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Iran Awakening: One Woman's Journey to Reclaim Her Life and Country

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since Ocalan's arrest. Although she does include a convenient time line, an index of the principal players and informants would have been a valuable aid to the reader.

Blood and Belief will be of interest not only to scholars of Kurdish and Turkish history but to anyone interested in the development of political movements and parties and in how power is consolidated. *Invisible Nation* offers an excellent, readable overview of the Kurdish experience in Iraq, especially since the Gulf war of 1991. These books document two different approaches taken by a social group long oppressed. Both raise questions about the cost and feasibility of self-determination, given the growing permeability of national boundaries. Another issue is the viability of using terrorism as a way to get recognition or press for one's rights, however legitimate they may seem. A lesson for national leaders is that the more you deny the identity of a social group (for years the government of Turkey claimed there were no Kurds, only mountain Turks) and its right to self-expression, the more you sow the seeds for insurrection and rebellion.

Despite their geopolitical separation, which contributes to the tendency to collude with or against each other, the future for the Kurds seems brighter than ever. Marcus shows that they can organize themselves effectively, while Lawrence suggests that with autonomy and better economic times, historical animosities can be set aside. Both authors have added pages to Kurdish history.

ANTHONY DIBELLA
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Ebadi, Shirin. *Iran Awakening: One Woman's Journey to Reclaim Her Life and Country*. New York: Random House, 2007. 256pp. \$14.95

Nasr, Vali. *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2007. 240pp. \$14.95

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran has posed a serious dilemma for regional and global peace and security. Today, Iran is more perplexing and ominous than ever, thanks to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's threatening rants and Iran's supposed nuclear ambitions.

Two books about Iran and Shiism are must reads to understand better the current dilemma in the Middle East and its ramifications for global security. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi's autobiography *Iran Awakening* and Vali Nasr's *The Shia Revival* provide unique insights and analyses of the power-hungry clerics ruling Iran and of the Sunni-versus-Shia paradigm.

Shirin Ebadi's personal story about her upbringing in Iran, first under Shah Pahlavi and then under the Islamic Revolution that brought Ayatollah Khomeini to power, is captivating. Each chapter contains shocking developments, but nothing grabs the reader more than the prologue, in which she describes her surreal discovery that she is next on the revolutionary clerics' hit list. The Shia revolutionary paradigm that evolved in Khomeini's Iran proved as repressive and brutal as the shah's reign. Particularly bewildering was the Shia messianic belief in the return of the Mahdi—the "hidden imam"—whose arrival would be preceded by the apocalypse. Equally provocative is the nearly hypnotic religious fervor with

which the Shia sought martyrdom, especially when they fought Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq War (1980–88). The scale of destruction and loss of human life was staggering, yet Iranians volunteered to fill the front lines in droves. Shirin Ebadi vividly describes these strange, violent events, as well as the ideological earthquakes in Iran and the state of fear that pervaded the very air people breathed.

As a human-rights lawyer, Shirin Ebadi has taken on cases that were extremely perilous to her and her colleagues. She has particularly involved herself in cases of gross violations against women and children. Both men and women, young and old, underwent torture, disappeared, or languished in Iranian prisons. Extrajudicial executions and assassinations were not uncommon. In 2003 Shirin Ebadi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. In chapter 12 she describes her strange elation in being chosen, and how her fellow Iranians reacted—the authorities were unhappy, but the people, especially the women, were ecstatic. Today, Shirin Ebadi continues to work as a human-rights lawyer in Iran, despite continuous threats to her life.

Vali Nasr's book illustrates the patterns of conflicts between Shias and Sunnis throughout Islamic history. In *The Shia Revival* he explains how he believes these patterns will continue to shape regional politics in the Middle East and South Asia. It is a book to which U.S. policy makers, military, and intelligence groups should pay close attention. Nasr has the ability to do something that probably no other "analyst" has done—to explain the mind-set of the Sunni and Shia leaders and their followers, and why they have such deeply

emotive sentiments about themselves and resentments toward each other. These sentiments and resentments, Nasr is convinced, are affecting politics in post-Saddam Iraq and have ramifications for regional and global security. The book's subtitle states his theory that it is the many conflicts within Islam that will shape the future. All we need to do is look at what is happening in Iraq, and other parts of the Islamic world, to see that this is true.

The Sunni-Shia rivalry is as old as Islam itself. Today, for military and security strategy purposes, it is especially important to understand the political, sociocultural, religious, historical, and even economic variables affecting the Sunnis and Shias. For example, the Shias tipped the balance of power when they ruled the Islamic empire during the Fatimid dynasty. However, the Fatimids were not successful in expelling the crusaders from Jerusalem. The Sunnis stepped in and victoriously fought the crusaders, eventually tipping the balance of power back into their hands.

The Sunnis and Shias fear that the same power struggle will take place today in Iraq. This time, it is the Americans who invaded Iraq, providing the opportunity for the Sunnis and Shias to play the power game once again. In the long run, global peace and security are at stake.

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