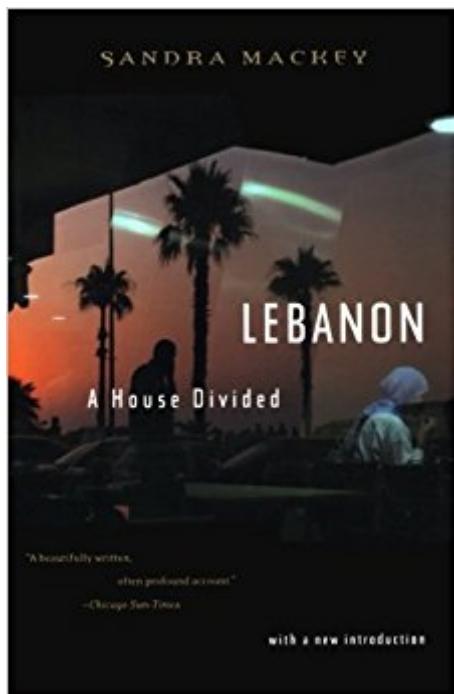


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Lebanon: A House Divided



Synopsis

With a new introduction by the author, a seminal study of Lebanon's past, present, and future. With the West's economic and security interests increasingly at stake in the Middle East, it is impossible to ignore Lebanon • a nation in all ways divided and tormented by the interplay between the West and the Arab world. Sandra Mackey delineates the multifarious culture that is Lebanon; carefully stripping away the complex stigmas of Lebanese politics, she brings each component into focus, priming readers on the conflicts between Sunni and Shia, Maronites and Druze, Christian and Muslim, Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Lebanon and Palestine, and Syria and Lebanon. Covering Lebanon's history through the civil war of 1975-89, and with a new introduction on recent developments, Mackey lays the groundwork needed to comprehend this often ill-understood country • offering insight into its role as the gateway between West and East, and bringing clarity of focus to the schisms that serve to divide and define Lebanon.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

With impressive no-nonsense clarity Mackey sorts out the tangled history of Lebanon leading up to the start of civil war in 1975 through 1988, breaking down the conflict into understandable categories and layers: Christian against Muslim, Left against Right, Lebanese against Palestinian, Israel against PLO, Syria against Lebanon. Identifying the Maronites, the Druze, the Sunnis and Shiites, the author (The Saudis) also defines what they represent. Underlying the progressively fractionalizing effect of the war, as Mackay makes clear, is the "endemic schizophrenia" produced by Lebanon's Western and Arab identities and its emergence as the place where centuries of Arab

resentment toward the West has found voice and direction. The author is bluntly critical of the Lebanese for their unwillingness to accept responsibility for the fate of their country, which she calls "a truculent parody of a nation." She stresses that the bloody anarchy in Lebanon is as much a tragedy for the West as for the Lebanese, since the war has all but closed the last Western gateway to the Arab world. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is an excellent primer on Lebanon and its internal politics for both the general reader and the specialist. In an almost clinical fashion, journalist Mackey strips away the complex nuances of Lebanese politics and looks at each social and ethnic component individually. She covers the historical background and development of Lebanon from antiquity to current day. She analyzes the agony of the contemporary civil war and provides insight into the intertwining of families and power politics. Also discussed is the role of the external regional and world powers, particularly the strong French influence, the American and Israeli interventions, and the Soviet presence. This is an excellent supplement to Michael Hudson's *The Precarious Republic* (Random, 1968) and *Lebanon in Crisis* , edited by P. Edward Haley and Lewis W. Snider (Syracuse Univ. Pr., 1979). Well recommended for a wide audience. See also Thomas L. Friedman's *From Beirut to Jerusalem* , reviewed on p. 95.- Ed. -- Sanford R. Silverburg, Catawba Coll., Salisbury, N.C. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a must-read for anyone who claims to be interested in or should be informed about Mideast politics--including any future residents of the White House and the the Pentagon. Mackay covers the early and recent history of Lebanon and elegantly outlines the challenges the tiny nation has faced since it won back its independence from France after World War 2. Lebanon has to deal with all the problems of the Middle East squeezed into its 4053 square miles of territory. And it has very few friends: Israel scorns it because, in its view, the strong presence of Shi'ites has created a de facto Hezbollah regime [both the U.S. and Israel have labelled the Hezbollah a terrorist organization]; Syria, now embroiled in a civil war, has a long history of intervention in the country's affairs; while the Syrian-backed Sunni Muslims play a pivotal role in the nation's affairs.Under Lebanon's rather shaky constitution, the President of the country has to be a Christian Maronite [the Maronites are orthodox Christians] while the Prime Minister has to be a Sunni and the Speaker of Parliament a Shi'ite. And then there's a very active and influential faction called the Druze, an offshoot of Islam with a bit of Gnosticism thrown in. So Lebanon may have few friends [the U.S. and other western

powers have largely ignored the minor Mideast player since terrorists blew up the U.S. embassy in Beirut as well as a big U.S. army barracks for GIs who were then trying to keep the peace among the various warring factions.] Then came the long civil war between the Shias and the Shi'ites and the Christians, a 15-year conflict that devastated Beirut, once called the Paris of the East. Post civil war construction was hampered by several notable assassinations of the Lebanese leadership [including a prime minister]Now the little country is trying once again to pull itself up with its bootstraps. Beirut still shows the scars of a massive bombing raid on the capital by Israel in 1986.If Lebanon's story sounds complicated, it is. Sandra Mackay's book provides an excellent guide to understanding the small and ever-struggling Mediterranean nation-state.

I purchased this book in hopes of getting a background to the current political situation in Libya. What one actually gets is not history but an extremely one sided story with little supporting data. From the outset of this book the author's views are clear the Lebanese Christians are blood thirsty, powerful, moneyed, religious fanatics. The Sunni are described as corrupt but little, next to zero mention. The Druze as well are barely mentioned and the massacres they committed are summed up in a paragraph where as pages are devoted to the Christians. The author reserves all of her sympathy for the neglected Shiite (Hezbollah/Amal) and the freedom seeking Palestinians(PLO). The author's skewed views even come into play when describing foreign intervention. Syria is basically described as trying to keep the peace while a sentence is devoted to the possibility that Assad was responsible for hundreds of political assassinations within Lebanon. Israel as one could already guess is accused of genocide and war crimes with no mention of PLO attacks against Israel. The multi national force instead of being described as peace keepers is described as being a support system for Israel. I am astonished there are so many positive reviews for this book, one can only assume that the vast majority of people are simply uninformed and like a good story with a clear good and evil character; however sadly in civil war there are just shades of grey.

Because Lebanon-Death of a Nation and Lebanon-House divided are the same books. The reader is deceived into thinking that House divided is a continuation of Death of a Nation. Unfortunately, after purchasing both books (because of different titles), we found out that they are exactly identical. The claim of "with new introduction" is nothing but a measly page and a half write-up that adds no value to the overall read, but certainly puts more money in Sandra's pocket. Getting over this disappointment, Sandra's book about the war in Lebanon during the 1975-1989 period is a great

read. Without judgment or prejudice, she sheds lights on the politics of the "Zuama" their alliances and re-alliances during that period of Lebanon and how all Lebanese have suffered because of them. It will be interesting to see if she will write a true-continuation about the period 1989-2003 and the similarities of those situations with the past.

For someone who ignores basic concepts of the lebanese sectarian society as I was, this should be the book to start with. Sandra Mackey detaily explains aspects of lebanese society prior and during the civil war, starting by the basics and inducing us into concepts a non-lebanese could not understand otherwise. I mostly found impartial such a book (maybe slightly pro-muslim , as much as " From Beirut to Jerusalem, much less than "Pity the Nation") and maybe it would be one of the few books I would be willing to read again... On this occasion I purchased "A mirror of the Arab world: Lebanon in conflict" by the same author, hoping it will be as good as "Lebanon: A House Divided".

This is the third book i read from Sandra Mackey (the Saudis and The Iranians are the other two). And this is another fantastic work for her. I love the clarity and well explained manner in which she explore the nation that is Lebanon and this is not an easy task. When you finish reading this book you have a very good understanding of the situation in Lebanon. As usual she describes every major political party and organization involved as well as the mindset of the people of Lebanon. Also she gives a great explanation as to the ramifications and involvement of other countries as the war rages in Lebanon. Just an excellent work!

If you already know about the civil war in Lebanon then this book is a wonderful way to get a different perspective. It is not a comprehenisve study of the wars.

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