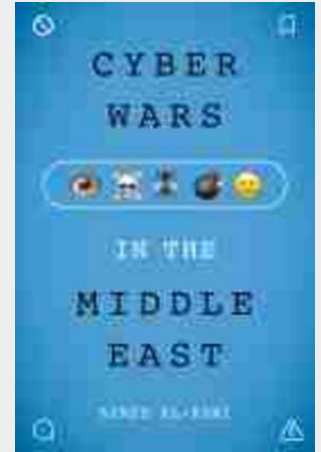


Cyberwars in the Middle East

Cyber Wars in the Middle East argues that hacking is a form of online political disruption whose influence flows vertically in two directions (top-bottom or bottom-up) or horizontally. These hacking activities are performed along three political dimensions: international, regional, and local. Author Ahmed Al-Rawi argues that political hacking is an aggressive and militant form of public communication employed by tech-savvy individuals, regardless of their affiliations, in order to influence politics and policies. Kenneth Waltz's structural realism theory is linked to this argument as it provides a relevant framework to explain why nation-states employ cyber tools against each other. On the one hand, nation-states as well as their affiliated hacking groups like cyber warriors employ hacking as offensive and defensive tools in connection to the cyber activity or inactivity of other nation-states, such as the role of Russian Trolls disseminating disinformation on social media during the US 2016 presidential election. This is regarded as a horizontal flow of political disruption. Sometimes, nation-states, like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain, use hacking and surveillance tactics as a vertical flow (top-bottom) form of online political disruption by targeting their own citizens due to their oppositional or activists political views. On the other hand, regular hackers who are often politically independent practice a form of bottom-top political disruption to address issues related to the internal politics of their respective nation-states such as the case of a number of Iraqi, Saudi, and Algerian hackers. In some cases, other hackers target ordinary citizens to express opposition to their political or ideological views which is regarded as a horizontal form of online political disruption. This book is the first of its kind to shine a light on many ways that governments and hackers are perpetrating cyber attacks in the Middle East and beyond, and to show the ripple effect of these attacks.



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