

Tariq Ramadan and the Quest for a Moderate Islam

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Abstract Tariq Ramadan calls himself a bridge builder between Muslims and European culture, but contradictions in his theology prevent him from fulfilling this role. He is an Islamic intellectual who espouses democracy and pluralism, yet he believes that shari‘a law is universal. He exhorts his European followers to refrain from anti-Semitic violence, yet he cites as an authority Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who is an apologist for Palestinian suicide bombers. He calls for Muslims to be full participants in Western civic societies, yet he calls on Muslims to “resist” the neo-liberal economic order that forms the basis of Western society. Ramadan has made alliances with left wing politicians and academics in France, Britain, the Netherlands, and the United States, but he has a pattern of disappointing and frustrating his leftist allies. In the wake of terrorist attacks in Britain and the Netherlands, the British and Dutch governments called upon Ramadan to support peaceable brands of Islam in these traumatized countries. These efforts failed because Ramadan’s most important constituency has always been “the Muslim street,” and this makes it difficult for him to embrace liberal principles.

Keywords Tariq Ramadan · Yusuf al-Qaradawi · Paul Berman · Ian Buruma · Salafism · Muslims · Europe

On November 20, 2003, the French interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy and Tariq Ramadan squared off in a debate broadcast on national French television. As always, Ramadan dressed carefully to put his various constituents at ease. As a faithful salafist, he was not wearing a neck tie,

which is a symbol of the cross, western domination, and capitalism. Yet Ramadan had nothing of the shaggy exoticism of other salafists, with their rumpled *jilabas*, prayer hats, and roughly cut beards. His beard was tidy and trim, and his suit was elegantly tailored. Ramadan’s characteristic open shirt meant different things for different members of the audience. For Muslim viewers, it linked Ramadan to Iranian and other Third World revolutionaries. For European socialists, it evoked telegenic leftists in the tradition of Noam Chomsky and John Pilger.

The debate was a disaster for Ramadan. Sarkozy asked Ramadan if he supported his brother Hani’s justification of the stoning to death of adulterous women. In front of six million incredulous viewers, Ramadan refused to clearly condemn stoning. Instead, he said that he favored a moratorium on the practice “so that they can stop applying these sorts of punishments in the Muslim world. What is important is for people’s way of thinking to evolve. What is needed is a pedagogical approach.” “A moratorium?” Sarkozy exclaimed, “What does that mean? We are in 2003.” Sarkozy then mentioned a book by a medieval Muslim theologian who instructed men to slap their disobedient wives. Ramadan had written a laudatory preface for the book.

French leftists, who had lionized Ramadan as a bridge builder between Muslims and French society, were dismayed. Ramadan was savaged in *Le Monde* and *Politis*. *Libération* reported that “Sarkoszy had clobbered Ramadan’s double talk.” New York University Professor Paul Berman wrote, “The whole panorama of Muslim women’s oppression suddenly deployed across the television screens of France—the panorama of violence that is condoned, sanctified, and even mandated by the . . . religious authorities who are venerated by the Islamist movement. And here was Sarkozy, recoiling in horror: the

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bourgeoisie, shocked at last” (Berman 2010: 282) French sociologist Gilles Kepel warned, “Unless Tariq Ramadan takes responsibility for his growing internal contradictions, they will propel him, like all shooting stars, into the dark night” (Kepel 2004: 282).

Muslim scholars were also alarmed by Ramadan’s performance. They accused Ramadan of pandering to Western sensibilities by turning an internal Muslim debate about *shari’a* law into a media sensation. Sano Koutoub Moustapha of the Organization of the Islamic Conference said, “If we call today for an international moratorium on corporal punishment, stoning and the death penalty, then tomorrow I am so worried that they may ask Muslims to suspend their Friday Prayer.” Muzammil H. Siddiqi, President of the Fiqh Council of North America, said, “When this call comes from a respectable scholar like Dr. Tariq Ramadan, it may encourage others also to disrespect the laws of Allah. Some may start calling for moratorium on the family law of Islam also, and some others on the business and finance laws of Islam, and some may ask for moratorium on the whole *shari’a*.” Salah Sultan of the European Council for Fatwa and Research warned, “Such a call . . . will further beef up seculars and enemies of Islam, who will step up their war on Islam.”

Ramadan, who had carefully cultivated his role as a genteel, civil mediator between Muslims and European culture, was clearly stung by all this negative attention. In 2005, he published on his website a 4,000-word “International call for Moratorium on corporal punishment, stoning and the death penalty in the Islamic World.” Ramadan wrote, “The majority of the *ulama*, historically and today, are of the opinion that these penalties are on the whole Islamic but that the conditions under which they should be implemented are nearly impossible to reestablish. These penalties, therefore, are almost never applicable. The *hudud* would, therefore, serve as a deterrent, the objective of which would be to stir the conscience of the believer to the gravity of an action warranting such a punishment.”

In 2007, Ian Buruma wrote that the mere mention of stoning set Ramadan off on a long explanation. “Personally,” Ramadan said in an interview, “I am against capital punishment, not only in Muslim countries, but also in the U.S. But when you want to be heard in Muslim countries, when you are addressing religious issues, you can’t just say it has to stop. I think it has to stop. But you have to discuss it within the religious context. There are texts involved.” Paul Berman compares this logic to that of Sartre, who refused to condemn Stalin because he was so popular among the French working class. “Sartre did not want to demoralize the downtrodden,” Berman writes, “So if the ignorant proletariat were going to learn the truth about the Soviet Union, it was not going to be from France’s most famous philosopher” (Berman 2010: 219).

An Illustrious Heritage

Ramadan’s maternal grandfather, Hassan al-Banna, founded the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928 to purify Islam of secularist and Western influences. Al-Banna was a fierce anti-colonialist and an economic redistributionist. He taught that the modern West posed a devastating physical and psychological threat to Muslims. Liberalism is based on faulty assumptions about human nature, and democracy replaces the rule of God with the rule of men and women, who legislate according to their own perverse desires. “Centers of usury,” such as Western banks and financial markets, abrogate economic principles set forth in the Qur’an. Al-Banna elevated armed jihad against European colonizers to an “individual duty” incumbent upon all Muslims. Al-Banna taught that, after the British were expelled from Egypt, jihad would reach out to include the whole world: “Western secularism moved into a Muslim world already estranged from its Qur’anic roots . . . We will pursue this evil force to its own lands, invade its Western heartland, and struggle to overcome it until all the world shouts by the name of the Prophet.” Al-Banna wrote that if Europeans define “patriotism” as the “conquest of countries and the lordship over the earth,” then “Islam has already ordained that, and has sent out conquerors to carry out the most gracious of colonizations and the most blessed of conquests” (Habeck 2006: 29, 31).

In order to turn Islam into a program of political and economic domination, al-Banna politicized Muslim theological concepts. Al-Banna taught that Islam cannot exist only in the hearts of believers; Islam requires a state based upon *shari’a* law. Muslims have traditionally understood *jahili* (darkness) to refer to pre-Muslim pagan cultures; Al-Banna wrote that it referred to godless political/economic systems. Whereas traditionalist Muslims interpret *tawhid* (oneness) as a spiritual concept to mean that there is only one God, al-Banna interpreted it as a political concept that fuses religion, politics, and economics. Whereas for most Muslims *jihad* refers to one’s struggle against sin, for al-Banna it meant armed conflict in the service of Islam.

In his war against the British, al-Banna made common cause with the Nazis, and he was a supporter of the notorious grand mufti of Jerusalem. Al-Banna compared his efforts to resurrect the caliphate to Mussolini’s efforts to resurrect the Roman Empire, only the caliphate would be superior because it was based on spiritual values. In “Toward the Light” al-Banna describes life in the resurrected caliphate: “an end to the dichotomy between the private and professional spheres,” “the imposition of severe penalties for moral offenses,” “the prohibition of dancing and other such pastimes,” “the expurgation of songs,” “the confiscation of provocative stories and books,” “punishment of those who infringe or attack Islamic doctrines,”

“active instigation to memorize the Qur’an in all free elementary schools” (Berman 2010: 44). The Brotherhood became the predominant face of political Islam in the twentieth century. In 1998, Ramadan wrote a 200-page hagiography of al-Banna (*The Roots of the Muslim Renewal*) in which he presents al-Banna as the “Mahatma Gandhi of the Arab and Muslim world” (Berman 2010: 37). In an interview with Alain Gresh, Ramadan said, “I have studied Hasan al-Banna’s ideas with great care and there is nothing in this heritage that I reject.”

Ramadan’s father, Said, was one of al-Banna’s most fervent followers. He was expelled from Egypt by Gamal Abdel Nasser for his work on behalf of the Muslim Brotherhood. He moved to Saudi Arabia, where he formed the World Islamic League, a *salafi* charity and missionary group. In 1958, he moved to Geneva, Switzerland where, with Saudi money, he founded the Islamic Center in Geneva, a mosque, think tank, and community center that serves as an outpost of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe. In 1988, prominent members of the Islamic Center in Geneva set up The Al Taqwa (“Fear of God”) Bank. Ahmed Huber, a Swiss convert to Islam and a vocal admirer of Adolf Hitler, was a board member, as was François Genoud, the notorious publisher of Joseph Goebbels’ diaries. Al-Taqwa was closed in 2001 after American intelligence services identified it as a financial sponsor of Hamas, Islamic Armed Group (Algeria), An-Nahda (Tunisia), and al-Qaeda. Tariq Ramadan has insisted that his family had nothing to do with Al-Taqwa, but the Supreme Guide of The Muslim Brotherhood, Mustafa Machour, identified Said Ramadan as a founder of the bank, and Said Ramadan’s name appears on bank documents.

A Swiss Citizen

Ramadan was born in Geneva, Switzerland on August 26, 1962, the youngest of six children. His mother, Hani, was a daughter of Hassan al-Banna’s. Tariq was named after Tariq Ibn Zayd, the first Muslim conqueror to set foot on the Christian soil of Spain. As a youth, Ramadan and his siblings attended mainstream Swiss schools. Tariq was not particularly committed to Islam, but his two great loves, sports and reading, kept him away from the temptations of alcohol and promiscuous sexuality. In an interview with Ian Buruma, Ramadan said, “I was protected, first of all, by playing sports, every day for two hours or more . . . And reading, reading, reading, five hours a day, sometimes eight hours . . . I stayed away from drinking, I got respect from people around me. I was known as ‘the professor,’ ‘le docteur.’”

At the University of Geneva, Ramadan studied philosophy, literature, and social sciences, and he wrote a master’s thesis on Nietzsche. Ramadan told Ian Buruma that he appreciated the “strong and accurate questions about religion” that

Nietzsche raised, especially questions on how “religious identities are built, on how believers use victim status to become killers themselves.” Ramadan’s advanced degrees in philosophy and literature qualified him for a teaching job at Collège de Saussure, a high school in Geneva. In 1986, Ramadan joined some fellow teachers to form the Helping Hand, a service cooperative, financed by the Geneva school district which taught students to develop solidarity with foreign cultures. Helping Hand took Ramadan and his students to Mali, Senegal, Tibet, India, Burkina Faso, and Brazil. Through this program, Ramadan and his students met religious luminaries like Sister Emmanuelle, Mother Teresa, the Dalai Lama, and Dom Helder Camara.

“The theologians in Brazil were very important to me,” Ramadan told Buruma. “Resisting in the name of religious principles. I was at home in this discourse. I was also close to the Tibetans and spent one month with the Dalai Lama. It was the same philosophy, spiritual commitment, and resistance in their case against Chinese communism.” Ramadan began reading Hassan al-Banna, and he found that his grandfather, who used the story of Moses as a paradigm for Muslim resistance, was a type of liberation theologian.

In 1986, Ramadan married Iman, the sister of a football teammate and a French convert to Islam. In 1991, Ramadan moved with his wife and children to Egypt, where he lived in his mother’s apartment and studied Muslim philosophy with a sheikh affiliated with Al-Azhar University. As a boy, Ramadan had idealized Egypt as a kind of spiritual home, but his travels to Egypt were profoundly disillusioning. He found that Switzerland was, intellectually and politically, a much more dynamic place than Egypt. The stay in Egypt turned him into a convicted European. He realized that although Islam was his faith, his culture was European. “The Arabic language is the language of the Qur’an,” Ramadan told Laura Secor of the *Boston Globe*, “But Arab culture is not the culture of Islam . . . You are not asked to remain Pakistani or Arab Muslim in America or in Europe. You are asked to remain Muslim.” When Ramadan returned to Switzerland, he completed a doctorate in Islamic Studies. Ramadan wrote his dissertation on the theology of his grandfather, Hassan al-Banna. His committee rejected his thesis, judging it to be partisan and unscholarly. Ramadan protested this decision, and a second committee was formed. His thesis was eventually accepted, but without honors.

Ramadan’s sojourn in Egypt and his illustrious family history gave him the street credibility to begin preaching in mosques and at Islamic conferences. Ramadan, with his movie star good looks and his fluency in Arabic, English, and French, became a magnet for young Muslims throughout Europe. Wherever he went, he packed out lecture halls and mosques with crowds of admirers. Ramadan’s favorite theme was the place of Muslims in Western societies.

Muslims, he taught, should be faithful to their roots but demand their rights as citizens. They should throw themselves into Western society “like a bomb,” but they should also be model, law-abiding citizens. Ramadan exuded freedom, self-confidence, and success, and Ramadan advocated that his followers travel the path that he had blazed. After his lectures, traditionalist Muslim youth thronged the stage, seeking guidance from Ramadan on everything from veiling to animal rights to rap music.

Ramadan’s lectures became among the most popular audiorecordings in Europe. In these lectures, Ramadan addresses the complexities and contradictions of Muslim life in Europe. He warns Muslims against the dangers of alcohol, non-marital sex, unrestricted musical and artistic expression, and Darwinian evolution. He also encourages Muslims to assert their rights to keep to their traditions of veiling, wearing the *jilaba*, fasting, and prayer. Yet Ramadan does not want Muslims to wall themselves off from European culture. He argues against segregated Muslim schools, and he sent his four children to public schools in Switzerland and Britain. In the past decade, Ramadan has been active in the European Social Forum (ESF), which advertises itself as an alternative to its “great capitalist rival,” the World Economic Forum. Through the ESF, Ramadan has gotten to know the leftist politicians that make up Europe’s moribund socialist and communist parties. These leftists increasingly rely on Muslim votes to win municipal elections.

Admiration and Suspicion

Outside the Muslim community, Ramadan became an object of both admiration and suspicion. His proponents saw him as someone whose Europeanized Islam deflects cultural strife. He was showing European Muslims how to use their unique experiences to develop a brand of Islam that is compatible with democracy and pluralism. His detractors saw him as the head of a fifth column intent upon transforming Europe into Eurabia. They accused him of *taqiyya*, the art of dissimulation or double-meaning. He projects an image that puts secular Westerners at ease, but he is actually leading Muslim youth down a path toward extremism. Ramadan became a symbol of the hope that Muslims can be part of European cultural and civic life without watering down their faith. He also symbolized the fear that Islam will soon eclipse Europe’s enlightenment and Christian heritage. As one Lutheran bishop told a news service, “I fear that we are approaching a situation resembling the tragic fate of Christianity in northern Africa in Islam’s early days.”

Following 09/11, French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy began searching for Muslims who could mediate

between French civil authorities and Muslim youth. Sarkozy formed the French Council of the Muslim Creed (CFCM), which was comprised of representatives of the Paris Mosque and the Union of Islamic Organizations of France—a Muslim Brotherhood affiliate. Sarkozy excluded Tariq Ramadan from the CFCM, even though Ramadan was more popular among French Muslim youth than any of the CFCM representatives. A Ramadan spokesman compared the CFCM to North African collaborators of the colonial period. Like them, the CFCM delivered votes and stability to the Interior Minister in exchange for Sarkozy’s help in consolidating the government’s power. “Muslims,” wrote Ramadan, “are to Sarkozy . . . private hunting grounds, tools in the new vote collection campaign, the instruments of a crude retrieval policy” (Kepel 2004: 275).

After having been spurned by Sarkozy, Ramadan began making alliances with anti-globalization activists on the far left, some of whom found him both charming and useful. Ramadan began bringing bearded young men and veiled women to conferences that were sparsely populated by aging middle-class leftists. In 2003, Ramadan stole the limelight from leftists at the European Social Forum in Paris, and he became a new face of anti-globalization. Ramadan and his Muslim followers promised to “rejuvenate and dominate a left-wing movement that had been moribund since communism’s demise” (Kepel 2008: 191). Through the European Social Forum, Ramadan exchanged his costume as the Muslim youth’s spokesman—“an outfit too tight to accommodate his ambitions and talents”—for the garb of the universalist intellectual (Kepel 2004: 278). The French press ran a constant stream of profiles of Ramadan, some laudatory, others critical. Young Muslims also were not sure what to make of Ramadan. In 2004, a Muslim cybernaut criticized Ramadan for “saying two different things. He tells us Muslims one thing, and he tells *kouffars* [unbelievers] what they want to hear” (Kepel 2004: 280). Other Muslim bloggers were more generous with Ramadan, comparing him to the Prophet Muhammad, who tricked infidels in times of weakness.

In the fall of 2003, Ramadan published a provocation on *oumma.com* entitled “Critique of the [new] Communalist Intellectuals.” The lead explained that the text had been turned down by both *Le Monde* and *Libération*, which immediately suggested that Ramadan was being victimized by the French media. Ramadan then drew up a list of “French Jewish Intellectuals” who had abandoned “universal principles of equality and justice” in their “communist” support of Israel and the war in Iraq. This was a risky venture, which would both shore up Ramadan’s support on the Muslim street and expose him to the charge of anti-Semitism. Since 1989, European Muslims have habitually been accused of “communist” failure to integrate into European culture, and here was Tariq Ramadan accusing

Jewish intellectuals of tribalism, while claiming that his concerns for Palestinian rights was “universalistic” (Kepel 2004: 278). Ramadan’s article caused an uproar in the press, but it also brought Ramadan a lot of media attention. Andre Glucksmann wrote, “What is surprising is not that Mr. Ramadan is anti-Semitic, but that he dares to proclaim it so openly.” Bernard Henri Lévy compared the Ramadan article to “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.” The controversy, however, helped Ramadan’s standing with activists on the far left, who were furious over Glucksmann and Lévy’s support for the Iraq war.

On November 20, 2003, just as the controversy over Ramadan’s alleged anti-Semitism was dying down, Ramadan’s notorious call for a “moratorium” on stoning on the televised debate with Sarkozy destroyed his credibility with French leftists. Caroline Fourest, editor of the feminist journal *ProChoix* (ProChoice), set out to prove that behind Ramadan’s charming exterior lurks a “fundamentalist wolf in reformist clothing.” Fourest published *Frère Tariq*, a 250-page investigation of Ramadan’s fifteen books, 1,500 pages of interviews, and approximately 100 recordings. “Tariq Ramadan is slippery,” Fourest writes, “He says one thing to faithful Muslim followers and something entirely different to his Western audience. His choice of words, the formulation he uses—even his tone of voice—vary, chameleon-like, according to his audience.” In scouring Ramadan’s speeches and writing, Fourest uncovered explicit condemnations of Kant and Pascal and “fundamentalist” condemnations of evolution, abortion, and homosexuality. Fourest calls Ramadan “a war leader,” who acts as “political heir of his grandfather.” Fourest believes that Ramadan is secretly working to establish a theocracy in every country in Europe. In *Frère Tariq*, Fourest described several links between Ramadan and terrorist networks. Many of these links are circumstantial, but they pile up to present an alarming portrait.

A Star in Britain and America

The events of 2003 seriously damaged Ramadan’s ability to build bridges between the French left and French Muslims, but in 2004, Ramadan became star in Britain. In 2004, Oxford University Press published *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, which met widespread critical acclaim. Ramadan’s previous books had been published by Muslim publishing houses with limited readership. In the first chapter of *Western Muslims*, Ramadan writes “The aim [of this project] is to protect the Muslim identity and religious practice, to recognize the Western constitutional structure, to become involved as a citizen at the social level, and to live with true loyalty to the country to which one belongs.” Ramadan is able to achieve this through an

innovative interpretation of *shari‘a*. Like all salafists, Ramadan accepts the authority of the Qur’an, the *sunna*, and the methods of the traditional *ulama*. But as a reformist, he seeks to interpret scripture contextually and to bypass the traditional schools of Islamic jurisprudence.

Ramadan distinguishes between those principles that are permanent and unchangeable in Islam from those that change with historical circumstances. The five pillars of Islam are permanent and unchanging. These include the confession of faith (“I testify that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is His Prophet”), daily prayer, alms, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the *hajj*. There are also permanent and unchanging principles regarding God and God’s creation and the virtues of humility, piety, justice, compassion. What must change is the application of these principles in different contexts. But this application must be done by trained Islamic scholars, and they must conform to rules that have been sanctified by tradition (Baum 2009: 91).

For Ramadan, the Islamic principle of permissibility makes Islam flexible and enables it to flourish in many different cultural contexts. The Qur’an defines a few obligations (*wajib*) and a few prohibitions (*haram*). Everything else is permitted (*halal*). The Qur’an teaches this principle in the story of creation, where Adam and Eve are invited to eat from the different fruits of the garden, except one, “lest you become wrongdoers.” “The *shari‘a* teaches us to integrate everything that is not against an established principle and to consider it as our own,” Ramadan writes. There are limits to permissibility, but they are few. “That which is lawful is plain, says the Prophet, and that which is unlawful is plain, and between the two are doubtful matters about which not many people know.” Ramadan argues that the Muslim principle of permissibility encourages Muslims to be venturesome as they move into new cultures. Ramadan uses the rules of permissibility to show that Muslims can make Europe their home. In doing so, they will transform Europe, and be transformed by Europe. Though Islam takes root in many cultures, different cultural forms of Islam do not produce different Islams. Ramadan assures European Muslims that even though they live differently from their parents and grandparents in the East, they continue to practice the identical Islam (Baum 2009: 98).

Ramadan’s theology of permissibility stands in tension with the traditionalist political geography of Islam, which admonishes Muslims to live within the fold or abode of Islam (*dar al-Islam*), where the *shari‘a* is upheld by the state. Muslims who find themselves outside the *dar al-Islam* should leave the realm of war—*dar al-harb*—and return home. Ramadan writes that these classical concepts were relevant during the first three centuries of Muslim conquest, but they are irrelevant in a post-colonial world of

mass migration. European laws give Muslims freedom of speech and religion. “This could lead one to conclude,” Ramadan writes, “that, in terms of security and peace, the name *dar al-Islam* is applicable to almost all Western countries, but does not apply in the slightest degree to the great majority of contemporary Muslim ones.” Ramadan argues that the contractual nature of the relationship between Europe’s Muslims and their societies means that they are obligated to abide by the laws of these societies. Because of this, Ramadan proposes a new abode—the *dar al-shahada*, or the abode of witness. Muslims should see Europe as a place where they bear witness to Islamic values of justice and equality.

Western Muslims seemed to provide a strategy for Muslims to integrate into European society without giving up their religion. It was reviewed favorably in *The New York Times*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The Guardian*, and *Prospect Magazine*. What many of these reviews seemed to miss or glide over is Ramadan’s redefinition of *dar al-harb*. The abode of war does not disappear in *Western Muslims*, it is simply redefined. For Ramadan, the abode of war is not a geographical space but the “the northern model of development” which enables “a billion and a half human beings to live in comfort because almost four billion do not have the means to survive.” In an interview with Ian Buruma, Ramadan calls global capitalism a “murderous tyranny,” and he said that, when faced with organizations like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, “the message of Islam offers no way out but resistance” (Buruma, *New York Times Magazine*). Muslims in this worldview are a saving remnant, the only people capable of presenting a spiritual alternative to the “homogenizing neo-liberal international order.” Bruce Bawer argues that this disqualifies Ramadan as a bridge builder or a reconciler. “The last thing Muslims need is one more ‘leader’ reinforcing an already extremely robust victim mentality by telling them that their relative poverty is the fault not of a lack of individual effort or ingenuity, or of various cultural deficiencies, but of abuse and exploitation.” Bawer argues that if Muslims are to succeed in Europe, they must view capitalism as their “engine of wealth” not as a “wellspring of poverty” (Bawer 2009: 128).

Following the publication of *Western Muslims*, Ramadan received several offers to teach at major universities. In the spring of 2004, Ramadan announced with great fanfare that he was moving to the United States to become a visiting professor at Notre Dame University. Notre Dame had hired Ramadan, with money supplied by the Luce Foundation, to lead a “study program devoted to religious conflicts and the establishment of peace” for the Joan B. Kroc Institute. The Kroc Institute is committed to “finding non-violent solutions to conflict.” Unfortunately for Ramadan, the State Department revoked his visa to enter the United States.

The university filed a petition on Ramadan’s behalf, but when he heard nothing from the State Department, he resigned from his post at Notre Dame. Ramadan was later denied other visas to speak in the United States. The ACLU, the American Association of University Professors, and the PEN American Center wanted to host him, and they represented him in the ensuing legal battles. In 2006, a federal judge ordered the government to give a reason for denying Ramadan’s visa requests. In September 2006, a U. S. consular officer announced that Ramadan’s \$940 contributions to two charity groups in 1998 and 2002 “constituted providing material support to a terrorist organization.” The charities were legal in the United States until 2003, when the U.S. Treasury Department linked them to Hamas. Hillary Clinton lifted the ban on Ramadan on January 20, 2010.

Ramadan’s exclusion from the United States made him a kind of folk hero among North American intellectuals, journalists, and activists. Charles Taylor wrote: “What we need is an alliance of people of all faiths and civilizations who will resist together this slide into polarization . . . Tariq Ramadan should be welcomed as a prime member of this alliance, not denied a US visa.” The ACLU stated that “Tariq Ramadan is a consistent and vocal opponent of terrorism and extremism.” Scott Appleby, who offered Ramadan the teaching position at Notre Dame, wrote, “He is doing something extraordinarily difficult if not impossible, but it needs to be done . . . He is trying to bridge a divide and bring together people of diverse backgrounds and worldviews.” Harvard professor Diana Eck said that “for many of us, it was an astonishing thing to see someone as vibrantly engaged in the kind of work we do excluded by the United States.”

On February 4, 2007, Ian Buruma published a laudatory, full-length profile of Tariq Ramadan in *The New York Times Magazine*, entitled “Tariq Ramadan Has an Identity Issue.” This raised him to celebrity status among educated Americans, boosting his book sales and establishing him as one of the world’s top intellectuals. In his article, Buruma characterized Ramadan as “a Noam Chomsky on foreign policy and a Jerry Falwell on social affairs.” Buruma describes a debate that he had with Ramadan in France in 2006. The organizers hoped to see “sparks fly,” and they urged Buruma to be rough with Ramadan. They were disappointed. “We agreed on most issues,” Buruma wrote, “and even when we didn’t (he was more friendly toward the pope than I was), our debate refused to catch fire.” Buruma rehearsed the charges that Fourest had made against Ramadan in *Frère Tariq*, only to find them overstated or unsubstantiated or unfair. Buruma concludes that because Ramadan represents philosophical principles that reasonable Westerners and Muslims share in common, he is bridging the divisions between the West and Islam and

facilitating a cultural peace. Buruma believes that Ramadan practices “a reasoned but traditionalist approach to Islam” that is based on “values that are as universal as those of the European Enlightenment.” He judged that Ramadan, though “neither secular, nor always liberal,” offers “an alternative to violence, which is, in the end, reason enough to engage with him, critically, but without fear.”

In June 2007, Paul Berman published a 28,000-word critique of Ian Buruma’s article in *The New Republic*, which he expanded into a full-length book in 2010. Berman shows how Ramadan’s “family relationships shape everything he does and writes.” Whereas Buruma does not challenge Ramadan’s interpretation of Hassan al-Banna as a parliamentary democrat, Berman describes al-Banna’s links with Hitler and Nazism. Al-Banna coined the slogan “God is our goal; the Prophet is our guide; the Qur’an is our constitution; struggle is our way; death on the path of God is our ultimate desire.” “Al-Banna did something dreadful to Islam,” Berman concludes. He “founded the modern vogue of suicide terror—the cult of death as political art form par-excellence—and attached this cult to Islam.” According to Berman, al-Banna’s blurring of Islam and Nazism betrayed Islam’s larger principles of tolerance and civility. This was a victory for “the Islam of fanaticism and hatred” over the “the Islam of generosity and civilization” (Berman 2010: 97).

One might forgive Ramadan for peddling a mythological revisionist interpretation of his grandfather if it were not for Ramadan’s relationship with his grandfather’s most faithful living disciple, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi. Al-Qaradawi, who lives in Qatar and is a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, is best known for his popular Al Jazeera program, “Shari’a for Life.” Al-Qaradawi believes that the Asian tsunami victims were punished by Allah because their countries are centers of tourism, with widespread “alcohol consumption, drug use, [and] sexual perversion.” According to al-Qaradawi, homosexuals and religious apostates should be executed in Islamic countries “to maintain the purity of Islamic society and to keep it clean of perverted elements.” Al-Qaradawi has said that he “personally supports” female genital mutilation and has stated that husbands should be allowed to beat their wives who display signs of “disobedience and rebelliousness.” He has accused rape victims of immodest dress, and he supports suicide bombing campaigns in Israel. “Women’s participation in martyr operations carried out in Palestine,” al-Qaradawi said, “is one of the most praised acts of worship.” In 2003, al-Qaradawi issued a fatwa allowing the killing of pregnant Israeli women and their unborn babies on the grounds that the babies could grow up to join the Israeli army. In 2007, al-Qaradawi also issued a fatwa offering women who commit acts of suicide terror a dispensation from the normal obligation of concealing their hair beneath their *hijab*.

Although Ramadan occasionally criticizes al-Qaradawi, he cites him as an authority more frequently than any other Islamic scholar. Berman writes, “He sprinkles signs of his personal homage throughout his books—one reference after another, always expressed in a tone of humble respect and deference, always designed to induce a feeling of respect and veneration, as if al-Qaradawi were an entirely reputable scholar.” Berman accuses Tariq Ramadan of being inconsistent in his condemnations of terrorist violence. He condemns terrorist organizations but he excuses terrorist deeds and lavishes praise on pro-terrorist theologians. “The whole problem,” Berman writes, “lies in the terrible fact that Ramadan’s personal milieu is precisely the milieu that bears the principal responsibility for generating the modern theory of religious suicide bombing” (Berman 2010: 200).

Berman’s pieces are devastating critiques, not only of Buruma, but also of a whole host of leftists that ignore the totalitarian tendencies lurking behind Ramadan’s genial smile. Dwight Gardner compares Berman’s treatment of Buruma to the “spectacle of a respected man of the left pummeling another while the blood flows freely, and no one calls the police.”

Preventing Extremism Together

On July 7, 2005, three bombs exploded within 50 seconds of each other on three London Underground trains. An hour later, a fourth bomb exploded on a double-decker bus in Tavistock Square. The bombs were home-made organic peroxide-based devices, packed into rucksacks and detonated by the bombers themselves, all four of whom died. Fifty-six people were killed and 700 were injured. The bombings were carried out by four Muslim men, three of British Pakistani and one of British Jamaican descent. Two weeks later, four more British Muslim men launched another attack on the London Underground, but their bombs failed to detonate. The fact that all of the terrorists in these attacks were British nationals, many of whom seemed well integrated, alarmed government officials. The shock of terrorist attacks being perpetrated by seemingly well-integrated “cleanskins” without criminal records prompted British Prime Minister Tony Blair to convene Preventing Extremism Together (PET), a committee that brought together imams, activists, academics, and government officials who would encourage the practice of healthy religion and discourage the practice of terrorism. PET participants visited 10 Downing Street to advise the Prime Minister. They also visited British mosques to hear complaints and offer solutions. Ramadan was an invaluable member of this team, as he had the credibility to shore up the government’s legitimacy on the “Muslim street” at a time when Blair’s popularity was at an all-time low.

Ramadan became a regular guest on BBC, where he relished his role as intermediary and commentator (Kepel 2008: 191).

But Tariq Ramadan paid a high price for his participation in Preventing Extremism Together. By 2007, his relationship with the Prime Minister who supported the Iraq War had damaged his standing among Muslim youth. On June 4, 2007, Ramadan published an inflammatory 943-word article in the *Guardian* that blasted the British anti-terrorist policies that he had been supporting for the last 2 years. Ramadan said that Britain's problem was not the Muslim failure to adopt British values. Rather, he bemoaned fact that "Justice is applied variably depending on whether one is black, Asian, or Muslim. Equal opportunity is often a myth. Young citizens from cultural and religious 'minorities' run up against the wall of institutional racism." He also wrote that "the illegal invasion of Iraq, blind support for the insane policies of George Bush, British silence on the oppression of the Palestinians—how could these issues not have a direct bearing on the deep discontent shared by many Muslims?" Gilles Kepel called this article Ramadan's "farewell to Britain." Tony Blair had nothing left to offer Ramadan. "Bush's lapdog" was being forced out of office by his own Labour Party, and Ramadan needed to buttress his standing with his militant base. The day the article was published, Ramadan declined an invitation to a conference on "Islam and Muslims in the World" organized by Tony Blair (Kepel 2008: 194).

In the next issue of *Prospect*, editor-in-chief David Goodhart published an "open letter to Tariq Ramadan" expressing the "disappointment" of a liberal British intellectual who had "spent quite a lot of time in the past year or two defending you against the French-American view that you are a dangerous extremist." Goodhart described as "nonsense" the claim that "all this Muslim extremism in Britain is someone else's fault, probably the British government's" and asserted that "British Muslims are among the politically freest and richest in the world." For Ramadan to say that Britain "is a kind of apartheid state where justice is applied variably depending on whether one is black, Asian, or Muslim is such an absurd exaggeration that it undermines Ramadan's credibility." While it is important to reform British society, it is "at least as important to change the mentalities and ideologies that radicalize British Muslims, making terrorism a major, recurrent problem in Britain."

Missteps in Rotterdam

David Goodhart's remarks received no reply. In 2007, Tariq Ramadan took up a new position as Visiting Professor of Identity and Citizenship at Erasmus University in Rotterdam. In Rotterdam, Ramadan's duties included teaching alongside well-known Dutch academics, contributing to public debate,

and promoting his vision of Islam in Europe—all financed and supported by the city of Rotterdam. (Kepel 2008: 211). Ramadan quickly became the most visible intermediary between the Dutch political establishment and the Muslim community. Ramadan developed a framework that encouraged Muslims living in Holland to follow *shari'a* law in cases where there was no conflict between *shari'a* and Dutch law. This framework relied on the Dutch tradition of "pillarization" (*verzuiling*), a nineteenth-century institutional arrangement in which Catholics, Protestants, socialists, and liberals lived in separate worlds with their own schools, newspapers, trade unions, and social clubs. The metaphor of the pillars evoked the image of a Greek temple with its roof supported by a number of separate pillars. (Kepel 2008: 211).

Pillarization fit in quite well with the multiculturalists' rejection of the inclusive politics of citizenship in favor of an exclusive politics of identity. In contrast to mediating institutions like religious, civic, or professional associations, multicultural "communities" would govern the lives of immigrants. Christopher Joppke writes that such cultural communities are "collectively represented, loaded with emotional significance, and tied to the construction of ingroup-outgroup boundaries." Gilles Kepel argues that although multiculturalists and Islamists have similar visions for Europe in the short-term, in the end, the Islamists see pillarization as a means toward Islamizing Europe. Kepel writes, "This concept of 'minority Islamic law' . . . advocates reaching necessary compromises with European societies, until such time as the whole of Europe becomes Islamic . . . as the Byzantine Empire had done before it" (Kepel 2008: 212).

On March 21, 2009, a gay Dutch newspaper, *Gay Krantz*, published the texts of some audiotapes in which Ramadan made controversial statements about homosexuality. On these tapes, Ramadan said that "God has established norms, and the norm is that a man is meant for a woman and a woman is meant for a man," and "The word of Islam is very clear on this point: homosexuality is not allowed." Ramadan replied that he was quoted out of context. He said that he had always stressed the rights of homosexuals "but it cannot be denied that Islam and Christianity and Judaism all prohibit homosexuality." In response to this article, the right-wing liberal party (VVD), accused Ramadan of spreading "homophobic ideas in the name of the city of Rotterdam," and it demanded that Ramadan's contract with the city of Rotterdam be terminated. The city of Rotterdam ordered that 54 of Ramadan's taped lectures be translated and examined for signs of homophobia. City officials determined that the *Gay Krantz* article was misleading, and Ramadan's contract with the city was extended for 2 years. On April 23, two VVD aldermen, Mark Harbers and Jeannette Baljeu, submitted their resignations in protest over Ramadan's rehiring. Harbers

said that Ramadan's views are at odds with "the freedom of the individual to choose his or her own lifestyle."

In August 2009, another controversy erupted over Ramadan's hosting of *Islam and Life: A Weekly Talk Show* on Press TV. Press TV is an English-language Iranian broadcaster, which was started by President Ahmadinejad in 2007 and is financed by the Iranian government. In an editorial published in *NRC Handelsblad*, Persian-Dutch law professor Afshin Ellian wrote, "Day in and day out we witness the atrocious actions of the Iranian government against defenseless civilians. And what does our bridge builder Ramadan do? He makes programs that are directly financed by the Iranian government. If a Muslim dies in the Palestinian territories, there is no end to the fury of Ramadan and his people. But the raped, abused, and murdered young Iranians should not count on any sympathy . . . Anyone who works for the immoral, extremely violent and anti-Semitic Iranian regime . . . may not and cannot ever build bridges with Dutch money. And if Ramadan has unexpectedly built a small bridge, we should destroy it as quickly as possible, because [at] the other side of that bridge [lies] Islamic fascism."

As a result of the Press TV scandal, nearly all of Holland's political parties demanded Ramadan's immediate termination. As a result, the city of Rotterdam and Erasmus University fired Ramadan on August 18. In a joint statement, the city and the university said that "Ramadan continued to participate [work for Press TV] even after the elections in Iran, when authorities there [brutally] stifled the freedom of expression." This behavior is "irreconcilable" with Ramadan's duties as integration adviser and professor. Ramadan responded with "An Open Letter to my Detractors in The Netherlands," which is posted on his website. He wrote, "When I accepted the offer from Press TV, I did so with the clear condition that I would be free to select my topics and that I would have full editorial freedom within the parameters of a weekly program dealing with religion, philosophy, and contemporary issues. My method, from the start, has been to explore these issues without lending support to the Iranian regime, and without compromising myself." Ramadan wrote that "the present controversy says far more about the alarming state of politics in The Netherlands than about my person . . . When they single out a 'visible Muslim intellectual' for attack, their real agenda is the politics of Muslim-baiting and fear."

Europe: A Beautiful Idea

In 2005, the Dutch government hired German Muslim scholar Bassam Tibi to help lead an initiative entitled "Europe: A Beautiful Idea" that would encourage Muslim immigrants to embrace a European identity. At the same time that Ramadan

was setting up a Muslim pillar in Rotterdam, Tibi was in Rotterdam exhorting Muslims to be more than just legal citizens of European countries. They must also become "Citizens of the Heart" by appropriating European values and integrating into European society. "Citizenship means more than receiving a passport: it must resemble membership of a special club, one with rules," Tibi said. Tibi opposes Ramadan's efforts to create parallel and separate Muslim communities within mainstream European society. Instead, he argues that a Muslim's identity as a European citizen should stand above his or her religious identity. Whereas Ramadan prioritizes Islam above all other identities and promotes its application in law, society, and politics, Tibi argues that religion should be practiced privately. In public, "citizen" is the only relevant identity, and citizenship binds Muslims with non-Muslims in a common civic project. "The multicultural vision of two different worlds living peacefully side by side is a deception," Tibi writes. "Collective identity politics" is an "instrument against the civilizational identity of Europe itself."

Tibi was born in Damascus in 1944, and he became a German citizen in 1976. Tibi studied philosophy with Jewish scholar Max Horkheimer, a Holocaust survivor and a member of the Frankfurt school of social research. Through Horkheimer, Tibi learned to appreciate the idea of Europe as an "island of freedom in an ocean of despotism." Europe is responsible for an ugly colonial past, two World Wars, and Nazi atrocities, but Europe has another side, which promotes freedom, democracy, pluralism, and individual human rights. Horkheimer wrote that it is "an obligation on those who subscribe to critical theory" to be committed to Europe and the West, and to defend it against "all varieties of totalitarianism." With the Enlightenment, Europe gave birth to a "disenchanted world" with "inclusive," universal values that transcend ethnicity and religion. Europeans need to be true to their Enlightenment heritage by giving up "blood and soil" concepts of citizenship. In response, immigrants need to "bring their identity into harmony with Europe and its cultural system." Muslims can do this because they, like Europeans, are heirs of Hellenistic rationalism.

In 1992, Tibi coined the word Euro-Islam to describe an alternative to Islamist visions of Europe's future. Tibi criticizes Tariq Ramadan for adopting the word Euro-Islam to describe his salafist project, "presumable with the intent to deceive." Tibi writes that Muslims can become Europeans without relinquishing Islam only on the condition that they embrace secular European laws and constitutions that separate religion from politics. Tibi shows how there can be no Europeanizing of Islam without rejecting the heritage and theology of al-Banna and relinquishing salafist concepts like *shari'a* and *jihad*. Euro-Islam also rejects the salafist's call to Islamize Europe through *da'wa* (witness) and *hijra* (migration). Muslims must give up loyalty to an imagined *umma* and adopt

cultural reforms that would encourage submission to a non-Muslim *imam* (ruler).

“It must be candidly stated that the integration needed for Muslim immigrants to become European citizens cannot take place alongside claims that run counter to secular civil and open society,” Tibi writes. Tibi warns that “if an enlightened Muslim position should now fail in favor of a multi-cultural communitarianism that admits different laws and different treatment of people from different cultural communities, then Islamization will doubtless be the future of Europe.” He continues, “As a Muslim who is committed to freedom and rationality, and who fled the despotism and authoritarianism that prevails in the world of Islam, I do not like to see the political culture of Islamism establishing itself in the Islamic diaspora in Europe.” “As a pro-democracy Muslim and a European by choice, the contemporary jihadist Islamism, and its call for a world revolution to remake the world in revolt against the West incorporates the most recent variety of totalitarianism to be countered by all those who are committed to the open society. Here there can be no tolerance in the name of cultural diversity and multiculturalism.”

Tibi distinguishes Islamism, which is a rigid political ideology, from Islam, a “religious and cultural system” that takes liberal, mystical, and apolitical forms. Whereas Islamism is incompatible with democracy and pluralism, Islam is compatible, provided that religious reforms take place within Islam. European Muslims can accept what Tibi calls the *Leitkultur* (the leading or guiding culture) without compromising their integrity as Muslims. In the European context, the *Leitkultur* includes the Enlightenment ideals of human rights, pluralism, and religious freedom. Muslims will benefit from embracing these values “because Islam, unlike the West has not experienced an Enlightenment.” This means that “Islam has no tradition of either autonomous institutions designed to protect human dignity or of tolerance toward dissenters.”

“We are left with the following imperative.” Tibi writes, “Those who seek to come to Europe must strive to become part of its community, adopting the democratic consensus expressed in its value system.” Immigrants must want to become European and to participate in European identity, rather than seeking to alter it. “Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam, these are the only two options available,” Tibi writes, “The [only] alternative to cultural segregation [in Islamic enclaves] is inclusive Europeanization.”

The Europeanization of Islam or the Islamization of Europe?

For most of Muslim history, Muslims viewed Europe as a remote place from which there was nothing to learn and

little to be imported except slaves and raw materials. Christendom meant, primarily, the Byzantine Empire, which gradually became smaller and weaker until it finally disappeared with the Turkish conquest of Constantinople. The military and political successes of the caliphate supported the prejudice that Christianity had been superseded by the final Islamic revelation and that the Christian’s best hope was to be incorporated into the house of Islam, which offered the benefits of religion and civilization (Lewis 2002: 4). This changed in the nineteenth century, when the Arab-Muslim universe fell under European control. At first, Muslims responded to this loss of power and dignity by trying to modernize their religion along European lines. They tended to agree with the Europeans that traditionalist Muslim views of politics, religious authority, and women had to be tailored to fit modern sensibilities. Concepts like secularism, separation of church and state, nationalism, and liberalism made sense to these reformers and formed the basis for their ideologies of modernization. Other Islamic scholars were horrified by these attempts to update Islam. They were convinced that Muslims were weak and marginalized because they had made too many compromises with the West. What was needed was a return to the “true” Islam of Muhammad and the right guided caliphs. These jurists and activists called themselves *salafis*, “followers of the forefathers.” The divide between the modernists and salafists have defined the great debates that have taken place among *sunni* Muslims since the turn of the last century.

During most of the twentieth century, the modernists had the upper hand in these debates. A generation ago, Muslim youth in Europe tended to be socialists of one sort or another, and they were loyal members of the anti-racist, anti-imperialist, non-religious European left. Second-generation European Muslims rarely practiced the “folk” Islam of their parents’ generation, which seemed moribund and irrelevant to urban life. David Warren writes that most Muslims looked forward to “a world that would be, if anything, post-Muslim and post-Christian—to the triumph of a kind of universal civil order that would be socialist in its economy.” In 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, this all changed. The European left was largely discredited, and Marxist categories suddenly became irrelevant to most Muslims. European Muslims responded to this new environment by returning to the mosques in great numbers. Tariq Ramadan’s political mixture of salafism, globalism, and socialism quickly replaced Marxism as the new medicine that could rescue the underclass from poverty and humiliation. Today, Ramadan huge following makes his liberal critics look marginal and irrelevant. Bassam Tibi admits that Ramadan has millions of followers in Europe, whereas “maybe a few thousand” European Muslims subscribe to his progressive, secular views. Tibi has

recently given up on Europe. In 2006, he announced that he was moving to the United States, where his views are respected and where he will not feel like an outsider in “ethnically exclusive” environments.

Sociological factors work to keep salafism popular in Europe. In defiance of traditional immigration patterns, second and third generation Muslims are less integrated into European culture than were their parents or grandparents. Throughout Europe, Muslims remain, for the most part, uneducated and poor. European labor rules protect workers from exploitation and layoffs, but they also prevent employers from hiring immigrants, and they make it difficult for immigrants to start businesses. Social welfare programs that are funded through employees’ and employers’ contributions drive up the cost of hiring and stifle job creation. Ian Buruma writes: “Immigrants appear to fare better in the harsher system of the United States . . . The necessity to fend for oneself encourages a kind of tough integration. Immigrants do not feel the entitlements in the United States that they do in Europe.” Afshin Ellian writes, “Five years ago, my Afghan sister-in-law emigrated to the United States, where she now works, pays taxes and takes part in public life. If she had turned up in Europe, she would still be undergoing treatment from social workers . . . and she still wouldn’t have gotten a job or won acceptance as a citizen.” Condemned to permanent unemployment by a culture that contemptuously feeds and clothes them, Europe’s Muslim youth find dignity in closed communities that separate them from their environment. In this respect, Europe’s Muslim ghettos function as Islamic jurisdictions or “colonies” sealed off from the rest of Europe.

Demographic trends suggest that history is on the side of the Islamization of Europe. The number of Muslims in Europe has doubled over the last decade, and is expected to double again by 2025. Native populations of Europe are reproducing slowly and aging fast. Today, only Malta has a naturally growing population. If current birthrates continue, by 2050 the number of Germans will shrink from 83 million to 63 million; native Italians will shrink from 57 million to 44 million. Italy expects its working age population to plunge by 41 percent by 2050. One quarter of all German men and a fifth of young German women say that they have no intention of ever having children. These demographics contrast sharply with patterns in the United States, which has a naturally growing population (2.1 births per woman as against 1.5 in Western Europe and 1.4 in Eastern Europe). These trends suggest that Muslims could soon be the majority in Europe. Most of the Muslims will be young; and most of the Europeans will be old. A popular t-shirt among European Muslim youth declares “2030—then we take over.”

Another factor in the strength of Islamism in Europe is the demise of Christian religious adherence. The energetic

faith of European Muslims stands in sharp contrast to the anemic faith of European Christians, and this leads many Muslims to see Europe as a place that is ready for conversion and domination. London is home to seven times as many born Christians as born Muslims, but more Londoners attend mosques on Fridays than churches on Sundays. Muslims often perceive the West as a wasteland of addiction, pornography, depression, and teenage pregnancy. Aatish Taseer writes that “for many second-generation British Pakistanis, the desert culture of the Arabs holds more appeal than either British or subcontinental culture.” Theodore Dalrymple, a harsh critic of Islam, admits that Muslim girls in Britain are “vastly superior in manners, outlook, and intelligence to their white counterparts” (quoted in Bernhard 2006: 143). Even atheist Michel Houellebecq, who called Islam the world’s “stupidest” religion, admits that Islam offers a moral code that rescues people from drug addiction, alcoholism, and sexual promiscuity. British convert to Islam Abdal-Hakim Murad writes that Muslim immigrants are preserving values that Europeans relinquished during the sexual revolution. “The lifestyle of the average Muslim,” Hakim writes, “is redolent of the 1940s and 1950s.” This makes Muslims “the sole defenders of values” which would be “recognized as legitimate” by earlier generations of Europeans (www.islamfortoday.com/murad08.htm).

Tariq Ramadan’s vision for Europe is polarizing, illiberal, and riddled with contradictions. Yet he has gained a huge following by addressing the profound problem of spiritual, cultural, political, and ethical alienation that plagues young European Muslims. He has also worked to construct a counter-culture that provides an alternative to the frenetic hedonism, materialism, and individualism of Western youth culture. European secularists have responded to this challenge with vague concepts of self-actualization, social security, and peaceful coexistence, often laced with cynicism. This is no answer to Islamism. As German jurist Udo Di Fabio asks: “Why in God’s name should a member of a vital world culture want to integrate into Western culture, when Western culture . . . is not [reproducing itself], no longer has any transcendental idea, [and] is approaching its historical end? Why should he get caught up in a culture . . . that offers no higher ideal of the good life beyond travel, longevity, and consumerism?”

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