

Summary of Sunni-Shia Divide Talk

The talk focused on the period from the death of Mohammed in 632 to the death of his grandson, Hussein, in 680 at the battle of Karbala as the pivotal period creating the Shia sect.

The talk summarized the Caliphates of Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman, Ali, Hassan, Mu'awiyah and for Shias Hussein. It examined the role of commercial and social competition between Mecca and Medina and the Caliphs they supported. The last Imam/Caliph recognized by the Shia escaped assassination and went into hiding in 872. He remains in a form of suspended animation ("occultation") to return in the future to usher in a golden age of peace and justice. The speaker then provided a brief overview of Sunni-Shia relations up to the 20th century t. The talk concluded with the events of 1979: Khomeini's return to Iran, the terrorist seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca and the Russian invasion of Afghanistan which together created the conditions leading to the radicalization and weaponization of extremist Islam, represented by Iran on one side and Saudi Arabia on the other.