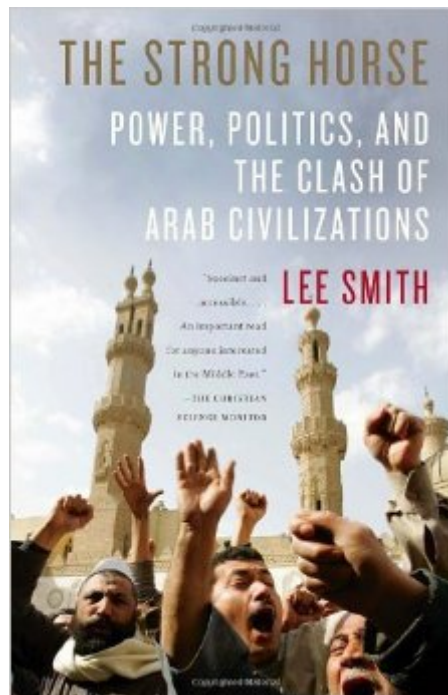


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The Strong Horse: Power, Politics, And The Clash Of Arab Civilizations



Synopsis

In this provocative and timely book, Middle East expert Lee Smith overturns long-held Western myths and assumptions about the Arab world, offering advice for America's future success in the region. Seeking the motivation behind the September 11 attacks, Smith moved to Cairo, where he discovered that the standard explanation "a clash of East and West" was simply not the case. Middle East conflicts have little to do with Israel, the United States, or the West in general, but are endemic to the region. According to Smith's "Strong Horse Doctrine," the Arab world naturally aligns itself with strength, power, and violence. He argues that America must be the strong horse in order to reclaim its role there, and that only by understanding the nature of the region's ancient conflicts can we succeed. Smith details the three-decades-long relationship between Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and the United States, and gives a history of the Muslim Brotherhood, which would likely play an important role in the formation of a new government in Egypt. He also discusses Lebanon, where tipping the balance against Hezbollah in favor of pro-democracy, pro-US forces has become imperative, as a special tribunal investigates the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Eye-opening and in-depth, *The Strong Horse* is much needed background and perspective on today's headlines.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lee Smith's 'The Strong Horse' dismantles many of the false assumptions about the Middle East commonly held by scholars and observers of the region in the West. Most people have a difficult time understanding that not everyone is 'just like us', or holds the same values and ideals as do the

citizens of Western democracies. The book's basic thesis should not be controversial: it is that human culture and belief matters, and that Arab political culture, unlike ours in the West, is and always has been violent. For readers used to thinking of the region as inhabited homogeneously by "Arabs", this book will help to break down that myth and demonstrate how Middle Eastern regimes are divided amongst themselves, and how they employ violence to advance their political ends. But this book also suffers from a number of serious flaws. Firstly, it lacks a truly coherent structure. Smith interweaves accounts of his personal experiences with historic material, contemporary politics, political analysis, and cultural commentary, and reaches conclusions by drawing on all these sources. Although this makes the book somewhat 'lighter' than an academic text, it can also make it difficult to follow and relate back to the book's thesis. The second issue is related to the first: this book resembles more a work of journalism than an academic text. This is not entirely surprising given Smith's background as a journalist, nor is it necessarily a weakness in itself. Footnotes are used very sparingly to support what is, in the academic world at least, a controversial thesis. In light of this it would have been a good idea to devote more time to making the book more academically robust.

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