



# The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future

By Vali Nasr



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**"Historically incisive, geographically broad-reaching, and brimming with illuminating anecdotes."?Max Rodenbeck, *New York Review of Books***

Iranian-born scholar Vali Nasr has become one of America's leading commentators on current events in the Middle East, admired and welcomed by both media and government for his "concise and coherent" analysis (*Wall Street Journal*, front-page profile). In this "remarkable work" (Anderson Cooper), Nasr brilliantly dissects the political and theological antagonisms within Islam, providing a unique and objective understanding of the 1,400-year bitter struggle between Shias and Sunnis and shedding crucial light on its modern-day consequences.



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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

One of the least remarked upon aspects of the war in Iraq, at least in the American press, has been how conflict and instability in that country have shaken the delicate balance of power between Sunni and Shia throughout the wider region. Nasr, professor of Middle East and South Asia politics at the Naval Postgraduate School, tackles this question head-on for a Western audience. His account begins with a cogent, engrossing introduction to the history and theology of Shia Islam, encapsulating the intellectual and political trends that have shaped the faith and its relations with the dominant Sunni strain. Nasr argues that the Shia Crescent—stretching from Lebanon and Syria through the Gulf to Iraq and Iran, finally terminating in Pakistan and India—is gathering strength in the aftermath of Saddam's fall, cementing linkages that transcend political and linguistic borders and could lead to a new map of the Middle East. While Nasr's enthusiasm for Iraq's Shiite leader Ayatollah Sistani sometimes borders on the hagiographic, and he makes a number of uncharacteristic errors, such as conflating the Syrian Alawi community with the Turkish Alevis, his book is worthwhile reading for those seeking a primer on the second-largest Muslim sect. (Aug.)  
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From [Booklist](#)

\*Starred Review\* About 15 percent of Muslims worldwide are Shia. In Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and Bahrain, Shia constitute a majority or plurality of the populace, and areas of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia (in the latter, the oil fields) host Shia majorities. Iran's Islamic Revolution under Ayatollah Khomeini, which rushed Islam to the forefront of non-Islamic consciousness internationally, was a Shia phenomenon. Iranian Middle East researcher Nasr, who teaches, consults, and writes in the U.S., says that Khomeini was rather a maverick who discountenanced the quietism, ritualism, and celebratoriness of mainstream Shia. If that is a revelation to Westerners, so, probably, are Nasr's arguments that the Shia have been persecuted and oppressed by the Sunni majority ever since the divergence of the two Islamic strains more than 1,300 years ago, and that Islamic terrorism from well before 9/11 to the current insurgency in post-Saddam Iraq is a tactic of intransigent Sunnism. Nasr never pontificates or accuses, always choosing to show both sides' reasons for even the most heinous actions. He never so much as hints at what many readers must infer from his presentation--that the U.S. should think again and again and again before attacking Iran. So enlightening and perspective altering that no one concerned about the Middle East should miss reading it. *Ray Olson*  
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Review

Provocative. -- Thomas L. Friedman

Brilliant and very readable. -- Trudy Rubin

A must-read. -- Robert Hunt

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Brilliant and very readable. --Trudy Rubin

Smart, clear and timely. --Warren Bass

Provocative. --Thomas L. Friedman"

Brilliant and very readable. --Trudy Rubin"

[A] must-read for those who find themselves perplexed about the sectarian violence in Iraq, the unpredictable politics of Iran, and the suddenly resurgent Hezbollah in Lebanon. --Robert Hunt"

Smart, clear and timely. --Warren Bass"

Fast moving, engaging and ultimately unnerving.... The Shia Revival is at its most provocative when exposing how the Sunni-Shiite power imbalance seeps out of classrooms and infects life on the ground. --Irshad Manji"

This book offers compelling corrective reading.... Broad-ranging and detailed, but still eminently readable. --L. Carl Brown"

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