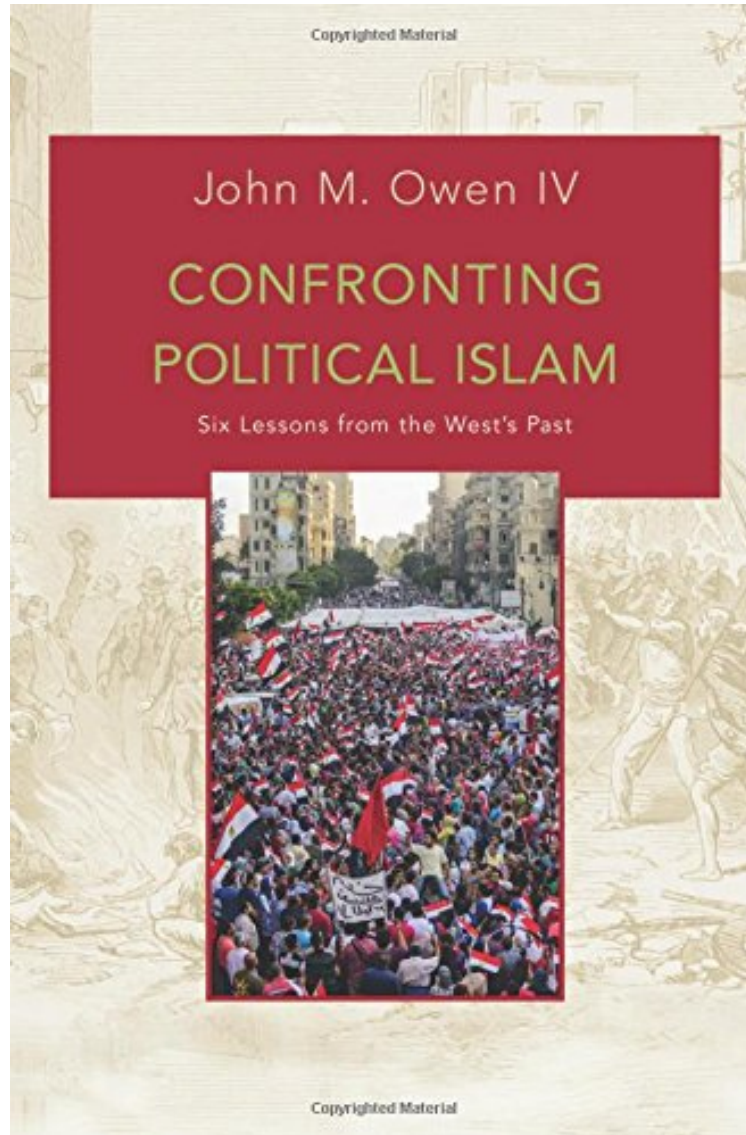


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Confronting Political Islam: Six Lessons from the West's Past

John M. Owen

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John M. Owen : Confronting Political Islam: Six Lessons from the West's Past before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Confronting Political Islam: Six Lessons from the West's Past:

17 of 19 people found the following review helpful. Owen defines political Islam as the view that the Islamic community would be better off and stronger if only it were piousif MuBy John MartinConfronting Political Islam by Professor John M. Owen IV is an effort to place political Islam within the context of other historical confrontations to

see what lessons might be learned. Owen defines political Islam as the view that the Islamic community would be better off and stronger if only it were pious if Muslims lived under state enforced Islamic or Sharia law in accordance with the Koran. The alternative is generally regarded as secular Islam. Owen cites three historical examples for comparison: Catholics v. Protestants from about 1520 to 1690 in Europe; monarchy v. republican democracy between Europe and the United States from 1770 to 1870; and the struggle among Communism, Fascism and liberalism globally from 1910 to 1990. Owen claims that the current situation with Islam is not sui generis (unique) and thus there are parallels with these three historical situations. Owen then draws six lessons from these comparisons: 1. Don't sell Islam short it is not going to go away soon. 2. Ideologies are not usually monolithic there are various ideological perspectives in Islamism. 3. Foreign interventions are normal thus American and Western efforts to intervene in the Middle East are not unusual. 4. A state can be rational and ideological at the same time which may be true about Iran, for example. 5. The winners may be none of the above unlike the Cold War, which ended with a clear winner the ultimate result may well be mixed. 6. Watch Turkey and Iran, which are exemplars of secular and Islamic states. Owen concludes that we do not know what the root cause of Islamism is and suggests that the sole cause is not poverty, Western intervention or any other single cause. He suggests that the United States should continue to be who we are which he says is a virtuous, positive, constitutional democracy. We should use our soft power to gain whatever influence we can. I see this book as an effort by an establishment historian to explain a situation that he has little personal knowledge of. I am not an historian, but I have lived and worked in Islamic countries, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan (as well as countries with substantial Muslim populations India and Ethiopia), and have some understanding of the culture and religious values of these places. The past may well provide some insights into the present but it is nothing more than an academic exercise to make the kind of comparisons Owen suggests. Still, the book is worth reading as it does provide some insights and perspectives into what is a very complex and difficult situation. 1 of 30 people found the following review helpful. Anti Islam and Muslims Rhetoric By M. This book is just anti Islam rhetoric.

Political Islam has often been compared to ideological movements of the past such as fascism or Christian theocracy. But are such analogies valid? How should the Western world today respond to the challenges of political Islam? Taking an original approach to answer this question, *Confronting Political Islam* compares Islamism's struggle with secularism to other prolonged ideological clashes in Western history. By examining the past conflicts that have torn Europe and the Americas and how they have been supported by underground networks, fomented radicalism and revolution, and triggered foreign interventions and international conflicts John Owen draws six major lessons to demonstrate that much of what we think about political Islam is wrong. Owen focuses on the origins and dynamics of twentieth-century struggles among Communism, Fascism, and liberal democracy; the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century contests between monarchism and republicanism; and the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century wars of religion between Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and others. Owen then applies principles learned from the successes and mistakes of governments during these conflicts to the contemporary debates embroiling the Middle East. He concludes that ideological struggles last longer than most people presume; ideologies are not monolithic; foreign interventions are the norm; a state may be both rational and ideological; an ideology wins when states that exemplify it outperform other states across a range of measures; and the ideology that wins may be a surprise. Looking at the history of the Western world itself and the fraught questions over how societies should be ordered, *Confronting Political Islam* upends some of the conventional wisdom about the current upheavals in the Muslim world.

Shortlisted for the 2017 Estoril Global Issues Distinguished Book Prize "Owen is generous, rational and balanced. . . . [H]e is astute enough to understand the vast real-world differences that block the resolution of conflict."--Publishers Weekly "[A]n animated, ambitious and thoughtful book."--Borzou Daragahi, Financial Times "[P]rovocative."--Amb. (ret.) Anthony Quainton, American Diplomacy "This engaging and thoughtful book by University of Virginia scholar John Owen looks back on a series of upheavals in Western history to better understand the Middle East's current travails and challenges posed by political Islam. . . . [A] wise and sophisticated book."--William Armstrong, Hurriyet Daily News "Owen writes to provide policy makers, students, and those engaged in the Middle East with tools to confront political Islam. . . . This is a unique, stimulating, well-written and documented work that takes an unusual approach to the political problems of Islamism."--Choice "A highly recommended work for observers, students, and research scholars who are grappling with the contemporary problems faced by the Middle East through the prism of political disturbances in the past centuries of Western history."--Mehraj ud Din, Politics, Religion, Ideology From the Back Cover "Through a systematic, rigorous comparison of the trajectory of historical ideological conflicts in Europe during the last five centuries and today's struggles over Islamism in the Middle East, Owen draws insightful conclusions about the future of political Islam and U.S. policy responses. His book is sure to advance understanding of the defining ideological debate of our time--that of Islam's role in political transitions throughout the Muslim world."--Lisa Curtis, Heritage Foundation "Many people talk about the 'lessons of history,' but Owen actually delivers them. With erudition, balance, and good judgment, he uses the history of ideological conflict in the West to discern

guidelines for how to deal with the challenge to American interests presented by contemporary Islamist politics in all its forms. This is a wise and well-reasoned book."--F. Gregory Gause III, Texas AM University "Critiques of Islamic fundamentalism rarely seek parallels in Western history. Owen assesses Islamism and offers perceptive, provocative comparisons to the historical conflicts among Protestants and Catholics, and liberals, socialists, and communists. Showing that the duel between Islamists and Muslim secularists is far from over, he explores how it has challenged and changed the West. Scholars, officials, soldiers, and students would do well to read this book."--Reuel M. Gerech, Foundation for Defense of Democracies "With an innovative approach, Owen provocatively argues that previous episodes and ideological battles in Western history can shed light on the questions and likely political developments in the Muslim world today. The topic is very important and will spark many reactions and discussions."--Jeremy Pressman, University of Connecticut "Combining scholarship with important policy proposals, *Confronting Political Islam* successfully puts forth a set of recommendations for U.S. grand strategy toward Islamism. This engaging and accessible book does a good job relating past ideological struggles to the current long war' against religiously oriented terrorism."--Daniel Nexon, Georgetown University

About the Author John M. Owen IV is professor of politics and a faculty fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture at the University of Virginia. His books include *The Clash of Ideas in World Politics* (Princeton) and *Liberal Peace, Liberal War*.