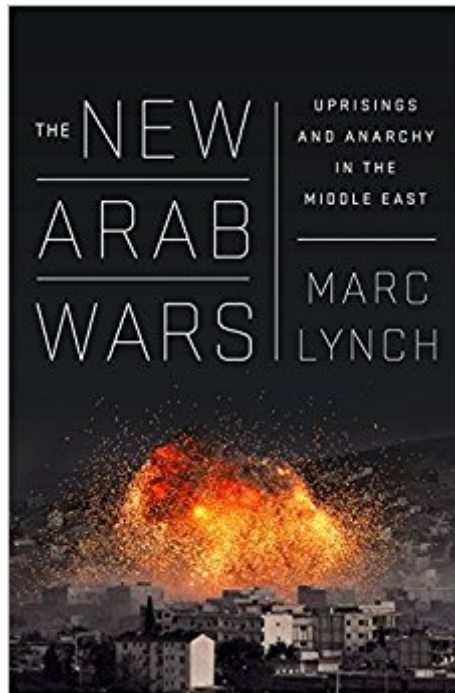




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# **The New Arab Wars: Uprisings And Anarchy In The Middle East**



## Synopsis

Less than twenty-four months after the hope-filled Arab uprising, the popular movement had morphed into a dystopia of resurgent dictators, failed states, and civil wars. Egypt's epochal transition to democracy ended in a violent military coup. Yemen and Libya collapsed into civil war, while Bahrain erupted in smothering sectarian repression. Syria proved the greatest victim of all, ripped apart by internationally fueled insurgencies and an externally supported, bloody-minded regime. Amidst the chaos, a virulently militant group declared an Islamic State, seizing vast territories and inspiring terrorism across the globe. What happened? *The New Arab Wars* is a profound illumination of the causes of this nightmare. It details the costs of the poor choices made by regional actors, delivers a scathing analysis of Western misreadings of the conflict, and condemns international interference that has stoked the violence. Informed by commentators and analysts from the Arab world, Marc Lynch's narrative of a vital region's collapse is both wildly dramatic and likely to prove definitive. Most important, he shows that the region's upheavals have only just begun—and that the hopes of Arab regimes and Western policy makers to retreat to old habits of authoritarian stability are doomed to fail.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“A keen observer of the violent upheaval in the Middle East since the Arab Spring makes a strong assertion: there is no returning to the old autocratic ways.”  
“An excellent, clear distillation of recent events in the Middle East.”  
—Kirkus Reviews, STARRED REVIEW  
“This is an

unblinking, unsparing and un-put-downable account of the anarchy and ruin that have engulfed the Middle East since the 'Arab Spring' dawned five years ago. Marc Lynch offers no easy answers or escapes: The Arab uprisings had deep roots and they won't be suppressed by the neo-autocrats in Egypt or Saudi Arabia; U.S. intervention couldn't have prevented the fracture of Syria; Islamic extremism is only going to get worse. This is a brutally honest book that will peel the varnish off conventional wisdom. Even those who disagree with some of Lynch's conclusions will find *The New Arab Wars* must-reading. • David Ignatius, columnist, Washington Post

Marc Lynch is professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University, where he is the director of the Institute for Middle East Studies and of the Project on Middle East Political Science. He is also a nonresident senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security, and a contributing editor at the Monkey Cage blog for The Washington Post. He is the codirector of the Blogs and Bullets project at the US Institute of Peace. He formerly launched and edited the Middle East Channel on ForeignPolicy.com. His most recent book, *The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East*, was called 'the most illuminating and, for policymakers, the most challenging' book yet written on the topic by The Economist. His other books include *Voices of the New Arab Public: Iraq Al-Jazeera*, and *Middle East Politics Today*, selected as a Choice Outstanding Academic Book, and *State Interests and Public Spheres: The International Politics of Jordan's Identity*. Follow him on Twitter @abuaardvark.

Marc Lynch (aka blogger "Abu Aardvark") wrote the best account of the Arab Spring uprisings in his 2012 *The Arab Uprising: The Unfinished Revolutions of the New Middle East*. This follow-up account does a masterful job of placing those uprisings in context. It is well-written, easily accessible, and compact account of the unraveling of the regional order in the Arab World by one of today's top experts on the region. Lynch's greatest strength is in succinctly detailing the multiple forces driving events, illustrating the complexity of the problem without getting bogged down in tangents or excess detail. Lynch draws a direct line from the crushing Arab autocracies of the 1990s and early 2000s to today's terror and civil war. Lynch's account balances local conditions and regional order, detailing how the U.S. "War on Terror" increased local despots' freedom to crush their own populations. He draws on his own deep knowledge of Arab-language media sources to support his claim that the erosion of U.S. leverage in the region is the product of the invasion of Iraq and close ties to dictators, rather than policy missteps by President Obama. Not all readers will

agree with Lynch's argument, but his book makes a powerful contribution to the policy discussion.

The New Arab Wars outlines the regional conflicts in the Middle East and the political and ideological factors involved. This book is effectively a political science book that can get the casual reader much more versed into the differences between the countries and the interest of regional powers in any given country. To get an understanding of what is going on in Syria, Libya with ISIS, Yemen, Egypt, etc... this book is a must read and can give a deeper insight into what various interests and why are driving the conflicts rather than the good and evil narratives that come through with too great abundance through the 24 hour news service. The New Arab Wars discusses recent events in the middle east focusing on Syria, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain and Tunisia. Despite most headlines trumpeting ideological reasons for who should be in charge the author discusses which regional powers have direct interests and spheres of influence concerns in the various countries. In particular in the Middle East there are those fearful of the rise of Iran and its sphere of influence, Saudi Arabia with the UAE and Qatar as an opposing interest in favor of the Muslim brotherhood. Due to the competing interests both political and ideological there is an abundance of spin that comes out of the news trying to gather support. Furthermore the willingness to finance groups who would further certain groups political goals has led to a massive proxy war in the region as arms have been fed into tribal and ideologically driven groups for often quite shallow reasons. The US has been far less willing to fund and expand their war effort so much of the conflict is due to the escalating proxy war of regional powers with deep pockets. It is tragic as the human side of the equation is what is suffering the most by far. The New Arab Wars gives a window into the political science of the conflicts in the Middle East. The author discusses how the promotion of democracy as an ideal that is pushed by the US cannot be taken at face value as Bahrain had the support of the US in using force to suppress civil unrest but elsewhere did not due to the closer relationship of the US with Bahrain. Furthermore the fall of the Muslim brotherhood in Egypt whose election was a manifestation of a move toward democracy was a tragic step back for the country that should have been stabilized by the US. There is an inherent conflict of interest in the power struggle in the Middle East. The allies of the US are not democratic so the idea that for current events the US will put ideology above regional relationships is flawed. The balance of power is the center of concern in the region and sectarian conflict the norm. Democracy leads to majoritarian outcomes which are destabilizing and the regional conflicts are real between Saudi, Iraq, Iran and Qatar. The conflict and proxy war that is being fought in Syria was inevitable given the intrinsic interests known ex-ante and though there are very obvious moral dimensions to the conflict there are many issues under the

hood if one looks at the regions history and associated parties. Very informative and timely.

Ah! This is how books were meant to be written. Professor Lynch's book deftly combines a sophisticated yet extremely timely review of Arab Spring with a political scientist's appreciation for history, statistics, and theory. The strength of the writing, the incorporation of Arab sources, and the appropriate timeliness of the topic was definitely the "gateway" to my enjoyment of the book. But, MORE than simply a book about The New Arab Wars, this book is ultimately a detailed set of case studies about nonviolent resistance. Any person who believes in making a positive difference, and who also realizes the extent to which effective implementation will make or break the success of an effort, would appreciate Professor Lynch's thoughtful review of the Arab Spring to-date. While I was attracted to this book because I wanted a guide to the modern Middle East, I would recommended it to anyone who wants to take a serious role in a cross-sector organization, as a strategist, as a practitioner, or as a political leader. You probably need at least some basic context of the Middle East to fully appreciate the book "but you don't need too much at all! Thank you Professor Lynch for such an incredible contribution, and for making those of us who are practitioners more effective at what we do. PS. As a follow up, I can't help but wonder whether "we" (the U.S., U.S. universities, and ideally others "my "we" is loosely defined) could offer free modules on governance and government institutions to anyone with a refugee status. Probably shorter than a masters degree but longer than a summer. And probably residential programs. High-quality programming in this area " obviously with the right people in place to ensure access to the program " could begin to build the leadership skillsets of those who have been impacted by the suffering that Professor Lynch's book details so vividly.

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