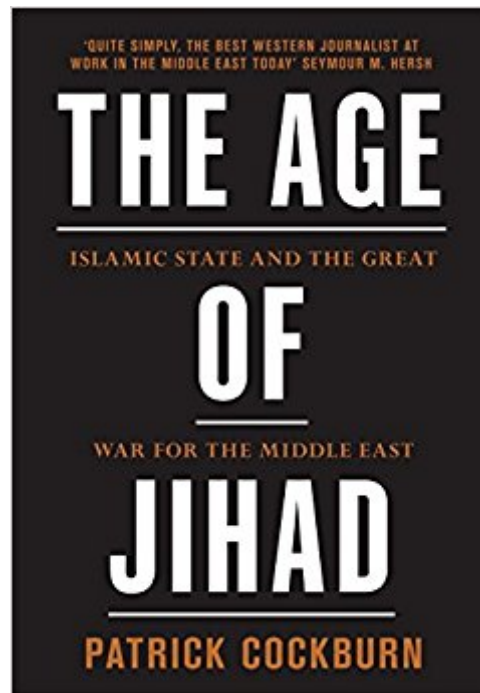




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# The Age Of Jihad: Islamic State And The Great War For The Middle East



## Synopsis

From the award-winning author of *The Rise of Islamic State*, the essential story of the Middle East's disintegration. *The Age of Jihad* charts the turmoil of today's Middle East and the devastating role the West has played in the region from 2001 to the present. Beginning with the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, Cockburn explores the vast geopolitical struggle that is the Sunni-Shia conflict, a clash that shapes the war on terror, western military interventions, the evolution of the insurgency, the civil wars in Yemen, Libya and Syria, the Arab Spring, the fall of regional dictators, and the rise of Islamic State. As Cockburn shows in arresting detail, Islamic State did not explode into existence in Syria in the wake of the Arab Spring, as conventional wisdom would have it. The organization gestated over several years in occupied Iraq, before growing to the point where it can threaten the stability of the whole region. Cockburn was the first Western journalist to warn of the dangers posed by Islamic State. His originality and breadth of vision make *The Age of Jihad* the most in-depth analysis of the regional crisis in the Middle East to date.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Patrick Cockburn spotted the emergence of ISIS much earlier than anybody else and wrote about it with a depth of understanding that was just in a league of its own. Nobody else was writing that stuff at that time, and the judges wondered whether the Government should consider pensioning off the whole of MI6 and hiring Patrick Cockburn instead. The breadth of his knowledge and his ability to make connections is phenomenal.” —Judges of the Foreign Affairs Journalist of the Year Award 2014 “Quite simply, the best Western journalist at work in the Middle East today.”

"Seymour M. Hersh "One of the best informed on-the-ground journalists. He was almost always correct on Iraq."

"Sidney Blumenthal, in an email to Hillary Clinton "Cockburn wears his opinions on his sleeve" informed opinions, that project an aura of the New (now oldish) Left "so you can get an honest take on his perspective. That perspective can be dizzying, both panoptic and intimate."

"Peter Lewis, San Francisco Chronicle "A fine and courageous journalist, who has displayed a sustained commitment to laying bare the tribulations of the Middle East... This book confirms Cockburn's reputation as a reporter and analyst."

"Max Hastings, Sunday Times "A compelling series of dispatches from a journalist who has learned the hard golden rule in Iraq: "to forecast the worst possible outcome."

"Kirkus "It is a brilliant tour d'horizon of the new wars, a chronicle compiled from despatches, notes and diaries. No one could be better placed for this task and no one else could have produced such a lucid and comprehensive account."

"Robert Fox, Evening Standard "Likely to be a reference for future scholars. Cockburn's dispatches make for a somber, vivid, and gripping work of eyewitness history."

"Publishers Weekly "His reports coalesce here, giving life and shape to the forces of terror currently shaping the region and beyond. The book serves as a strong argument for sharpening the mind of each and every politician responsible for the continuing calamity."

"GQ "A meticulous and blistering condemnation of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East."

"Macleans "This book is required reading for anyone who wants to try to understand the disaster. It should be compulsory reading for politicians, diplomats, defence chiefs and the academic think-tanks whose members make confident predictions, usually confounded by what follows."

"Allan Massie, Scotsman

Patrick Cockburn is a Middle East correspondent for the Independent and has worked previously for the Financial Times. He has written three books on Iraq's recent history, including the National Book Circle Awards " shortlisted *The Occupation and Saddam Hussein: An American Obsession* (with Andrew Cockburn), as well as a memoir, *The Broken Boy*, and, with his son, a book on schizophrenia, *Henry's Demons*, which was shortlisted for a Costa Award. He won the Martha Gellhorn Prize in 2005, the James Cameron Prize in 2006, and the Orwell Prize for Journalism in 2009. More recently he has been awarded Foreign Commentator of the Year at the 2013 Editorial Intelligence Comment Awards, Foreign Affairs Journalist of the Year in British Journalism Award 2014, and Foreign Reporter of the Year in Press Awards 2014.

I made myself read this book to get a real understanding of what is happening in the Middle East.

From being revolted by the callous and downright stupid manipulations of the West and its allies in the Middle East to feeling my heart go out to the civilians, just trying to live in a homeland which has neighbour rising up against neighbour and being finally driven away from home and livelihoods. The afterword sums it up with chilling clarity. Yes, this is truly the final throes of the end of the Ottoman Empire. Some smaller ethnic and religious will be wiped off the face of the Earth as they are lost in a diaspora. The oldest Christians will be in that group. The dogs of war have been unleashed and people who could at one time still live in mixed neighbours will never be able to do this again due to the hostilities that have been raised. These people have fled and live in refugee camps and have lost livelihoods and pride. On reflection it seems to have great similarities with the Thirty Years War where the armies of many countries criss crossed Germany leaving destruction and a scorched Earth in its wake.

One of the only journalists who covered, in person, the invasion of Iraq, its early disasters, and its most three recent consequences and disasters: ISIS the war immigrants into Europe, Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, and terrorism in France, Belgium and now Germany. A brilliant mind who has written a number of books on these subjects, in addition to a steady stream of articles.

I read this for one of my classes and it was interesting the way it was written in storytelling manner.

A must read for all those interested in what happens in the Middle East and not only. To me it was much better than a history book.

Excellent reading and informative about the time period and location

A MUST READ book. Do not hesitate. Patrick Cockburn is the best.

One of the greatest problems in the United States today is a lack of knowledge about the entire logic behind the events in the Middle East. Over a decade ago, President George W. Bush stated the Muslims hate us because of our freedoms, a statement that did nothing to explain anything about Islamic terrorism, the way either radicalized or everyday Muslims feel about Americans or Europeans, and just generally added to the ongoing mystification of everything Oriental, in the 19th Century sense of the terms (which focused more on the Near than the Far East). In the past, I have recommended to those interested in understanding the situation today in the Middle East three

undertaking three things. First, read the Cairo trilogy by the Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz, the winner of the 1988 Nobel Prize for Literature. Beginning in *PALACE WALK*, and continuing in *PALACE OF DESIRE* before concluding in *SUGAR STREET*, Mahfouz tells the story of the members of a Cairo family in the years following the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire and demonstrates in graphic fashion how traumatic that was to everyday individuals. Very few Americans realize how dramatically the Middle East was remade by the outcome of WW I. The Ottoman Empire, which was centered in Turkey but embraced all Muslim lands from Egypt to Modern Iran. They sided with Germany and Austria in WW I, but one of the conditions put forth by the allies for the Armistice was the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. This story is told brilliantly by David Fromkin in his brilliant *A PEACE TO END ALL PEACE: THE FALL OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND THE CREATION OF THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST*. If you read both the trilogy by Mahfouz and Fromkin's outstanding book you will have more of an understanding of the current situation than the vast majority of Americans and will understand precisely why claiming "they hate us for our freedoms" is so absurdly ridiculous. If one wants to go further, one would do very well to read the Qur'an, since reading it will do much to dispel so many absurdities about the nature of Islam. There are actually many excellent translations of the Qur'an into English, several with important commentaries, but perhaps the most accessible is the highly regarded translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem published in the Oxford World Classics series, which is also easy to obtain and very reasonably priced. Malise Ruthven's *ISLAM IN THE WORLD*, 3rd ed. is a very widely praised book about modern Islam, and one that corrects much of the ridiculous nonsense one often hears. Edward Said's *ORIENTALISM* is a classic study of the way that those in the Western European Tradition have come to conceptualize the Middle East. But thankfully a number of outstanding books on the contemporary situation in the Middle East have been published, like Carlyle Murphy's *PASSION FOR ISLAM: SHAPING THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST: THE EGYPTIAN EXPERIENCE*, a marvelous study about the rise of Jihadist theology in the 20th Century in the wake of the break up of the Ottoman Empire. And just this month I was delighted to read Malcolm Nance's excellent *DEFEATING ISIS: WHO THEY ARE, HOW THEY FIGHT, WHAT THEY BELIEVE* (Nance serves as a commentator on terrorist movements for MSNBC). I am aware that I've listed a fairly large number of books here, but this was intentional on my part. We Americans do not have to persist in our ignorance about the Middle East. We can actually understand the region instead of persisting in our ignorance. If we don't understand what is happening in Syria and Afghanistan and Iraq and Iran and Egypt, it is because we are too lazy to pick up a book. To the list of outstanding books on the Middle East can be added several books by

Patrick Cockburn, the most recent of which is this fine book, *THE AGE OF JIHAD: ISLAMIC STATE AND THE GREAT WAR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST*. The brilliance of this book is that it explains the present - especially the rise of ISIS - in terms of history, in particular what he takes to be the central event in Islam over the past few decades, and certainly the central event in the creation of ISIS, the Sunni-Shia war. Far too often we strive to explain events in terms familiar to us, but in truth the roots can be in events with which we are completely - or only moderately - familiar. For most Americans, regime change in Iraq in the previous decade meant ridding the world of Saddam Hussein. For those in Iraq, however, it means supplanting Sunni control of the state with Shi'a control. When allegedly rebuilding the state in Iraq during the American occupation, anyone who had been associated in any way with Saddam's rule was instantly disqualified from serving in any branch of the organized government. So career bureaucrats who were those preeminently qualified to help rebuild Iraq were shut out from any legitimate public service. Many of these, or their children, became the backbone for the newly formed and self-legitimized Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, aka Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, better known respectively as ISIS and ISIL. Many people have pointed much of this out, but Cockburn explains this in the greatest detail, structuring the book around the dating of things on almost a month by month basis, with some reference to pre-9/11, but mainly focusing on the major stimulus in the creation of ISIS, the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the United States and the few additional countries they were able to strong arm into participating in the "Coalition of the Willing," as George W. Bush put it. Almost all section headings consist of dates, thereby tying the book to the historical progression of events rare in any kind of book, even an historical. Tying the narrative to dates also gives the book a concreteness that is rare. While many talk of ISIS as if it appeared out of thin air, Cockburn clothes it in history, thereby giving it almost the air of historical inevitability, the events of July 2014 and beyond being rooted in the earlier events of the conflict between the Shi'a and the Sunni, showing how the rise of ISIS was merely the result of the earlier conflict. This definitely belongs to the list of essential books on the Middle East. It is also one of the most accessible. Cockburn never aims to obfuscate or confuse, but instead always writes with a clarity that is unusual. This is intended to illuminate and clarify what has been happening in the Middle East in the past few decades. Given the centrality of Iraq and Syria and Libya in the current national debate, this book is a must-read book if any book is.

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