

# Islam and the Arab Awakening

AMIDST the proliferation of writing on the current sociopolitical upheavals in the Middle East, Tariq Ramadan contributes an ideological perspective on questions of political ethics that seeks to negotiate the tensions between Western secular-liberal culture and the robust assertion of Islamic identity. This book, pitched to a popular yet educated audience, applies this perspective in a scatter-shot fashion to a wide-ranging set of figures, trends, and challenges raised by recent events in the Middle East. Part introduction, part commentary, and part prescription, the book's first two chapters survey a number of different features of the "Arab Awakening" while the last two chapters attend to the specific role of "the Islamic reference." Ramadan's analysis is often vague and he emphasizes questions and debating points rather than answers. However, his perspective on the direction in which he hopes Arab societies will move is worth considering.

The book is less than ideal as a primer for those with little previous exposure to the Middle East. One finds a brief recounting and evaluation of the first year of the sociopolitical uprisings in Iran, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain, and Yemen (each country receiving between two to four pages lest particulars be absorbed into facile generalizations), some commentary on the role of technology and new media in the uprisings, and a few pages on the historical evolution of both secularism and political Islam. One also finds several sections on the West: the debate over its behind-the-scenes role in the uprisings; the Orientalism of its media commentators on the political left and right alike; and the inconsistency and hypocrisy of its foreign policy, which lurches between rhetoric celebrating democracy and self-determination, and actual positions that expose realpolitik-driven concerns over oil, stability, as well as economic hegemony. The writing is conversational, the analysis glancing, and reasonable disagreements among analysts are largely ignored. Un-

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**Penulis**

Tariq Ramadan

**Penerbit**

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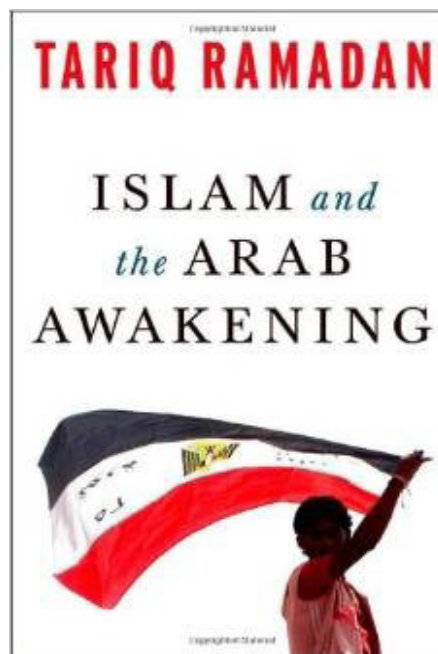
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fortunately, much of the information in these chapters is already dated and easily accessible elsewhere in clearer and better organized presentations.

Since Ramadan is best known as a representative intellectual who speaks on behalf of Muslim causes, the two chapters in which he takes up the relevance of Islam to the uprisings would seem to be the most promising. There is, he claims, "one single Islam [and] a diversity of interpretations. .

. . The same body of references and values nurtures the diversity of interpretations" (p. 69). This open-ended approach enables him to claim the initial protesters for Islam, if not for Islamism: "most of the activists . . . who were calling for freedom and justice and an end to corruption and dictatorship, did so as Muslims--and not against their religion" (p. 15). In developing his views, Ramadan sets up two extremes--Islamist theocracy and a secularism wherein religion is entirely privatized--and he sensibly criticizes the commentators who claim that the future can only involve a stark choice between the two. Ramadan's mediating position is democratic and he speaks not of an Islamic state but rather of a civil society infused with Islamic values, where religion provides social mobilization. His list of core Islamic values include democracy (characterized by five inalienable principles), access to education, the protection of human dignity, the mitigation of poverty, an increased role for women in public life, increased freedom of expression, and acceptance of religious pluralism (including for atheists and agnostics). Such a list is likely to sound very fine and familiar to Western readers, yet Ramadan claims that if Muslims are to work toward cultural authenticity and autonomy, they must draw upon their own collective memory as well as their intellectual, religious, and cultural references in determining how to apply and develop these values. In addition to disparaging the idea of a single, global, (Western-led) liberal civilization, he criticizes international institutions such as the IMF and insists that Middle Eastern economies turn their attention toward Africa and the developing world and away from dependence on the West. In fact, he claims that the West is so fraught with its own political and economic crises that it needs to look to the Muslim Middle East for "real perspectives for the future" (p. 110).

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# Legal Integration of Islam: A Transatlantic Comparison

THE burgeoning literature on Muslims in the West, often engaged in rather static comparisons of citizenship regimes, national identities, immigration and integration policies, and church-state relations, has long ignored the legal dynamics of integrating Islam. With unerring instinct for major research trends and public concerns, Christian Joppke and John Torpey have now written a thought-provoking and agenda-setting book on the judicial politics of Muslim accommodation. A paired transatlantic comparison of France and Germany, Canada and the United States, the book's major argument is that, popular hostility against Islam notwithstanding, "liberal institutions have proved remarkably elastic in accommodating a religion that, judged by its worldwide politicization, may pose more of a challenge to liberal societies than others" (p. 139).

The argument is first explored in the Western European context where accommodation proceeded both by protecting individual rights to religious freedom and by incorporation into historically contingent church-state arrangements. In Chapter 2, the authors discuss liberalism's limits to exclusion in a vivid narrative about the French burka prohibition, showing that an electorally driven initiative faced seemingly insurmountable constitutional hurdles because legal experts saw *laïcité*, human dignity, and public order as insufficient reasons to restrict individual rights to religious freedom. Although such hurdles were tellingly overcome by political will, the French case confirmed that legal discourse was a "pivotal resource in the process of integration" (p. 47). Chapter 3, the most comprehensive one in its coverage of legal scholarship, case-law,

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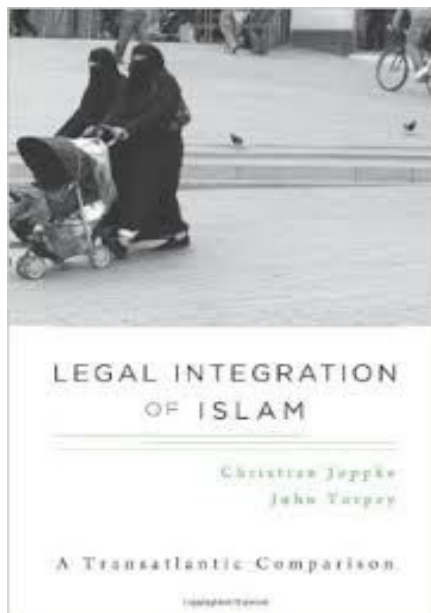
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and policy outcomes, further illustrates the individual rights track of integration with court rulings on Muslim claims for mosque building, ritual slaughter, and exemption from coeducative sport

lessons in Germany. However, the authors' major aim actually is to assess liberalism's limits of inclusion. They argue that including Islam into existing corporatist arrangements, e.g., by granting status as *Körperschaft des Öffentlichen Rechts* and offering Islamic instruction in public schools, had characteristically proceeded at slower pace and more by political pragmatism than principled judicial intervention.

Among the North American immigration countries where Muslims have come with greater human capital and in smaller numbers than in Europe's post-colonial and guest-worker context, Canada (Chapter 4) is portrayed as a case that shares a history of quasi-established churches but stands out by its professed (liberal) multiculturalism. The authors cite Ontario's debate about Shariabased arbitration courts, Quebec's controversy over the Bouchard/ Taylor report on "reasonable accommodation," and the proposal of Bill 94 to make the point that once protection was claimed for presumably "illiberal practices," notably in gender relations, the individual rights core of liberalism constrained multicultural recognition (p. 112). The United States (Chapter 5) serves, as it were, as a negative case where accommodation of Islam has, despite post9/11 distrust, not met substantial resistance, thanks to free exercise and nonestablishment jurisprudence. It may seem a digression that this chapter also summarizes Islamic scholarly views of how to live as a minority, but it does make explicit the book's major premise—that Islam constituted a particular challenge to liberal democracies.

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