

Blaming Islam (Boston Review Books)

By John R Bowen

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In the United States and in Europe, politicians, activists, and even some scholars argue that Islam is incompatible with Western values and that we put ourselves at risk if we believe that Muslim immigrants can integrate into our society. Norway's Anders Behring Breivik took this argument to its extreme and murderous conclusion in July 2011. Meanwhile in the United States, state legislatures' efforts to ban the practice of Islamic law, or sharia, are gathering steam--despite a notable lack of evidence that sharia poses any real threat.

In *Blaming Islam*, John Bowen uncovers the myths about Islam and Muslim integration into Western society, with a focus on the histories, policy, and rhetoric associated with Muslim immigration in Europe, the British experiment with sharia law for Muslim domestic disputes, and the claims of European and American writers that Islam threatens the West. Most important, he shows how exaggerated fears about Muslims misread history, misunderstand multiculturalism's aims, and reveal the opportunism of right wing parties who draw populist support by blaming Islam.

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Editorial Review

From Booklist
After the demise of the Soviet Union left vacant the position of hated ”them“ vis-a-vis the West, Islam, the main religion of the Middle East, with its distinctly different culture and much-coveted oil reserves, was enlisted to fill the opening. Since 9/11, hatred and misapprehension have blossomed as part of a backlash against immigration and a belief that Islam is incompatible with the culture and ideals of the West. Bowen explores numerous cases in the U.S. and Europe of protests against the building of mosques, banning Muslim women from wearing headscarves, violent attacks, and even the killing of Muslims. He examines how so many of these actions go against Western beliefs of religious freedom and free speech. Bowen debunks several beliefs, including that the ideals of multiculturalism are opening the door to Muslim immigrants who then do not integrate well and that sharia is becoming law in areas with sizable Muslim populations. Bowen argues that Western biases cause people to see religion as the focus of actions by Muslims, a perception that is not applied to people of other faiths. An illuminating look at Western perceptions of Islam. --Vanessa Bush

Review

"An illuminating look at Western perceptions of Islam." Booklist

About the Author

John Bowen, Dunbar-Van Cleve Professor in Arts & Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis, is the author of *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves* and *Can Islam Be Frenc*h? He was a 2005 Carnegie Scholar.

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