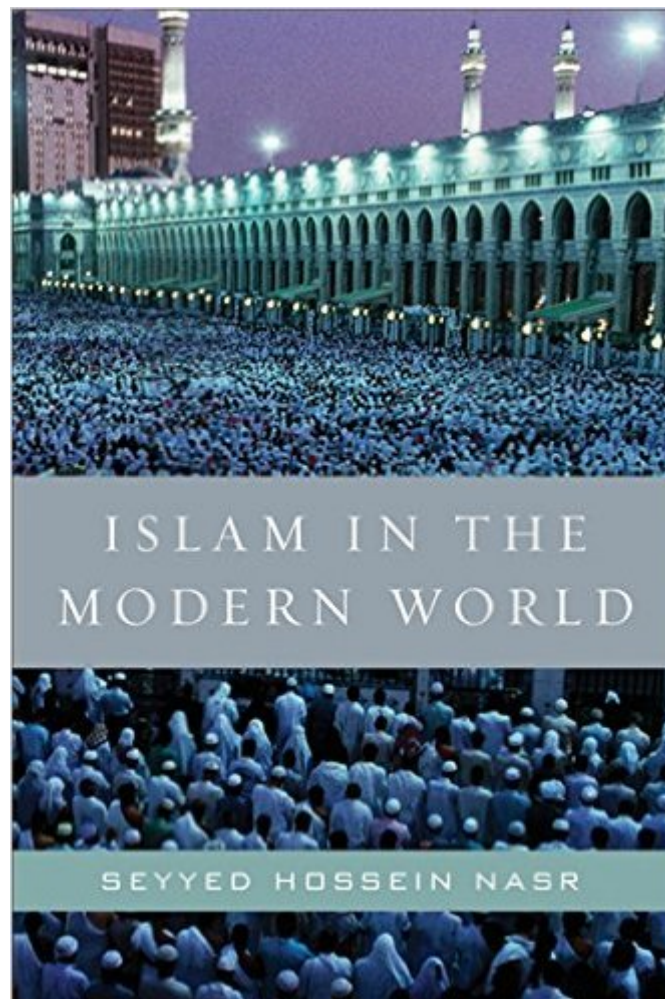


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# Islam In The Modern World: Challenged By The West, Threatened By Fundamentalism, Keeping Faith With Tradition



## Synopsis

The foremost U.S. authority on Islam and, Seyyed Hossein Nasr discusses today's hot button issues including holy wars, women's rights, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, and the future of Moslems in the Middle East in this groundbreaking discussion of the fastest-growing religion in the world. One of the great scholars in the modern Islamic intellectual tradition, and the acclaimed author of books such as *The Garden of Truth* and *The Heart of Islam*, Nasr brings incomparable insight to this exploration of Muslim issues and realities, delivering a landmark publication promoting cross-cultural awareness and world peace.

## Book Information

Paperback: 496 pages

Publisher: HarperOne; Reprint edition (January 24, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 006190581X

ISBN-13: 978-0061905810

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.2 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (5 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #942,504 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #378 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Islam > Sufism](#) #598 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Islam > History](#) #622 in [Books > History > World > Religious > Islam](#)

## Customer Reviews

"Islam in the Modern World" by Seyyed Hossein Nasr (first ed. c. 1990, but extensively revised, updated & with new chapters: hardback 2010), 472 pgs. Nasr is known for writing books contending that Islam is a moderate, peaceful religion. Does this mean we need to ignore what he has to say? Perhaps there is some knowledge, if not just 'factoids' to be learned from him. What strove Nasr to update this book was due to: "Only during the past few decades has a new phenomenon appeared that necessitates distinguishing rigorously between traditional Islam and not only modernism, but also that spectrum of feeling... that has come to be identified... as 'fundamentalist', revivalist, or 'activist' Islam." Nasr contends that the 1990s-2000s-era 'revivalist' (jihadist) groups "that speak of reviving Islam in opposition to modernism and Western civilization" (p. 2) misunderstand non-violent Islam. However, Nasr doesn't go into any depth in detailing the militant activities of any particular 'terrorist' jihadist group (i.e., al-Qaeda). Despite his opposition to jihadism, Nasr doesn't go into

detail in stating what he has against militant jihadism besides its violence (not all Muslims have to be violence-prone). This book provides a generic background history of Muslims and the Islamic religion. The author discusses the differences in Islamic theology, science and spirituality (Sufism). Nasr is fond of the past 'achievements' of Islamic architecture and science, but acknowledges that the West overtook Islamic in science and economic achievements starting in the 17th century. There are several appendices in which Nasr lists 'milestone' books written by medieval Muslims regarding architecture, philosophy, science, theology, etc.

In spite of my following comments, I have huge respect for the author, especially for clarifying what traditional (i.e. the 'real') Islam is about, and for the positive influences that Sufism brings to Islam. However his writings are not for the average lay person, as he writes and lives at a highly intellectual and metaphysical level, and with much nostalgia and idealism. Compared to the life of most of us, I feel he 'floats' through life in a meditative trance- one that I wish all of us could experience more of, but few of us can practicality-wise achieve. He's spent his entire life living physically and mentally in an above average environment, whether living in the US or in Iran; as such he's never had to experience the dimly difficult lives that the average and lower class Middle Easterners (and us average foreigners) have to endure when living in the Middle East (ME). Although I don't have his intellect or education, I do feel qualified (much self education, travelling and living in the ME and marrying a Moslem) in sharing my gut reaction to this book. I'm very aware that the Islam that most Moslems (at least in the ME) practice is in fact largely based on tradition and misinformation, both of which too frequently run totally opposite what the true message of traditional Islam preaches. He makes it clear that the purpose of Islamic teachings is to provide the greatest stability to the greatest number of people, and not to make everyone happy. Well, I guess I don't fit into what the masses want and are willing to give up for this intended stability (and which is no longer materializing). Here are a few examples.

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