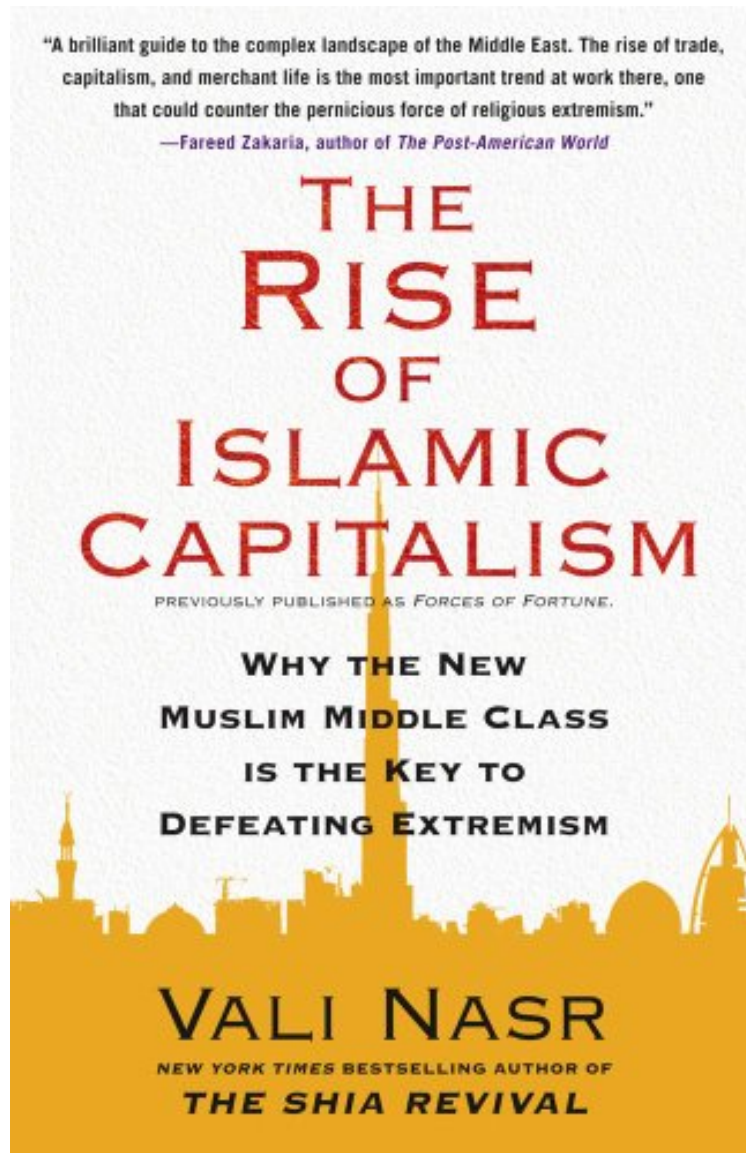


(Download) Forces of Fortune: The Rise of the New Muslim Middle Class and What It Will Mean for Our World (Council on Foreign Relations Books (Free Press))

Forces of Fortune: The Rise of the New Muslim Middle Class and What It Will Mean for Our World (Council on Foreign Relations Books (Free Press))

Vali Nasr

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Vali Nasr : Forces of Fortune: The Rise of the New Muslim Middle Class and What It Will Mean for Our World (Council on Foreign Relations Books (Free Press)) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Forces of Fortune: The Rise of the New Muslim Middle Class and What It

Will Mean for Our World (Council on Foreign Relations Books (Free Press)):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. One of the Best Overviews of the Middle East
By Lars Lofgren
In his new book, Vali Nasr provides an overview of the broad, societal trends that have shaped the Middle East over the last century. Each chapter serves as an overview of the popular topics of the region including Iran, Dubai, Pakistan, Turkey, fundamentalism, and the popularity of state control over the economy though Kemalism. Anecdotes are used throughout the book with engaging writing to absorb the reader in his discussion of the historical trends in the region. Nasr also makes a point to address popular misconceptions of events in the Middle East, providing a clear and thoughtful overview of many heavily debated topics. Throughout this discussion, Nasr exemplifies the importance of the middle class in fostering democratic norms, reducing tensions, and developing an economically vibrant region. If the West hopes to achieve long term reform within the region, it must promote economic reforms that support the moderate Muslim middle class. Only then will secularism, human rights, and democracy begin to gain prominence.
Response: Nasr's thesis of empowering the middle class of the Middle East to spur democratic reform throughout the region depends on a single assumption: the adoption of a neoliberal world view. Neoliberalism is a perspective within international relations that states economic interdependency and the adoption of democratic norms will reduce conflict throughout the globe. This is essentially Nasr's argument. As the middle class of the Middle East is allowed to progress economically, political reform will follow and tensions between the Middle East and the West will decline. There are numerous counters to this perspective. For example, Japan and the United States were highly integrated economically before World War II yet this did not prevent them from going to war. Realism, the other dominant world view in international relations, would assert that states are inherently self-interested since there is no global power that can monopolize force. Even though the middle class of the Middle East may spur economic development, these states will persistently pursue their self interest. Since the survival of any given country is never assured, national interests are built on a foundation of increasing one's relative power compared to other states. The answer is most likely somewhere between the two perspectives. Nasr's policy perspectives will most likely decrease conflict within and from the region. However, conflict should not be expected to be completely negated. There are no foundational "peace" theories within international relations, and for every model of peace, there is contrasting examples of that model leading to war. In short, Nasr's policy recommendations are likely to increase long-term development, consolidate democratic norms, and reduce tensions, but they cannot be expected to bring complete stability and peace to the region.
Bottom Line: Vali Nasr presents an incredibly informative book. Forces of Fortune is, hands down, one of the best primers on the Middle East. While there are numerous topics not discussed like the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Nasr focuses on the underlying dilemmas within the region that underpin today's tensions. Anyone that has an interest in the Middle East must read this book. For those that have already studied the Middle East at depth and are familiar with the concepts of neoliberalism, this book won't provide much in the way of new insights however.
For more reviews and an in-depth summary of Nasr's book, find us at Hand of Reason.
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Critical Analysis of the Re-emerging Muslim World
By Andy "Alpha 3"
The author, Vali Nasr, explores the recent political history of the Muslim world and the probable direction it is moving. He explores a wide range of issues affecting Muslims globally to include: the changing role of women, desire for democracy, the root causes of extremism, growing convergence of Islam with modernity taught in madrasahs (schools), and dealing with shariah (Islamic law). He provides the reader with perceptive observations of many Muslim world countries with a greater emphasis on Turkey and Iran. His realistic thesis is that once people have economic opportunities they will acquire a vested interest, hence seek to maintain their improved way of life. I did think Nasr tended to treat the Shah a little too kindly. This was further evidenced in the total omission of any reference to Iran's hated and feared secret police during the Shah's reign. Aside from that, a realistic and encouraging assessment.
2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Interesting and Informative Book!
By Alexandra Hopkins
I enjoyed this book and learned a lot from it about the Arab world. It has particular meaning at this time when the New Muslim Middle Class truly is rising in countries like Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. I highly recommend this book if you are interested in learning more about Islam and the Arab world of today.

Leading authority on the Islamic world and influential advisor to the Obama administration Vali Nasr shows that the West's best hope of winning the battle against Islamic extremists is to foster the growth of a vibrant new Muslim middle class. This flourishing of Muslim bourgeoisie is reshaping the mind-set, politics, and even the religious values of Muslims in much the same way the Western bourgeoisie lead the capitalist and democratic revolution in Europe. Whereas extremism has grown out of the dismal economic failures of the authoritarian Islamic regimes, Nasr explains, the wealth and aspirations of this Islamic "critical middle" put them squarely at odds with extremism. They have ushered in remarkable transformations already in Dubai, Turkey, and Indonesia, and they are the key to tipping the balance in both Iran and Pakistan. As he writes "the great battle for the soul of the Muslim world will be

fought not over religion but over market capitalism.rdquo;