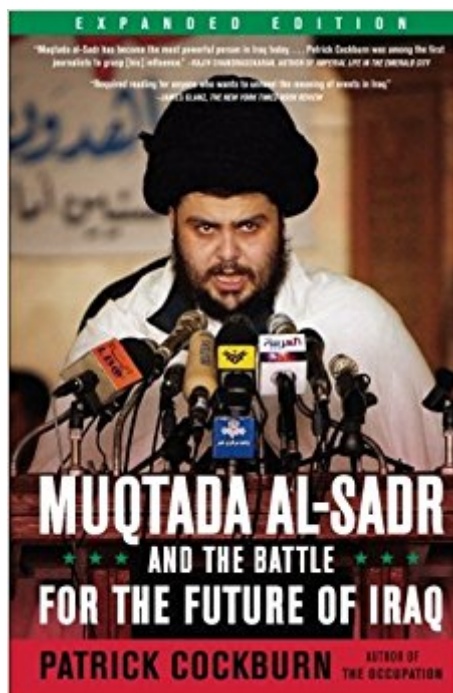


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Muqtada Al-Sadr And The Battle For The Future Of Iraq



Synopsis

Time magazine listed him as one of its "100 People Who Shape Our World." Newsweek featured him on its cover under the headline "How Al-Sadr May Control U.S. Fate in Iraq." Paul Bremer denounced him as a "Bolshevik Islamist" and ordered that he be captured "dead or alive." Who is Muqtada al-Sadr, and why is he so vital to the future of Iraq and, arguably, the entire Middle East? In this compellingly readable account, prize-winning journalist Patrick Cockburn tells the story of Muqtada's rise to become the leader of Iraq's poor Shi'ites and the resistance to the occupation. Cockburn looks at the killings by Saddam's executioners and hit men of the young cleric's father, two brothers, and father-in-law; his leadership of the seventy-thousand-strong Mehdi Army; the fierce rivalries between him and other Shia religious leaders; his complex relationship with the Iraqi government; and his frequent confrontations with the American military, including battles that took place in Najaf in 2004. The portrait that emerges is of a complex man and a sophisticated politician, who engages with religious and nationalist aspirations in a manner unlike any other Iraqi leader. Cockburn, who was among the very few Western journalists to remain in Baghdad during the Gulf War and has been an intrepid reporter of Iraq ever since, draws on his extensive firsthand experience in the country to produce a book that is richly interwoven with the voices of Iraqis themselves. His personal encounters with the Mehdi Army include a tense occasion when he was nearly killed at a roadblock outside the city of Kufa. Though it often reads like an adventure story, Muqtada is also a work of painstaking research and measured analysis that leads to a deeper understanding both of one of the most critical conflicts in the world today and of the man who may well be a decisive voice in determining the future of Iraq when the Americans eventually leave.

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Customer Reviews

Cockburn (*The Occupation: War and Resistance in Iraq*), a veteran Middle East correspondent for *The Independent*, knew the Iraq occupation was doomed when, in 2004, his Irish passport saved him from certain death at the hands of Mehdi Army militiamen convinced he was an American spy: "Bush and Blair never seemed to understand that the problem was not training or equipment, but legitimacy and loyalty." Building on this idea, Cockburn takes a close look at Muqtada al-Sadr, the country's major Shi'ite opposition leader, who has been consistently demonized and belittled by U.S. authorities even as he gains legitimacy among Iraqis. Calling him "the most important and surprising figure to emerge" in post-invasion Iraq, Cockburn details Muqtada's rise, beginning in 1999 when he took his assassinated father's place as head of the Sadrists, a populist religious movement. Mounting frustration toward the U.S. led many to join the Sadrists, the only Shia group to oppose outright the occupation, quickly making Muqtada the political representative of millions. Cockburn's incisive critique of U.S. policy mistakes in Iraq goes back to the first invasion, and draws some dire conclusions, among them that it's too late for Iraq "to exist as anything more than a loose federation." This probing look at a singularly divisive, undoubtedly important figure makes an invaluable resource for anyone weighing U.S. policy in Iraq. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Patrick Cockburn is, quite simply, the best Western journalist at work in Iraq today. And now he comes forward to warn us that the end game there is near, and we'd better pay much more attention to Muqtada al-Sadr. Cockburn takes us behind the clichés and half-truths to describe a complicated political operative who will play a huge role in the power struggle that is sure to come." -- Seymour Hersh "Muqtada is the story of Iraq's least known political figure who, unfortunately for the United States, is arguably its most important. Patrick Cockburn draws on thirty years' experience covering Iraq and his own extraordinary courage to produce this gripping account of the Shiite cleric and his Sadrist movement." -- Peter W. Galbraith "No serious student of Iraq has failed to incur a debt to the intrepid and intelligent Patrick Cockburn." -- Christopher Hitchens "Patrick Cockburn is one of the few journalists who has covered the Iraq crisis almost from its beginning. His peerless reporting has been instrumental in uncovering the true dimensions of the tragedy of Iraq. His new

book on Muqtada al-Sadr and the radical Shia of Iraq is probing and perceptive." -- Ali Allawi "No subject could be more important and, of course, Patrick Cockburn knows Iraq as few foreigners do. The right writer and the right book." -- David Rieff "It is hard to imagine anyone, I mean any other Westerner, getting a clearer take on this slippery and moody character." -- Dexter Filkins, The New Republic "Americans need to learn more about [Muqtada], and Cockburn's empathetic, thoughtful study is a good place to start." -- Vali Nasr, The Washington Post "What other Western journalist writes about Iraq with the intimacy and feel of Patrick Cockburn? This is a brilliant book." -- Martin Amis

The author provides both a first hand account of the Shia political environment after the fall of Saddam's regime as well as a history of the unique and bitter relationship between the Shia and Saddam that is most interesting for westerners as the author explains not only the conflicts between the Shia and Sunni but also between the Shia themselves. The book is not intended to be a bio of Muqtada al-Sadr but to underline his role in the Shia political conflicts within Iraq today. The most interesting aspects of the book is the telling of how the Shia were punished and killed during Saddam regime particularly Sayyid Muqtada al-Sadr's father, Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr. In summary yet informative detail, the author explains how the murder of Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Mohammad Sadeq al-Sadr caused a split among the Shia particularly those leaders that fled the country and then returned after Saddam's fall. The best example of this violent split is when Sayyid Abdul Majid al-Khoei returns to Iraq to assume a leadership role among the Shia but then is brutally murdered almost at Muqtada al-Sadr's door step. The slaughter of the Shia after the coalition stopped during Desert Storm, after encouraging an uprising, is well discussed with the bitterness it invoked along with the post Iraq war misunderstandings by the U.S. occupation most noted by Paul Bremmer. This is a very concise but well written educational look at the political situation in Iraq. My only criticism is that books in detail on the middle east should have a glossary of terms and a defined character list, for those less familiar with middle east terms and titles, and I include myself, to assist the reader.

While the book is filled with lots of historical information, it is very difficult to read.

So much more clear picture of the history of the Sadrist Movement. Being a non-Iraqi Shia I never knew these facts about the Sadrs, and I used to dislike Muqtada to a great extent. The background of Muqtada explains a lot of things. Another special thing is the account of Sadr II (Muqtada's

Father). Really good read even for some one not interested in Iraq because the story of this man is full of drama and suspense.

"Stalingrad in Iraq" deserves to be a subtitle of this thin but illuminating volume. The US Army is as entombed in Iraq as the German 6th Army was in the Soviet city along the Volga. The end results are the same in both cases: strategic defeat. Not defeat yet to come, but defeat that is already an accomplished fact: none of the Army's tactical victories can or will alter the fact. I suspect much of the Iraqi resistance knows this while the US refuses to admit it; the Germans never did until it was too late to matter. Interestingly, the book's main character, Muqtada Al-Sadr, doesn't really make an appearance until the end. The author justifies this by stating that the man cannot be understood apart from his family history and the history of Shia Islam. Even before the war began I never believed that the US or its British poodle would have a snowball's chance in Hell of succeeding. Certainly the US experience in Vietnam, the French experience in Vietnam and Algeria, and the British experience in Iraq should have provided some clue to the Coalition's clueless leaders. The religious dimension is crucial to understanding the unfolding catastrophe. The emergence of Shia Islam in Iraq as THE major player alters the region's whole balance of power and threatens to destroy American predominance there for good or certainly for the foreseeable future. The Shias have a very long memory, as this book well explains: what happened 1400 years ago is as current to them as yesterday's news is to us. They never forget and know that their moment has come. Iraq is the spiritual and historical heart of Shia Islam. More than anyone else, so millions believe, Muqtada Al-Sadr exemplifies this conjunction of faith, power and political savvy. The US demonizes him as they demonized Saddam. There is one difference, Al-Sadr is the genuine article while Saddam was nothing more than a hapless egomaniacal clown--he was easy to knock over, Al-Sadr won't be. Like it or not, he is Iraq's future. this excellent book explains why.

I liked this book a lot. I learned about the Mahdi militia which is Muqtada al-Sadr's militia and about Muqtada a son of late high ranking cleric. It shows how the winner of the Iraq war were the Shia because they're the majority and democracy was put in. Given that Iran is also Shia and their neighbour, so the invasion was a blessing for the Iranians who now have another country by their side besides Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon and non-Muslim Russia. Page turner for me front to back, and I rarely read front to back...

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