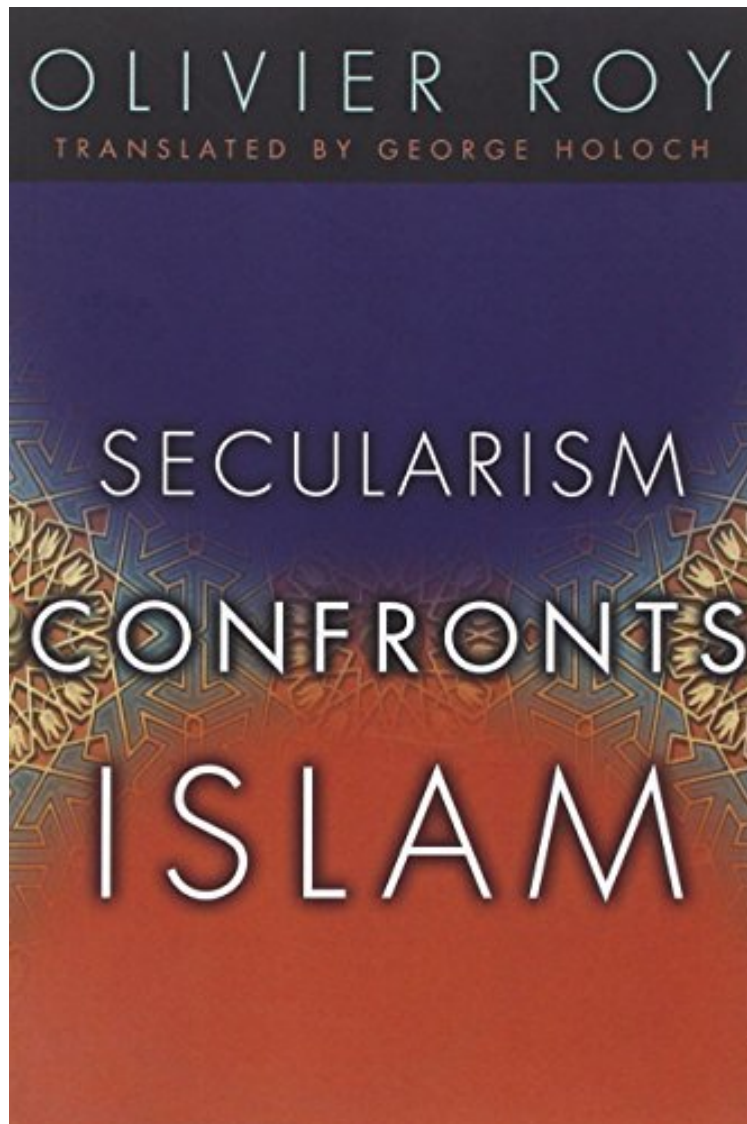


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Secularism Confronts Islam

Olivier Roy

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Olivier Roy : Secularism Confronts Islam before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Secularism Confronts Islam:

11 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Perspective on American culture By Abuelo The center of Roy's story is Islam in France, but his evidence and commentary are wideranging and provide food for the American mind not only about Islam but about the relationship between government and religion.

The denunciation of fundamentalism in France, embodied in the law against the veil and the deportation of imams, has

shifted into a systematic attack on all Muslims and Islam. This hostility is rooted in the belief that Islam cannot be integrated into Frenchland, consequently, secular and liberal-society. However, as Olivier Roy makes clear in this book, Muslim intellectuals have made it possible for Muslims to live concretely in a secularized world while maintaining the identity of a "true believer." They have formulated a language that recognizes two spaces: that of religion and that of secular society. Western society is unable to recognize this process, Roy argues, because of a cultural bias that assumes religious practice is embedded within a specific, traditional culture that must be either erased entirely or forced to coexist in a neutral, multicultural space. Instead, Roy shows that new forms of religiosity, such as Islamic fundamentalism and Christian evangelicalism, have come to thrive in post-traditional, secular contexts precisely because they remain detached from any cultural background. In recognizing this, Roy recasts the debate concerning Islam and democracy. Analyzing the French case in particular, in which the tension between Islam and the conception of Western secularism is exacerbated, Roy makes important distinctions between Arab and non-Arab Muslims, hegemony and tolerance, and the role of the umma and the sharia in Muslim religious life. He pits Muslim religious revivalism against similar movements in the West, such as evangelical Protestantism and Jehovah's Witnesses, and refutes the myth of a single "Muslim community" by detailing different groups and their inability to overcome their differences. Roy's rare portrait of the realities of immigrant Muslim life offers a necessary alternative to the popular specter of an "Islamic threat." Supporting his arguments with his extensive research on Islamic history, sociology, and politics, Roy brilliantly demonstrates the limits of our understanding of contemporary Islamic religious practice in the West and the role of Islam as a screen onto which Western societies project their own identity crisis.

A work of sustained deconstruction, [Roy] takes apart the myths, clichs and prejudices which characterise the current conversation about Islam. (The Economist)[A] brilliant little book. (Philip H. Gordon Foreign Affairs)A remarkable book: articulate, original, lucid, without a paragraph that fails to contain an interesting thought. (Claire Belinski New York Sun)[A] valuable little monograph. (Martin Levin Globe Mail)Roy provides a useful corrective to the interpretation of Islamism. (John Gray Harper's)Superb... a welcome contribution to political science, sociology, religious studiesand statecraft. (Choice)[A] cogent work. (Middle East Journal)An insightful analysis. (Talip Kkcan Insight Turkey)Rich in theoretical analysis. (American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences)About the AuthorOlivier Roy is research director at the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) and lectures at the cole des Hautes tudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) and the Institut d'tudes Politiques (IEP) in Paris. His books with Columbia University Press include The Politics of Chaos in the Middle East; Globalized Islam; and, with Amel Boubekeur, Whatever Happened to the Islamists? Salafis, Heavy Metal Muslims, and the Lure of Consumerist Islam.