos' ability to tell this story with a minimum of superfluous commentary...I have nothing but praise for this book...and highly, highly recommend it

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