THE IDEA OF EUROPEAN ISLAM
RELIGION, ETHICS, POLITICS AND PERPETUAL MODERNITY

Mohammed Hashas
Mohammed Hashas’s book points to ways to break away from such a clash of essentialized and inverted perceptions of Islam and Muslims by focusing on the original thinking of European Muslim thinkers who are providing new theological responses to address the specifics of European Muslims, therefore taking a much needed distance from Middle Eastern and/or salafi religious discourses. His work discusses the specificity of European Islamic thinking and emphasizes the importance of considering it as seriously as we consider thinkers in the Middle East or Asia.

Jocelyne Cesari, Georgetown University and University of Birmingham

In this meticulous and frequently brilliant study of the ideas, practices and precedents of European Islam, Mohammed Hashas illuminates and engages intellectual landscapes at the intersection of geography, theology, philosophy and politics. This book deserves a wide readership. After the dust settles, and it always does, The Idea of European Islam will remain on bookshelves and syllabi for years to come.

Jonathan Laurence, Professor of Political Science, Boston College

In a serious effort to capture the contours and details of European Islam, Mohammed Hashas provides an engaging account of several Muslim thinkers in Europe. He provides a theory to discuss the content of Muslim moral philosophy, theology and politics in conversation with leading thinkers based in Europe and those outside the continent in a search for solutions. Provocative as well as engaging. Anyone interested in one of the most important questions regarding the future of Europe in an age of migration and technological acceleration will find this to be an important book.

Ebrahim Moosa, Professor of Islamic Studies, University of Notre Dame, USA
Suspicions about the integration of Islam into European cultures have been steadily on the rise, and dramatically so since 9/11. One reason lies in the visibility of anti-Western Islamic discourses of salafi origin, which have monopolized the debate on the “true” Islam, not only among Muslims but also in the eyes of the general population across Europe; these discourses combined with Islamophobic discourses reinforce the so-called incompatibility between the West and Islam.

This book breaks away from this clash between Islam and the West, by arguing that European Islam is possible. It analyzes the contribution that European Islam has made to the formation of an innovative Islamic theology that is deeply ethicist and modern, and it clarifies how this constructed European Islamic theology is able to contribute to the various debates that are related to secular-liberal democracies of Western Europe. Part I introduces four major projects that defend the idea of European Islam from different disciplines and perspectives: politics, political theology, jurisprudence and philosophy. Part II uses the frameworks from three major philosophers and scholars to approach the idea of European Islam in the context of secular-liberal societies: British scholar George Hourani, Moroccan philosopher Taha Abderrahmane and the American philosopher John Rawls. The book shows that the ongoing efforts of European Muslim thinkers to revisit the concept of citizenship and political community can be seen as a new kind of political theology, in opposition to radical forms of Islamic thinking in some Muslim-majority countries.

Opening a new path for examining Islamic thought “in and of” Europe, this book will appeal to students and scholars of Islamic Studies, Islam in the West and Political Theology.

Mohammed Hashas is a Research Fellow at LUISS Guido Carli University of Rome, Italy.
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To my parents
for their love and life of generous giving
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In the conclusion of The Oxford Handbook of European Islam (2015), I argued that if European Islam means the adjustment of Muslims’ practices to Europe’s post-Enlightenment values and norms such as human rights, rule of law, democracy, and gender equality, European Islam already exists. In fact, a plethora of sociological and anthropological work shows that these adjustments are happening. At the same time, suspicions about the integration of Islam into European cultures have been steadily on the rise and dramatically so since 9/11. One reason lies in the visibility of anti-Western Islamic discourses of salafi origin, which have monopolized the debate on the “true” Islam not only among Muslims but also in the eyes of the general population across Europe, hence reinforcing the so-called incompatibility between the West and Islam. In salafi thinking, good Muslims are religiously conservative, wear the hijab, follow strict gender separation, avoid promiscuity, and limit their relations with non-Muslims or Muslims who do not behave like them. In contrast, bad Muslims have been “contaminated” by the Western lifestyle and values and, therefore, are in need of purification. Although this discourse does not reflect the reality of Muslim religious practices, it nevertheless operates as an authoritative interpretation of Islamic orthodoxy and influences Muslims’ identification with their religious tradition. Thus, the “good” Muslim becomes an ontological category based on total acceptance without critique of divine law, which is defined as immutable. As an inverted image, the “good” Muslims in the eyes of Europeans are secular and Westernized while the bad Muslims are doctrinal, anti-modern, and virulent. In other words, a distinction between radical, “bad” Islam and moderate, “good” Islam has become a common political framing across European democracies. In this sense, the clash is not between civilizations but between essentialized and inverted perceptions of Islam and Muslims that reinforce each other.

Mohammed Hashas’s book points to ways to break away from such a clash by focusing on the original thinking of European Muslim thinkers who are providing new theological responses to address the specifics of European Muslims, therefore taking a much needed distance from Middle Eastern and/or salafi religious discourses. His work discusses the specificity of European Islamic thinking and emphasizes the importance of considering it as seriously as we consider thinkers in the Middle East or Asia. Another virtue of the book is to show that
the ongoing efforts of European Muslim thinkers to revisit the concept of citizenship and political community can be seen as a new kind of political theology, in opposition to radical forms of Islamic thinking in Muslim-majority countries. Only time will show if these new thinkers will diminish and invalidate the religious legitimacy of salafism not only among some Muslims but also in the eyes of European political elites.
Transliterations and style

Arabic terms are transliterated according to the *International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)* transliteration system. Frequently used words such as Muslim, Muhammad (the Prophet), Qur’an, Sunna, shari‘a, hadith, fiqh, kalam, falsafa, madhhab, umma, ijtihad, jihad, and imam appear without (more) diacritics; they also appear unitalicized, and in lower case, unless they are in a quotation; unfamiliar concepts are transliterated. An apostrophe is used for the letter hamzah. A superscript comma is used for the ‘ayn letter instead of ‘ayn. The exceptions in the transliterations that occur in this work are due to the different styles used in the original citations, which cannot be changed here. For example, “shari‘a” will be found written in four forms – “Sharia” (in upper case), “sharia” (in lower case), “Shari’ah,” and “shari’a” (either in upper or lower case, besides the apostrophe of the Arabic letter ‘ayn) – depending on the quotation; “Shahada” will be found also written as “Ash-Shahada” in some citations, and I have opted for “al-shahāda” for my use. “Scriptures,” “text,” “universe,” and “man” (to mean humankind and both genders) can be found in both lower and upper case, depending on the author using them in each chapter; I did not force harmony here; in my own use I used lower case. “Jamal Eddine al-Afghani” will be found referred to as “Jamal Ed-dine Afghani” or simply “Afghani,” depending on the original citations. Titles of books and sentences in Arabic do not start in upper case, except for terms like kalam, falsafa, and fiqh that occur as titles of (sub-)sections. Proper names are not transliterated. The Arabic definite article “al-” is kept even with shamsi initial letters.

All the translations from Arabic and French are the author’s, unless otherwise indicated. Referencing notes and titles of books are provided in English, alongside their originals in Arabic, French, or Italian. Original titles are provided in brackets when they are first referred to, and the subsequent citations from these titles are to the English translation, for ease of reference. The references list also provides the non-English original titles. Each chapter ends with its own reference list, and there is no final bibliography for the whole book; this way, each chapter can be read independently from the others. The calendar used is the Common/Current Era (CE) one, and not the Hijri (Islamic) one.

Abbreviations in the acronym format are not used. Instead, shortened titles are opted for in Part I, where the focus is on one author and his texts throughout
Transliterations and style

the chapter. For example, Tibi’s *Islam’s Predicament with Modernity: Religious Reform and Cultural Change* is abbreviated as *Islam’s Predicament*.

I also note that the family name of the philosopher Taha Abderrahmane is Taha, and not Abderrahmane, which is his first name, but his books have been signed as Taha Abderrahmane ever since their first publication, and so is he referred to in public events. Since this is the case, and to maintain harmony in references to his works, he is referred to here too as Taha Abderrahmane, and not as Abderrahmane Taha.

**Arabic and transliterated Roman characters**

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*Vowels*

Short: a, u, i for ﺍ ﻉ ﺍ
Long: ā, ū, ī for ﺍ ﻉ ﺍ
Doubled: iyy, uww for ﻱ ﻉ ﻱ
Diphthongs: au/aw (ū), ai/ay (ī) for ﺍ ﻉ ﺍ ﻱ ﻉ ﺍ
Acknowledgments

This work owes a lot to many people who unfortunately cannot all be named here. They know who they are. It started nine years ago at LUISS Guido Carli University in Rome, where I have been granted three successive scholarships: for a second MA in European Studies with a grant from the European Commission for Education and Culture (2008–2009); for a PhD in Political Theory with a scholarship from the Department of Political Science (2010–2013), which culminated in the long dissertation from which this book originates; and for a postdoctoral research fellowship from the same department and university (2014–2018), which has allowed for further research on the topic and revisions of earlier findings. Without this institutional-financial support, this project, which includes other publications, would have been impossible. I am especially grateful to the following people who, chronologically, have been momentous in this nine-year endeavor so far: Professor Giovanni Orsina, Professor Giuliano Amato, Professor Sebastiano Maffettone, and Professor Francesca M. Corrao; they have been great company, institutionally and intellectually. For the last couple of years, working with professor Francesca Corrao and her team has been a real joy – I thank her very much; I extend my thanks to Dr Renata Pepicelli, Dr Simone Sibilio, Dr Donatella Vincenti, Odetta Pizzingrilli, Anthony Santilli, Lorenzo Liso, Shahd Aly Gamil. Fruitful collaborations with Professor Carmela Decaro and her team, especially with Dr Francesco Alicino and Dr Michele Gradoli, were an added value. Other colleagues and friends in the university have been lovely company over the years, and some of them read and commented on earlier drafts of some of these chapters: Dr Christian Blasberg, Dr Daniele Santoro, Dr Aakash Singh, Dr Domenico Melidoro, Dr Valentina Gentile, Dr Federica Liveriero, Dr Cecilia E. Sottilotta, Dr Meysam Badamchi, Dr Manohar Kumar, and Dr Silvia Cavasola.

Internationally, I have participated or have been invited to participate in various seminars, workshops, summer schools, and conferences, and on each of these occasions I shared my research and got enriching feedback from various established scholars and young researchers. Encounters with various figures sparked certain thoughts on some topics or concepts. Especially related to conversations on contemporary Islamic thought and my views on it, I thank Abdul-lahi A. An-Na’im, Abdou Filali Ansari, Taha Abderrahmane, Sadeq Jalal al-Azm
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Introduction

From Islam in Europe to European Islam

European interaction with physical as well as virtual [i.e. imagined] Islam has been very diverse. Muslims have been enemies and allies, foreigners and compatriots, Us and Them. Their civilization has been feared as aggressive and expansionist, but also praised for its religious tolerance and its culture that has produced great and innovative artists, scientists and intellectuals to which Europe is indebted.

(Maurits S. Berger, *A Brief History of Islam in Europe: Thirteen Centuries of Creed, Conflict and Coexistence* (2014))

The Iranian cultural theorist Daryush Shayegan (d. 2018) defines “grafting” – which is a technique whereby tissues of two plants are joined to grow together – as often an unconscious operation that aims at bringing together two unconnected words to form of them a coherent body of knowledge, the way a grafted plant is expected to give a new taste or flavor that is close, and thus coherent, with the old original tastes or flavors of the two separate plants. Shayegan adds that grafting tries to reconcile epistemologically two different paradigms, old and new, and thus tries to make ideas that have no real counterparts in the real world fit in with social facts. The result is that a new discourse emerges which attempts to be integrated into, or grafted onto, the old, or a discourse which tries to integrate the old into the new. In both cases, distortion happens. This is how Shayegan starts his analysis of “Westernization” and “Islamization” in Islamic-majority societies. First, this cannot be a rule for all concepts, since the history of ideas tells us that influence and confluence are natural phenomena in social life as in theories of knowledge. Second, “European Islam” is one of the grafted concepts in which at least two epistemologies try to find a new and coherent way of standing together in a non-Islamic-majority context that is already “Western.” As will be explored in this book, European Islam can be considered the fruit of confluences that world historian Marshall G.S. Hodgson might have included within what he called the “Islamicate” – taken here to mean, with a slight modification, the social and cultural complex, besides and/or irrespective of the religious one, associated with Islam and Muslims even when found among non-Islamic and non-Muslim complexes and domains. The “Islamicate” here refers to historical
Islam, or what the Scottish scholar of Islam William Montgomery Watt called
the ektosoma of Islam. Or, by adjusting the argument of the historian of ideas
Shahab Ahmed (d. 2015) that Islam is a system of coherent contradictions,
because it enjoyed flexible interpretations according to time and space in “pre-
modern” times, and fiqh law was not exclusive of other ways of life and discip-
lines however dominant it became, European Islam can be said to belong to this
plural tradition of being Islamic in a context where the religious or religion per-
se can still express itself as being Muslim or Islamic, even when this appears a
contradiction in terms. This view may appear novel to those not familiar with the
classical plurality of legal theories and the intellectual diversity of what the
German Arabist Thomas Bauer calls “the culture of ambiguity” that enjoyed
difference for over a millennium.

Though “it is impossible to understand Islam without understanding Islamic
law,” and “Islamic law is the central domain of Islamic ethical thought,” accord-
ing to the renowned Joseph Schacht and Kevin Reinhart respectively, European
Islam does not see itself as un-Islamic if it does not centralize law (fiqh), not
only because Islamic legal theories were plural and have historically integrated
customary laws and various laws of the lands where they happen to be applied,
but also because such a symbiosis between the “sacred” and the “mundane” was
ethically oriented. Because Islam did not have a “Church,” i.e. a central sover-
ign authority that fuses sacred and mundane powers together, it was legal theo-
rists and jurists that ruled the intellectual public sphere, and in so doing they
could not have one voice, one law, or one interpretation; shari‘a law was never
applied in the same way all over the Islamic-majority communities, nor was it so
even within the same cosmopolitan area, let alone within vast territories of
diverse “Islamic” empires. It was first of all an intellectual process, a heuristic
device, developed by civilian jurists to judge individuals and communities that
were governed by a homos moralis perspective of the “shari‘a ethic,” in Wael
Hallaq’s reading. The challenge European Islam raises – and also faces – is to
restore this compass of the homos moralis in a “secular age” ruled mostly
by secular law; it is a quest for what Hallaq refers to, in speaking of the task of
modern Muslims, as “Qur’anic cosmology” or “moral cosmology,” by which he
means that Muslims (need to) live deeply morally accountable and moral lives.

To use a concept that may bring the point to closer understanding, one may
say that the islamicity of European Islam could be understood only with the
change that not only “solid modernity” but also, and now most importantly,
“liquid modernity” have brought to the interpretation of the individual, the com-

munity, space, and time. Because of the variegated meanings given to Islam in
the age of “uncertainty” of liquid modernity in particular, “the vocation of the
intellectuals,” as Zygmunt Bauman writes, still has a role to play in bridging the
gap between a past and solid (i.e. certain, clear, spacial) way of life and a new
and light (i.e. liquid, uncertain, cyberspherical, and global) way of a consumerist
life, in which classical concepts and values are at risk. As self-proclaimed
speakers of their own Islamic tradition in a modern context of consumerist ideo-
logues, European Muslims, as committed intellectuals, are engaging with their
tradition from this changing space and time of modernity. For them, European Islam is not a “normative bricolage” – to borrow the phrase Peter O’Brien uses in his critique of controversial European policies and public philosophies. Rather, it is a form of reconsidering their relation between this and the other world to regain their subjective place in a cosmopolitan world instead of remaining in the politics of identity confirmation, beyond classical Orientalism and Occidentalism discourses; it is a form of reclaiming what the cultural critic Hamid Dabashi calls “hermeneutics of alterity,” i.e. the sense of being in the world as independent subjects, beyond the boundaries made by politics and hegemonic power. European Islam belongs to a larger “discursive tradition” of Islam, but it apparently is developing its new “discursive tradition” as well, in the words of the anthropologist Talal Asad, in a “new transcultural space” in the broad West, in the words of the sociologist Jocelyne Cesari. European Islam for Muslim thinkers is about meaning, morality, and social justice. This is about cosmic sovereignty and the place of man in it; as to political sovereignty, it is in the hands of the state. This differs substantially from, say, Arab Islams and political Islams, which are struggling to reach a renewed interpretation of the place of religion in the political and spiritual-religious realms.

This work raises and deals with this question: Is European Islam possible? The question was raised at the end of a presentation I delivered in a seminar during my research stay at the Center for European Islamic Thought, at the University of Copenhagen, on April 26, 2012. A colleague then asked me, following my own question that I had included at the end of the handout, “so, is European Islam possible or not?” I replied: “Theologically, it is possible; politically, it depends!” I was aware that my answer could raise more questions on why this was so. My answer could look more like that of a diplomat who prefers ambiguity, or a religious scholar or believer who defends his own faith in light of unwelcoming politics. By “politically, it depends!” I had the current status quo in mind, that is, the diverse European political responses to Muslims’ demands and Islam’s presence. My answer was partly socio-political, and not theoretical. Now, in this work, I deal with texts, and I am bound by a theoretical framework.

This book claims to present a new and different approach in the study of Islam in Europe, or what will be referred to here as European Islam and European Islamic thought interchangeably. It argues that European Islam is possible theologically and politically. It therefore contributes to the field of study of Islam and Muslims in Europe from the perspectives of theology, political theology, political philosophy, and ethics. Particularly, political theology simply means the study of how theological concepts are reinterpreted and/or reclaimed to fit in the constitutionally secular-liberal politics and societies, which are different, minimally or maximally, from the politics and societies which these theological concepts come from or grew in originally – i.e. the broad Middle East. In common parlance, these theological and theoretical concepts are “Islamic,” and these politics and societies are “European,” hence the grafted concept of “European Islam.” This means that this exercise belongs to at least two major domains of
thinking – Islam in Europe and Islam outside Europe, so as not to say Europe and the Islamic world – which this work takes to be not intrinsically opposing domains, but domains of controversy, different and intertwining. “European Islam” and “European Islamic thought” are used interchangeably here to generally mean any discourse, concept, or idea that claims to be minimally or maximally Islamic and European in theory and/or practice, irrespective of the degree of this affiliation to Islam and Europe. Though it is theoretical as it is mostly presented here, the claims of this European Islam are endorsed by various sociological-anthropological works as well.19

This work studies European Islam using a triadic framework or axis that grasps the comprehensiveness of a world religion like Islam: world–society–individual. That is, this is a theoretical project that deals with theological concepts for mundane (secular) and metaphysical (divine-transcendent) purposes, and European Islam will be analyzed to examine how it approaches the three entities that form these three axes: (1) the cosmos or the world, (2) society or the community as a whole, and (3) the individual as an agent that at the end interprets religious teachings for social purposes and for existential questions that involve her or his interpretation of the world. At this stage, it suffices to say that “this” European Islam does the following: (1) on the world axis, it humanizes the world through divinely willed inheritance for cosmic wellbeing, based on the principle of fraternity; (2) on the society axis, it historicizes revelation through practical fiqh, for social wellbeing, based on the principle of equality; (3) on the individual axis, it rationalizes individual faith through the principle of ethical liberty for individual wellbeing, based on the principle of liberty.

This work also studies European Islam as a category or subfield in contemporary Islamic thought for three main reasons. First, European Islam builds on the Islamic intellectual tradition of religious rational disputes (kalam), especially that of the medieval Mu’tazila rationalist school, though this is not always visible or stressed by the studied scholars, because the Mu’tazila gained a negative reputation among the dominant Ash’ari theological school and legal madhhab. European Islam aims at rationalizing ethics; that is why it focalizes ethics and not law in the Islamic tradition; it centralizes “thin shari’ā,” instead of “thick shari’ā.”20 Second, European Islam also builds on the heritage of the modern Islamic reformist movements, and its revivalists who make what is known as the Arab-Islamic nahda (renaissance) that historians of ideas generally see as ranging from the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798 and the rise of Muhammad Ali Pasha, followed by the modernization attempts in various parts of the Arab world, to the 1930s, with differences in this period of time for other Islamic countries and minorities.21 Third, it further continues the debate on the need for rethinking the Islamic tradition, beyond the limitations of the pioneering nahda revivalists, the way a new generation of critical reformists have been doing since the so-called postcolonial era, and especially since the 1967 Six Day War defeat in the Arab world, and post-1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and the rise of political Islam, to give two major examples of political events that have impacted Islamic thought in the broad Middle East that is geographically not far from
Europe. This era marks the beginning of the growth of a new generation of scholarship that is critical and reformist. This generation has produced modern and plural interpretations of the tradition, and European Islam belongs to this renewed interpretative atmosphere in Islamic thought. That is why it is considered here that European Islam has intellectual links with three generations of Islamic scholarship: (1) the classical rationalists, particularly with the Mu’tazila, championed by figures like Qadi Abd al-Jabbar (d. 1025); what will be referred to as (2) the “early” reformists of the nahda, like Jamal Eddine al-Afghani (d. 1897) and Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905); and (3) the “late” reformists, or the contemporaries, like Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988), Mohammed Abed al-Jabri (d. 2010), Fatema Mernissi (d. 2015), Muhammad Shahrur (b. 1938), Abdolkarim Sorouch (b. 1945), Mohsen Kadivar (b. 1959), Hassan Hanafi (b. 1935), Amina Wadud (b. 1952), Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im (b. 1946), and Taha Abderrahmane (b. 1944), among many others.

The scholarship of the contemporaries’ generation, to which European Islam is very close, constitutes what some call “Islamic critical thought,” “progressive Islam,” or “critical Islam.” The scholars interpreting and defending European Islam differ in methodology but do broadly agree with the general line of thought of the above generations in Islamic scholarship. That is why this work claims that European Islam aims at “rationalizing ethics”; it introduces arguments that support the making of an (Islamic) ethical theory that clearly differentiates between morality and law, without denying the divine sources of moral ethics. Because of the “rationalization of ethics” European Islam advances, in the footsteps of some earlier kalam theology and other contemporary reformist voices, I call such advancement “revisionist-reformist” since it is not a radical breakthrough in Islamic thought; it is, however, a “mild revolution” that does not aim at “killing” or “denying” God, but at working out theologically grateful ways of cultivating this world, without resorting to what is often referred to as divine law or divine prescriptions. I refer to the Muslim Caliph, in the sense of “Muslim personalism” and agency that opts for such an interpretation, as the “Muslim Prometheus” – who does not need to kill God to get the torch of knowledge (i.e. sovereignty) from Him; there is no tragedy here: it is a peaceful rebellion and mild revolution, with substantial epistemological consequences, namely the rationalization of ethics through an objectivist perspective. European Islam, therefore, continues a tradition but renews it as well. This is modern in Islamic thought; it is in this sense that it is critical, progressive, and reformist. This rationalization of ethics leads to the adoption of what might be referred to as the values of “legal modernity” or “Euro-modernity” and argues for them “from within,” for theological legitimacy. This step in Islamic thought is what is referred to here as “perpetual modernity,” in the sense that it does not satisfy itself with the achievements of “Euro-modernity” but keeps religious thought as a form of critique for permanent awakening; it is only through this process that the divine remains a source of liberation for human beings, liberation from objects and subjects. This liberation theology is based on what will be introduced as “trusteeship critique” or “trusteeship paradigm.” By adapting “thin shari’a” as the form for being
European politically and Islamic theologically, European Islam establishes itself as a “reasonable comprehensive doctrine,” able to legitimately contribute to the idea of “overlapping consensus” in constitutionally liberal societies from its doctrinal perspective. These concepts will be explained in due course.

On Islam in Europe: inlandish or outlandish?\(^{26}\)

The literature carrying the labels “Islam” and the “West” is vast, and European Islam as studied here tries to overcome this dichotomy and opposition in the nomenclature, that is why this work too avoids these labels, and uses them only for clarification when need be. European Islam as studied here considers itself “Western” in the sense of being “modern,” and “not Western” when it comes to certain values that may go against the doctrinal beliefs of Islam, which other religions share, too. This work focalizes Western Europe in particular and not the West in general for three reasons. First, the scholars studied here are based in Western Europe, and have used the terms “Islam in Europe” or “European Islam” in their works as an answer to various challenges raised in these societies, or what has become known as “the Muslim question.”\(^{27}\) Second, it is Western Europe, and not the rest of Europe, that is studied here, because the challenge of secularism-liberalism is mostly experienced in Western European societies, to which Muslims coming from outside try to adjust theologically and politically. Muslims of the Balkans or of Russia are also European Muslims,\(^{28}\) but their history and their institutional integration in their countries is different from the current questions raised in Western Europe, and thus they are not focalized here. This does not mean that Islamophobia does not reach these “indigenous European Muslims”; there is a “Platonic Islamophobia” even in the Eastern countries where the Muslim minorities are hardly existent and visible.\(^{29}\) Third, it is Western Europe, and not the West in general, that is focalized, because the broad term “the West” is criticized by European Islamic thought as hegemonic and political, and also not faithful to the past shared historical relations and contributions of the “Islamic world” to the renaissance of the Western world as a whole. Moreover, Islam in North America, a major component of the so-called West, has its own context and dynamics, which appear different at certain levels from their counterpart in Western Europe. Islam in America, for example, did not experience historical antagonisms between “Christendom” and “Islamdom,” in Hodgson’s terminology, antagonisms that still appear in the imaginary and populist discourses of people around the Mediterranean and beyond. American Islam has its own characteristics.\(^{30}\) North America has been a multicultural melting pot since its inception; society as a whole, especially in the USA, is religious, and its secularism is moderate, while Western Europe has become multicultural only post-World War II, and its relationship with religion and the Catholic Church has generally not been an easy story; it has been conflictual, that is why there was a Reformation, and the birth of secularism as a concept of multiple interpretations to overcome the conflict of the modern state and the Church.\(^{31}\) Islamophobia in the US seems more political than cultural-religious.\(^{32}\) However, for a
general study of Islamic reformist thought in “the West,” with reference to female scholars as well, the 2004 work of Jocelyne Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States,* remains pioneering. And if the meaning of the “West” is extended to include pre-modern Western times, then medieval Spanish/Andalusian Islam and Sicilian Islam belong to the West as well.34

This differentiation aside, a particular narrative of “Islam vs. West” has re-emerged in recent times since the 1990s. Especially after the fall of the Soviet Union, the “Islamic world(s)” have become the identity differentiator from the liberal “West.”35 The famous thesis of the “clash of civilizations” of Samuel Huntington, especially the clash of the Islamic with the Western civilization, has not vanished.36 The famous British-American historian Bernard Lewis speaks of a centuries-old rivalry between the Christian world and the Muslim world since the coming of Islam; this rivalry still exists, and is worrying, and defeats and humiliations experienced by Muslims since the demise of the Ottoman Empire in particular and the colonialism of Arab-Islamic lands nurture what he calls “generalized resentment” against the West.37 In *Faith and Power* (2010) he writes that the withdrawal of Western dominion from Islamic societies may allow one to “hope that the long record of strife will at last come to an end.”38 About the future of Islam in Europe, he raises a warning that its consequences might be multiple: “The emergence of a population, many millions strong, of Muslims born and educated in Western Europe will have immense and unpredictable consequences for Europe, for Islam, and for the relations between them.”39

On the other side stands another camp of contemporary historians who underline the interaction of these two major civilizations, and how at a certain historical period they had very close worldviews. The American Richard W. Bulliet speaks of an Islamo-Christian civilization, and says, “The past and future of the West cannot be fully comprehended without appreciation of the twinned relationship it has had with Islam over some fourteen centuries. The same is true of the Islamic world.”40 Europe-focalized, the Dutch Maurits S. Berger speaks of five historical Europes and says that each had a particular interaction with Islam and Muslims: Uncivilized Europe (700–1000), Crusading Europe (1000–1500), Divided Europe (1500–1700), Powerful Europe (1700–1950), and Struggling Europe (1950 to present). He describes this interaction as follows:

European interaction with physical as well as virtual [i.e. imagined] Islam has been very diverse. Muslims have been enemies and allies, foreigners and compatriots, Us and Them. Their civilization has been feared as aggressive and expansionist, but also praised for its religious tolerance and its culture that has produced great and innovative artists, scientists and intellectuals to which Europe is indebted.41

The Danish historian-sociologist Jørgen S. Nielsen speaks of four stages of the Muslim presence in Europe. The first is the period of Islamic Spain and Muslim
rule in Sicily; this was ended by the Reconquista in 1492, and the second by the Normans in the early thirteenth century; the second stage dates to the spread of the Mongol armies who later converted to Islam in the thirteenth century and left Muslim communities like the Tatars in Russia, along with others between Poland and Ukraine, in the Caucasus, and in the Crimea; the third records the Ottoman expansion in the Balkans and Central Europe; the fourth is the current phase, post-World War II. Historical antagonisms and relations, however, are still harbored around the subject of the Muslims of Europe and European Muslims. Europe seems to have forgotten, or not to have paid enough attention to, its “indigenous Muslims” that inhabited its soil prior to 1945.

Limitations in studies of Islam in/and Europe

This complex relationship of the religion of Islam as carried out in history by Muslims with the modern European world that is the heir of “Christendom” has been studied in the post-1945 period by at least three disciplines: (1) political science, (2) sociology, and (3) anthropology.

Politically, much fusion and confusion has taken place over Islam in the broad Middle East and Islam in Europe. There are various reasons behind this. The point to stress, however, is that scholarship on the Middle East has given itself the authority to speak of Islam in Europe, and ultimately of European Islam, with much neglect of the socio-political and historical situation between the two spaces that requires different scholarly approaches, and also with much neglect of the view that secular-liberal society should juridically treat its “Muslim citizens” as citizens first, irrespective of faith, color, or race; externalizing them becomes a European problem, and not an “Islamic problem.” There is a justification given for this by scholars in the field: many of the classical Orientalist and essentialist trends have been passed on from Middle Eastern issues to issues of Islam and Muslims in Europe. These trends have grown in intensity when merged with the securitization approach adopted in most European countries, particularly since 9/11.

Sociologically and anthropologically, two remarks need to be made. First, current studies of Muslims in Europe have been built on Orientalist scholarship, and that impacts research findings and perceptions. The sociology of Islam did not develop as a discipline in contemporary Islamic societies until recently; it did not attract much of the attention of early European sociologists either. With such a void, scholars of Islam would depend a lot on classical and Orientalist methodologies that could not be relevant in the study of contemporary Islamic societies, and in understanding Muslim communities in Europe. Jocelyne Cesari, Harvard scholar of the Islam in the West program, says that the current anthropological and sociological studies have been influenced by Orientalist scholarship in their disciplines, and that has affected the current study of Islam and Muslims in the West:

In the West, the study of Islam began as a branch of Orientalist studies and therefore followed a separate and distinctive path from the study of
religions. Even though the critique of Orientalism has been central to the emergence of the study of Islam in the field of social sciences, tensions remain strong between Islamicists and both anthropologists and sociologists. The topic of Islam and Muslims in the West is embedded in this struggle. Current sociologists and anthropologists would not agree on such a statement, because the last three to four decades have seen a remarkable growth in the literature, especially in Europe, as Cesari herself emphasizes, saying that this Orientalist heritage lingers especially in the American study of Islam. Her point, however, makes more sense if it is linked with the next point she makes, that is, when the socio-anthropological data is used and looked at through an Orientalist lens, one that is essentialist and normative, and when the data is especially read to reflect certain classical stereotypes and biases, as is the case in the French non-academic essays, the media, and journalistic context. This is in line with what the French scholar of Islam Maxime Rodinson (d. 2004) calls the “continuance of the past impetus” in his critique of the classical Eurocentrist methodologies of studying Arab-Islamic societies. Sophia Rose Arjana speaks of the imagined picture the West has of the Muslim man; she describes it as the “Muslim monster,” which has a background in medieval times, before it reaches its peak in 9/11. Second, these two fields seem to have been influenced and guided by the political rhetoric. Much of the fieldwork, for example, targets Muslim minorities alone, and does not advance that level of academic inquisitiveness to other minorities for a better understanding of the issue of religion in liberal societies in this historical moment. The increasing study of Muslims in Europe, especially after the 9/11 terrorist events, illustrates the fact that research on this particular minority is not purely academic, but is also driven by the political context, and some of the research conducted on Islam and Muslims in Europe is used by political parties and ideologies when that suits them in political campaigns and in the passing of certain laws (e.g. bans on the veil in schools and the full face veil in the public sphere, and bans on minarets). Some critical researchers who belong to these fields in particular have publicly denounced the exaggerated focus on Muslims in Europe, especially when it is driven by the political discourse, which the media and right-wing parties, for instance, (mis-)use. This mostly happens when the growing sociological data extrapolated from fieldwork is misused by a particular political discourse and essentialist academic line of thought that “externalizes” Islam and Muslims from their current Western context and home. For example, the German Qur’anic scholar Angelika Neuwirth argues that the externalizing of the Qur’an from Biblical studies methodologies is done on purpose, for a “political exigency,” to externalize the Islamic tradition from the European tradition, though it is part of it, since it belongs to the Abrahamic tradition and is related to the Judaeo-Christian traditions. The Italian scholar of Islamic philosophy Massimo Campanini argues that Islam is the religion of the West and part of its civilization, for theological similarities, and the historical, cultural, and economic connections between Europe and Islamic societies over the centuries.
Introduction

Overall, Islam and Muslims in Europe are studied in one of three ways. One, they are studied in light of Middle Eastern Islam, and geopolitics in the region. Two, the emerging European Islamic thought is studied in isolation, without an attempt to match it with recent general sociological-anthropological findings in the field, which will be briefly referred to below, and which give a different view of how Muslims see themselves in Europe as European Muslims, and how their various representative bodies seek integration into the institutions of their European states. Three, there is very little “intra-comparative” work that is conducted on European Islamic texts as a way of examining what they contribute to the debate over the “Muslim question” from within both their theological tradition and their political belonging to Europe, nor is there “inter-comparative” work in which European Islamic texts are compared with projects theorized in Islamic-majority societies to see where differences and/or similarities lie. Certainly there are minor attempts in that comparative direction, but the ones most heard of are of two types: (1) those that are either Islamophobic, by anti-Muslims or ex-Muslims, or highly Eurocentric; and (2) the most conservative, and especially the violent fundamentalists and extremists. This work examines a thought in the making, which tries to overcome such a binary and opposing representation of Islam in Europe.

Does European Islam think?

I distinguish between two major trends in the scholarship of Islam and Muslims in Europe. This distinction is based on my question “Does European Islam think?”

One trend or school sees that European Muslims – and by implication European Islam – think, and are developing a line of thought, and the other trend recognizes the agency of these Muslims but does not recognize that they can think about this agency. The French political sociologist Olivier Roy represents the second trend, while the Danish historian-sociologist Jørgen S. Nielsen represents the first.

Roy writes in his short book Vers un islam européen [Towards a European Islam] (1999) that there is no new theological input into Islam among Muslims in Europe. He believes that there is no rethinking of the religious dogma among Muslims in Europe. All he sees is the age of “post-Islamism,” characterized, among other aspects, by “individualization,” “privatization,” and “detrerritorialization” without theological reinterpretations. I quote him at length:

We see then that the minority fact does not necessarily bring about a theological or jurisprudential aggiornamento but rather a disconnection between the theological debate and the creativity of a religiosity which is centered on the individual. [...] It [i.e. individualized European Islam] is not a reformed Islam because not only the dogma but also the corpus of interpreters and jurists remain uncontested. [...] European Islam is detrerritorialized, deprived of institutions that could impose norms. [...] We are certainly wrong to wait for a theological reform, or a theological voice, for the liberalization of practices (like the veil, food, etc.) which would allow to [sic] the Muslims to adapt to Occidental norms. [Emphasis added]
According to Roy, the resurgence of Islam among Muslims in Europe, and in the Islamic-majority lands, is broadly anti-intellectual, especially among fundamentalists and salafis. This is the case for religion in general in the twenty-first century. He calls this “sainte ignorance” (sacred ignorance). In *Globalized Islam* (2004), Roy does not change his mind. He still views Islam in the West in general as looking through Western lenses: “The issue is not Western versus Muslim values. […] The debate occurs within a single ‘cultural’ framework: that of the West.” Due to the fact that it works “within” the Western framework, Roy then sees no Islamic theology being revisited or developed: “Islam in the West is Western not to the extent it changes its theological framework, but because it expresses that framework more in terms of values than of legal norms, whatever the content of those values.” What Roy considers to be changing is not the dogma, but simply the practice of believers – “What is changing is not religion but religiosity” – and he reaches this conclusion since the “liberal thinkers do not meet the demands of the religious market.” His conclusion then, as quoted above, is that European Islam “is not a reformed Islam because not only the dogma but also the corpus of interpreters and jurists remain uncontested.” On occasion he says that these new forms of religiosity will be legitimized theologically in the future, but up until now there has been no such process, though he refers to engaged imams like Dalil Boubakeur of the Grand Mosque of Paris, Soheib Bencheikh of Marseille, Hassan Chalghoumi of Seine-Saint-Denis, or the renowned public theologian Tariq Ramadan. Roy’s argument reads like Talal Asad’s critical reading of Ernest Gellner’s description of Muslim actors in *Muslim Society* (1981); they “do not speak, they do not think, they behave.” Roy’s actors do speak, but are unheard; they behave, but remain invisible. While I do agree with certain sociological observations and findings of Roy, I do not agree with his theoretical views on the subject; he fails to recognize a theoretical and theological dynamic among European Muslims. My work on European Islam is close to the socio-anthropological findings of Jørgen S. Nielsen, and other scholars who have a similar approach to these findings, like the pioneering work of Felice Dassetto, in *La Construction de l’islam européen* [The Construction of European Islam] (1996), and that of Jocelyne Cesari, in *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States* (2006). The latter work is even closer to my theoretical investigations, since it examines a number of important Muslim scholars and reformists based in both Europe and the US.

At the time when Roy first wrote on European Islam in French, Nielsen was doing the same, with a sociological work bearing the same title in the same year, in English, *Towards a European Islam* (1999). In the main, Nielsen imbues his sociological study of Muslims, mostly in Britain, with a historical touch. Though, like Roy, he does not go into deep theological investigations into the matter, he still sees “grounds for optimism” concerning the integration of Muslims in Europe and Europe’s ability to respond positively to that process, if it draws on its past heritage of pluralism and tolerance, away from “restrictive and sometimes oppressive forms of nationalism.” In *Muslims in Western Europe* (3rd ed., 2004), Nielsen sees the young Muslims born and educated in
Europe as being influential in leading their community of believers, and in giving shape to new forms of expressing and practicing Islam, forms, and priorities “relevant to their European situation.”

Nielsen notes that there is a lively intellectual debate going on within the Islamic community, and less attention is given to it. He compares it to the formative Islamic intellectual era:

less [attention] is being paid to the internal debates taking place. Here there is a range of philosophical and theological discussions, which in many ways remind one of the debates which ranged among Islamic theologians in the formative periods of the eighth–eleventh centuries.

Nielsen believes that Muslims in Europe “are being watched” by their co-religionists in the Islamic-majority countries, as if there were a shift in theological balance. In the Foreword to Tariq Ramadan’s *To Be a European Muslim* (1999), Nielsen states the following:

The irony of the situation has become that living on the margins of the Muslim world has taken European Muslims back into the theological centre. In doing so they are being watched also from the geographical centre [i.e. the Islamic-majority societies].

For him, European Muslims “are asking fundamental questions about Islam”; *fiqh* (which focuses on legal matters) is being questioned, and theology (which focuses on morality) is being given more weight. Nielsen’s contention reflects the claim of Richard W. Bulliet, who believes that “the edge in Islam, rather than the center, has been where new things happen.” Bulliet believes that creative elements that nurture traditional centers of authority grow up in the “edge,” which is not the equivalent of the “margin” for him. This book explores European Islam, which is growing outside classical Islamic lands and majority societies, as a creative edge in this sense.

**Speakers of European Islam: five criteria of selection**

The emerging European Islamic thought requires a comparative and interdisciplinary approach, since the studied texts belong to different disciplines (international relations, theology, philosophy, ethics, and legal theory), and develop different approaches to the subject under focus. Their background difference is what this work uses to advance a part of its thesis, i.e. that European Islam emphasizes ethics at the theological level, and social justice at the political level, somewhat in the way kalam theologians did in the formative years of Islamic thought. The selected scholars are as follows: the Syrian-German Bassam Tibi (b. 1944), the Swiss, of Egyptian descent, Tariq Ramadan (b. 1962), the Moroccan-French Tareq Oubrou (b. 1959), and the French Abdennour Bidar (b. 1971). Each of the four calls for a particular version of European Islam. Tibi
presents political justifications for “Euro-Islam”; Ramadan presents both political/public and theological justifications for “European Islam”; Oubrou is close to Ramadan, though, as I read him, he tries to be even more theological; and Bidar presents the philosophical and theosophic reading of European Islam.

This selection of Muslim scholars and their texts as a means to study European Islam is based on five criteria. First, the scholar should speak from the perspective of “declaration” and not “conjecture,” to use John Rawls’ terms. He (or she) should have an Islamic background, and speak from within the religion or doctrine studied, i.e. Islam. The fact that he is Muslim makes him more aware of the issues Muslims in Europe in particular face. A non-Muslim scholar or ex-Muslim could have equal awareness of the situation, or greater, but the point here is to look for scholars that are engaged in discussing the matters of their faith because they are seriously concerned with it, and not those who speak about it or against it. The transformation of any moral or ideological view comes from within the same tradition, and not from outside, even when the challenges behind this transformation come from outside.

Second, the scholar should be living, or should have lived, in Western Europe. Multicultural as it may seem, Western Europe’s policies toward religious minorities, Muslims in particular, are not homogeneous and do not consider them equal compared with its “native” religions. This makes Western Europe a particular secular and liberal case that challenges classical conceptions of religion, including the “newly arrived” Islam. As it is required of Muslim religious scholars/ulema to live or at least be well immersed in the daily issues that face their co-religionists, the same could be said of scholars and intellectuals not trained in classical religious seminaries, but who still speak of the Muslim question and Islamic adaptation in Europe.

Third, the intellectual biography of the scholar is taken into account, since it impacts his intellectual itinerary. By intellectual biography, what is meant is the way the personal or family background and the academic training of the scholar have impacted his vision of Islam in Europe, and his thoughts on European Islam. Without a consideration of the spacial-temporal conditions in which the scholar has developed his argumentation, his theses could be read out of their context, and could be dangerously generalized about other situations and contexts of Islam and Muslims. The context impacts the epistemological stance of the scholar.

Fourth, the public presence of the scholar is considered. In treating texts and measuring their potential influence on the public and politics, considering their public presence and circulation is important. This comparative work is not based on fieldwork; it is theoretical, but its choice of the selected scholars stems both from their presence on the ground and the potential impact they may still have in the future on European Islamic thought, seeing that they are among the pioneering voices and advocates of “European Islam.” All the scholars selected here have a presence in the public debate over Islam and Muslims in Europe, especially in their corresponding countries of origin and/or residence. Most of them have an international audience as well, but of a varying size, as chapters dedicated to each of them will show.
Fifth, and despite their different backgrounds, the scholars studied here all bring to the fore the ethical message of Islam and stress it in their version of European Islam. As will be argued in this work, they all tend to rationalize ethics, which classical rationalists like the late Mu'tazila school of thought, mostly finding its culmination in the work of the renowned rationalist scholar Qadi Abd al-Jabbar (d. 1025), pioneered between the ninth and eleventh centuries. Modern (“early”) and contemporary (“late”) reformist scholars based mostly, but not in all cases, in the Islamic-majority countries tend, too, by means of their various approaches, to rationalize the divine message, à la Mu'tazila, despite the fact that they do not mention this classical school by name, since it has been tarnished and defamed by some orthodox scholars and political regimes since the miḥna/crisis (“Inquisition-like”) of the school in the ninth century.78

The selected scholars, then, do stress the ethical question in Islam in light of not only the current socio-political situation in Europe, but also the socio-political changes and challenges that the Islamic-majority countries, mainly those of the broad Middle East, have been facing for about the last two centuries. They attempt to re-ground the Islamic ethical message in the liberal-secular European context. It is here that the theological and the political substantially intertwine. Because of the political pressure over the religious in Europe, and equally because of the religious challenge of the political status quo, this work, in various ways, builds historical links between the past and present in Islamic thought, so as to better understand how European Islamic thought is trying to present theological justifications for both its Europeanness and its islamicity in the secular age.

This understanding of the contemporary socio-political circumstances of the debate over European Islam brings to the fore early socio-political circumstances that were raised especially during the reign of the third and fourth Caliphs, Othman and Ali, which ultimately influenced the politico-theological paths of Islamic thought in general afterwards. The reference here is to the socio-political issue of who had the right to govern, on what basis, and the main theological and political divisions that developed out of that feud: Sunnites, Shi'ites, Kharajites, Murji'ites, and later on Mu'tazilites, and Ash'arites, to list these among other sects and schools. That is to say, theological, and ultimately philosophical, disputes flourish when the political situation is tense and requires “argumentation” to find out theological justifications and political solutions to various issues. That is the task the kalam legacy contributed to classical Islamic thought. Without saying much here, kalam theology discussed issues that belong to the field of what is known now as political theory and philosophy of ethics, besides issues of divine nature (like the attributes of God).79 Aspects of kalam renewal in Europe could be detected in European Islamic thought.

The current socio-political situation of Islam in/and Europe does slightly socio-politically correspond to the early formative period that brought about political and theological changes to the Islamic community. Still, and again based on the previous historical notes, I contextualize my reading in the intellectual labor in which Islamic thought has been engaged for nearly the last two
Introduction

centuries, chiefly since the beginning of the Arab-Islamic renaissance (nahda) of the mid-nineteenth century. Various reformist trends have developed since then, but symptoms of return to the ambience of the formative intellectual debate, which flourished mainly between the ninth and eleventh centuries, are very visible. There is “revision” in the reform being advocated in contemporary Islamic thought. European modernity opens space to Islamic thought to revise its own past, and rethink its conception of religion in light of the modern changes and challenges.

The age of kalam will not return in the same way as it first developed, but some of its main themes are being revisited in contemporary Islamic thought. The fundamentals of Islam, and the rebuilding of an updated understanding of religion and recontextualization of the message of the Prophet Muhammad are being heavily discussed, especially by critical Muslim scholars and philosophers. European Islam is not immune to this debate. Though it may develop its own path of understanding and practicing the message of Islam, European Islam, as I will illustrate in this work, is part of the current debate, which in turn has its roots in the formative era of Islam. European Islam in this sense, as I will recurrently mention, is both “revisionist” and “reformist.” It is revisionist since it keeps relations with the founding sources; it is “reformist” since it tries to build on them in the modern context.

As a matter of fact, this selection of scholars aims at making European Islam speak to itself more dialectically for the sake of intellectually rigorous religious dispute and argumentation (kalam), besides answering the criterion of what the scholars have in common in raising Islamic reform for a European Islam. The selected scholars hardly mention each other in their works, and when they do, they do so without a thoroughly analytical argument that either supports or refutes the others’ views. They are also not studied comparatively, nor is their emphasis on ethics, for instance, examined using an ethical framework for analysis – which this work does.

What “this” European Islam does not include: reply to five objections

Intellectual modesty has to be raised to avoid essentialisms and silencing of other European Islamic voices. Do the scholars studied here represent European Islam in all its varieties and possible versions? This research claims not to represent but rather to present a version of European Islam; it is not all-inclusive, but it is not exclusive either. The arguments presented by the scholars and the way I read them make my argument and the version of European Islam advanced here inclusive of diverse voices, which may not be represented directly but can still find their ideas hereby expressed and represented.

The previous five criteria of selection seem to exclude five main categories of Islamic voices from the question of Islam and Muslims in Europe. The objections to such a methodological exclusion may be expressed as follows: (1) the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR) is referred to only in passing;
(2) the Shiʿa voice, the second major sect of Islam after the Sunnis, is not referred to at all in “this European Islam”; (3) the traditionalist non-violent salafis, as well as their small faction that call for violence or the establishment/restoration of the “Islamic state” or the “Caliphate” are also not examined here, as if there were no problem with their interpretation of Islam in Europe and outside it; (4) in terms of gender representation, women seem absent; the studied scholars are all males; (5) voices from other geographical parts of Western Europe are not represented, either. Below I respond to each of these five objections.

First, I do not make much reference to the ECFR, which was established in Dublin in 1997 and is headed by the “global Mufti” Yusuf al-Qaradawi, primarily because it is an institution composed of a board of scholars who have different approaches to Islam, and Islam in Europe, and hence a variety of views is bound to be found within it. This is the case particularly because a lot of the scholarly committee members are not European, or based in Europe, which leads European Muslim scholars like Ramadan and Oubrou to consider the Council more Arab than European. Moreover, though it publishes various texts on Muslim codes of conduct, ethics, etc., the Council has mainly remained tied to issuing fatwas (non-binding legal opinions) instead of working out a thoroughly new reconsideration of the traditional sources in light of the European context. Some of its published works call for new “civilizational fatwa” paradigm (iftāʿ hadārī), based on the modern geographical and political rapproachment beyond the classical divisions of the abodes, and encourage Muslims to undertake full and active participation in their European countries of residence and citizenship. Most of these works, besides the specific themes they tackle, also keep the tone of daʿwa/proselytization alive, but they stress that it should be peaceful, based on Muslims ethical behavior, and within what the laws permit in Europe.

Therefore, in my reading of the literature of the ECFR, I see that though it tries to be more receptive and positively responsive to the problems Muslims face in (Western) Europe, it still considers them a minority that has to protect itself from melting into the mainstream society which is generally not religious, or is religiously different. The ECFR indirectly claims authority over the Muslims of Europe, and tries to keep them within the classical jurisprudential premises of fiqh al-aqalliyyāt (fiqh for the minorities); this fiqh does not speak of a “European Islam,” nor does it defend it as a nomenclature or as a concept. For this reason the texts of fiqh al-aqalliyyāt do not fit into this study.

Second, with regard to the Shiʿa, three particular points can be advanced here. One, the Shiʿa are a minority within a minority in Europe, reflecting their status within the Islamic-majority societies and the faith as a whole. Most of the Muslims in Western Europe are of Sunni origin, having migrated from North Africa, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Indian subcontinent; this “Sunni migration” reflects, among other things, the situation of the countries of origin post-World War II, a situation of postcoloniality and economic need, which led flows of people to migrate to Europe for economic reasons. Two, the
Shi’a have their own council in Western Europe, founded in 1993 in London as Majlis-e-Ulama and later enlarged to become Majlis-e-Ulama-e-Shia Europe. Third, the young Shi’a diaspora of Iranian descent tend to be less religious or not religious when they are outside their country of origin, often as a reaction to the enforced religiosity they have faced in the Islamic Republic of Iran since the 1979 revolution. Their religious presence in Europe ranges from silence to invisibility, as a form of “non-islamiosity.” However, philosophers and scholars of religion among the Iranian Shi’a diaspora are mostly visible and active in North America. Three, these factors may explain why the majority of scholars of Islam in Europe are of Sunni and of Arab origins, although, as will be seen in the following chapters, the scholars studied here try to overcome sectarian distinctions by focusing on the essentials of religion.

Third, salafis generally do not claim that there are various Islams – European, Arab, Asian, etc. Politically, and theologically, they do not believe in such divisions and nomenclature. They do not claim or defend the idea of European Islam. They practice Islam in Europe, and broadly think of themselves as “muhajirun” (migrants to un-Islamic lands); they live Islam as they perceive it, and hope to help others convert, or at least to guide their “deviant” co-religionists to their version of Islam. Moreover, many of their ideas are indirectly expressed, and critiqued, by the studied scholars; Tibi for instance devotes a lot of space to debunking all forms of salafism, while Ramadan critiques their literalist interpretations of the Qur’an and the Sunna.

Fourth, the same applies to the question of gender representation, which this study may appear to have missed; however, the scholars presented here defend gender equality. There are ample examples of Muslim female activists, and recently also some female religious leaders, in Europe, but they have not written texts on Islam in Europe to engage with for the purposes of this work. Jocelyne Cesari underlines this “weak” presence of Muslim female scholarship in Europe, compared with its major visibility in the US, where Muslims in general, and women in this case, represent an elite category of Muslim migrants; Cesari names Asma Barlas, Amina Wadud, and Kecia Ali as examples of Muslim reformist voices in the US.

Fifth, as to whether geographical representation is considered in the selection made in this study, it should be borne in mind that this is neither sociological nor anthropological fieldwork; it is theoretical and thus able to be expanded to various secular-liberal societies of Western Europe, despite the variety of secularism in each state. As to the fact that France dominates the debate, and its internal controversies on the topic are also discussed throughout the “West,” that is explained by the fact that the lines between the Church and the state have a special history and laws, and have become an iconic representation of “radical secularism” (French laïcité), to use Tariq Modood’s description. Besides, the visible size of the Muslim population in the country (unofficially estimated to be about five million) plays a role in magnifying the intensity of the “Muslim question.”
**Introduction**

**Book content**

Part I of this book is synthetically descriptive. It introduces four projects of European Islam. Chapter 1 is devoted to Bassam Tibi and his political justifications for Euro-Islam. Tibi, now a retired political scientist, is an expert in international relations (IR), religious fundamentalism, and the Middle East. He claims to be the first to use the term “Euro-Islam,” at a conference in Paris in 1992. His reform agenda of “cultural modernity” and its version of Euro-Islam answers more the political needs than any call for in-depth theological justifications for the debate of Islam in Europe. But since theological transformations are often pushed for by socio-political factors, Tibi’s voice remains important in the field. His ideas, in the end, are defended by the three other scholars, too, but the way they do so is significantly different. At a certain stage in this work, Tibi’s approach is found to be immersed in what I refer to as “classical dichotomous thought” that is radically secular.

Chapter 2 is devoted to Tariq Ramadan, who fills in the gap Tibi leaves “unfilled” concerning the theological input for European Islam. Ramadan pursued a literary-philosophic education in his early university studies before he moved to work on Islamic jurisprudence, which has become his major field of expertise, and based on which he calls for “radical reform.” He is a prolific writer, engaged scholar, worldwide lecturer, public intellectual, and theologian. He is an icon for European Islam, and for the European Muslim youth. Among the four studied scholars, Ramadan is the most visible and international. He tries to find a middle way in which politics and theology work together for social justice and political stability, based on ethics that feed both. He makes Islam accommodative of the political context in which it grows. His theology is political in the sense that it keeps abreast of human developments, without breaking with the divine. At the same time, his political attitudes are theological, in the sense that they find their justifications, and at times refutations, in the theological. This chapter distinguishes between “early Ramadan,” who is more conservative and in conflict with the “godless” Europe, and “late Ramadan,” who reconciles faith and modernity through his version of European Islam and call for a “radical reform agenda” that stresses ethics and considers the universe another Book of Revelation, equal to the written Book of Revelation, the Qur’an.

Chapter 3 introduces Tareq Oubrou’s legal and theological project. Oubrou was born in Morocco, and went to France for higher education in biology, to end up being a preacher and later on the director and imam of the Bordeaux Grand Mosque and president of the Association of the Imams of France. He is a self-made theologian and public intellectual. Oubrou’s philosophy of religion tries to re-ground Islamic faith in a secular world where man’s anthropological life is different from the classical religious life in which the first manifestations of shari’a were experienced during the Prophetic era. He proposes the secularization of Islamic theology through the apparatuses of “geotheology,” and “shari’a of the minority.”
Chapter 4 introduces Abdennour Bidar, a young French philosopher, who completes the circle of the studied scholars from a different perspective. Immersed in Western philosophy, Bidar opens out theosophically to the Islamic tradition. Most important in his contribution to European Islam are his concepts of “self Islam,” “Islamic existentialism,” the “immortality of man,” and the “overcoming of religion.” Bidar’s approach stands among the most critical, innovative, and challenging in the emerging European Islamic thought. His approach merges the Sufi tradition and the philosophic one, and implicitly answers some of the controversial political questions about religion in the public sphere in light of modernity’s three principles – liberty, equality, and fraternity – which he sacralizes. He considers modernity a moment willed by the divine.

As to Part II of this book, it evaluates the idea of European Islam described in Part I, based on three major philosophical frameworks, two mostly theological and the other mostly political, which the remaining three/four chapters synthetically introduce and critically engage with. While the previous part can be read in any order, since each chapter is independent from the others, the chapters of Part II are interconnected and replete with new concepts that build on each other, and it is advisable to read it in the order in which it is written.

Chapter 5 centralizes the question of ethics that the four previous chapters underline, and puts it in communication with the Islamic intellectual tradition, past and present. For this reason, brief reference is made to three scholarly traditions in Islamic thought: (1) the medieval Mu’tazila; (2) the “early reformists,” known as modernists, of the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century; and (3) the “late reformists” or contemporaries. By highlighting the sources and interpretations of ethics, the chapter brings to the fore the question of the ontological and epistemological bond that characterizes Islamic thought in general, as a way of examining whether this bond is the same, or whether it has experienced some change or reinterpretation within European Islamic thought, as studied here. An evaluative framework will be adopted to facilitate such an understanding, namely that of the British scholar of Islamic philosophy and ethics George Hourani (d. 1984) and his approach to reading ethics in Islamic scholarship. The chapter finally argues that there is a mild ontological revolution and an epistemological awakening that European Islam is launching through the Muslim Prometheus imagery – following in the path of earlier attempts in Islamic scholarship. This argument is presented as follows: European Islam (1) “rationalizes ethics,” makes the individual and the community of believers as the guardians of the Qur’anic moral cosmology, and in so doing it is (2) “revisionist-reformist,” and (3) “traditional-modern.” European Islam’s claims to defend human agency, the faculty of reason, and endorsement of the values of modernity in light of religious ethics, without denial of the divine, are the aspects that make it revisionist or traditional, and thus continuous with previous debates in Islamic scholarship.

Chapter 6 introduces the framework of the Moroccan philosopher Taha Abderrahmane (b. 1944) for further analysis of European Islamic thought from
Introduction

within the same tradition. The chapter explains further why I use his and not some other framework; it is sufficient to say here that his project is both “unique” compared with other reformist projects, and “comprehensive” of the various aspects that European Islamic thought tackles; there is not such a coherent ethical theory within contemporary Islamic scholarship that could have answered these two major criteria. Briefly here, Abderrahmane proposes what he calls the “trusteeship paradigm” as an ethical framework for renewal of Islamic thought. In this chapter, I use what he refers to as “three innovative plans” for renewing the understanding of the Qur’anic message of ethics in modern times: the “innovative humanization plan,” the “innovative rationalization plan,” and the “innovative historicization plan.” These plans allow for the birth of “spiritual modernity.”

These three levels of analysis and potential innovation inspired the development of a triadic axis I use in this work to further deconstruct European Islam for a better understanding of its intellectual orientation and proposals. This triadic axis contains the comprehensiveness of a world religion such as Islam; it is as follows: (1) world axis, (2) social axis, and (3) individual axis. That is, based on these axes, we will be able to understand how European Muslim scholars interpret Islam to have a comprehensive view that gives a contextual, i.e. European, meaning to the world, society, and the individual. The definition given to European Islam at the beginning of this Introduction is the result of the application of this analytical framework, and constitutes the gist of this work.

Chapter 7 consolidates this book’s analysis of European Islam as a modern idea by integrating a second ethical framework of Taha Abderrahmane. This framework is that of the “spirit of modernity,” or what he interchangeably refers to as “spiritual modernity” and “Islamic modernity.” This second framework is very relevant to our purposes because it critiques the Eurocentric version of modernity, and especially its disregard for the role religious ethics can play; that is why Abderrahmane builds a canon of concepts that reflect his overall vision of the “trusteeship paradigm” and its permeation of various levels of human relations with each other and the universe, instead of the binary oppositions that classical Euro-liberalism and secularism are founded on. This book uses Abderrahmane’s three major concepts of modernity (i.e. the principles of majority, autonomy, and creativity, besides other derivative pillars) in order to examine the ethical elan that European Islamic thought centralizes. A major normative exercise takes place in this chapter, because it not only introduces various new concepts, but also goes back to using the triadic axes so as to always facilitate the understanding of the theoretical advances European Islam makes. This way, links are always made and further consolidated with the previous chapters.

Chapter 8 is a “thought experiment” for various reasons that will be explained in due course. Here, it is enough to say that a different philosophical framework is adopted in order to critically engage with the political ideas of European Islam. This is the framework of “political liberalism,” and most particularly the “idea of overlapping consensus,” as developed by the American philosopher John Rawls (d. 2002). I say this chapter is a “thought experiment”
first because it uses a framework that revisits the meaning of liberalism in the “Western” tradition, and opens it up to the reality of the multicultural fact that characterizes liberal societies such as those of Europe; this fact is mostly about the resurgence of religion in the public sphere, and how to deal with it without asking religious doctrines to change their dogmas; so, this chapter tries to apply aspects of one of the most discussed liberal theories to the “Muslim question” as studied and conceptualized here. This chapter is, second, a “thought experiment” because it is based on a number of “founded assumptions,” a major one of which is that European Islam is considered here a comprehensive theological theory of the good, out of which the reasonable European Muslim can contribute to debates in the public sphere for the preservation of the liberal “well-ordered society.” The second major assumption is that European Islam seeks and defends social justice, which is originally a classical “Islamic” value that correlates with the idea of justice in Rawls’ work. This chapter reads European Islam as a “reasonable comprehensive doctrine” that can retain its version of the good, which may be different from majority-society views, and can at the same time equally solidify “stability” in the plural liberal society, without having to negate its theological/doctrinal worldview. A politically liberal society in the Rawlsian sense allows “reasonable” comprehensive doctrines to co-exist, without converting them to one version of the good, i.e. to classical liberalism of the Enlightenment that holds one version of the good. The book concludes by reflecting on the potential influence “this” European Islam can have on Arab Islam, in light of the various levels of affinity Europe and the Arab world have, one of which is the migration of religious ideas around the Mediterranean through human migration flows, and the confusions that this could bring about for both worlds.

Notes

3 Watt uses the biological terms “endosoma” and “ectosoma” to respectively refer to the nucleus or the internal organism of religion, and to its outer or external aspects and factors that impact its growth, expansion, and various interpretations and appropriations. William Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Revelation in the Modern World* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969), 8–11.
5 Bauer says that in his research over the years, he did not come across the execution of the penal code (*ḥudūd*) in Islamic history except for the few cases during the first 30 years of governance of the Prophet and the early caliphs, and one case in the seventeenth century in the Ottoman Empire. Thomas Bauer, *faqāfat al-iltibās: nahwa tārīhin āhar lil-islām* [The Culture of Ambiguity: An Alternative History of Islam] (Beirut and Baghdad: manshūrāt al-ǧamal, 2017), 324; the book is not translated yet into English; it first appeared in German as *Die Kultur der Ambiguität: Eine andere Geschichte des Islams* (Berlin: Insel Verlag GmbH, 2011).
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18 Overall, I take theology to mean the “contemplation and study of religion” (*tadabbur* in Arabic) in both physical and metaphysical matters, and politics to mean the “management of world affairs” (*tadbīr*); Taha Abderrahmane, *rūḥu addīn [The Spirit of Religion]* (Beirut and Casablanca: al-markaz al-ḥaqīqī al-‘arabī, 2012), 509.

19 A distinction can be advanced and developed, which I do not intend to pursue now; it may go as follows: European Islam may be more sociologically, anthropologically, and/or politically based; it feeds on lived Islam as well as the policies European states adopt to cater to Muslims’ needs. As to European Islamic thought, it is theoretically oriented; it bases its theoretical claims on the Islamic tradition and on the realities on the European soil in different fields, like philosophy, the arts, literature, music, sports, business and finance, medicine, environment, space.
“Thick shari’a” is the entire scope of religious creed, worship, rituals, and laws, whereas “thin shari’a” refers more to the message’s spirit and principles and not to the exact laws prescribed in the context of seventh-century Arabia. See Jan-Erik Lane and Hamadi Redissi, *Religion and Politics: Islam and Muslim Civilization* (Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 277–283. Thick and thin concepts in ethics were first coined by the British moral philosopher Bernard Williams (d. 2003).


Briefly here, by “early reformists” I mean the avant-gardists of renewal as well as liberation movements who were working within the framework of a classical shari’a paradigm, including its legal prescriptions, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By “late reformists” or “contemporaries” I mean the 1960s generation onwards; these reformists go beyond the classical shari’a paradigm by integrating modern methodologies from disciplines like philosophy, theology, literary criticism, historicism, history of ideas, political sociology, sociology, and anthropology in their study and revision of the Islamic tradition in general and the scriptures in particular (i.e. Qur’an and Sunna). This generation of scholars expands the meaning of shari’a beyond legal prescriptions and fiqh, and opens new pathways in Islamic thought which are more critical, progressive, and open. For more, see: Mohammed Hashas, “On the Idea of European Islam: Voices of Perpetual Modernity,” PhD Diss. (LUISS Guido Carli University in Rome, 2013), 330–398.


Phikhu Parekh, “European Liberalism and the Muslim Question,” ISIM Paper, no. 9 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008): 5–37; Peter O’Brien argues that the “Muslim question” – like the “Jewish question” before it – is fundamentally a European problem that goes back to the nineteenth century: it is European centrist understandings of liberalism, nationalism, and now postmodernism that make Islam and Muslims appear the problem; he sees that the problem is within the same Western civilization, and not with Islam; *The Muslim Question in Europe*. 
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33 Cesari, When Islam and Democracy Meet, part III.

34 A recent historical work in this direction is that of Muhammad Mojlum Khan, Great Muslims of the West: Makers of Western Islam (Markfield, LE: Kube Publishing Ltd, 2017). Mojlum Khan collects a list of important Muslim caliphs, philosophers, scientists, artists, and poets, males and females, that contributed to the flourishing of “Western Islam” and Western Islamic culture at the time. Routledge Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies Series produced a four-volume set on a variety of themes and topics related to Islam in the “modern” West: David Westerlund and Ingvar Svanberg, eds., Islam in the West, 4 vols. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).

35 In this work, I use both “the Islamic world” and the “Muslim world” interchangeably, though I differentiate between the two—a differentiation I could not introduce in this book. In the Arabic language, it should be the “Islamic world” because the adjective “Muslim” refers to (the faith of) human beings, and “Islamic” to the things that these human beings make or shape. Moreover, and seeing that the current “Islamic world” is not dominantly governed by “Islamic law,” nor was it fully so before, though it may be governed by the “Islamic worldview” in general, including customary laws, etc., it may be more correct to use “Islamic world” to refer to pre-modern, pre-Western modern times, say before 1798 (the year of the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt and the birth of “modern” ideas in the classical “Islamic world”) or at least to the world before 1924 (the date of the end of the Islamic Ottoman Caliphate) and the birth of nation states in most of the vast “Islamic world.” The “Islamic world” post-1924, and especially post-World War II, is politically different and divided, and it is intellectually erroneous to consider it a homogeneous world. Geographies and regional blocs or political unions are more accurate now as the basis for naming than religious labels that reflect “Western” power balance and its intellectual tutelage.
For a chronological genealogy of the idea of the “Islamic or Muslim World” see the recent work of Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).


39 Ibid., 38. In an interview in 2012, after the so-called Arab Spring protests, Bernard Lewis expressed a somewhat changed perspective, and a possible rapprochement between the two civilizations of “Christendom” and “Islamdom”:

There is still a confrontation, there is no doubt about that. But I think confronted with the modern world or with the rest of the world, I think people are becoming aware that the Western and Islamic civilizations have more in common than apart. It was a German scholar, C.H. Becker, who said a long time ago that the real dividing line is not between Islam and Christendom; it’s the dividing line East of Islam, between the Islamic and Christian worlds together on the one hand and the rest of the world on the other. I think there is a lot of truth in that.


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_Faces of Islam: Perspectives on a Resurgent Civilization_ (Gainesville: Florida University Press, 2000), part IV.

47 There is no need to state that Orientalism here is meant in its Saidian sense, i.e. the body of knowledge produced by the “West” about especially the Arab-Islamic East from a centrist, hegemonic, and biased angle; Edward Said, _Orientalism_ (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).


49 Ibid., 159.

50 Ibid.


54 Over the last seven years, I have taken part in a number of workshops and conferences around Western Europe, and I have noticed that there is a growing tendency among a number of scholars to agree on “finishing” with studying Islam as a security issue/threat for Europe, and to distance themselves from the political and media rhetoric. Birgitte Schepelern Johansen and Riem Spielhaus found out that polling of Muslims in Europe is often flawed methodologically; among the findings of their work, which studies a number of polls produced in various European countries, are the following: the manner in which questions are posed by the pollers (sociologists) focuses on particular “controversial” issues of religious practices (like violence, terrorism, and polygamy); sometimes the informants are not given choices in answering questions, and are bound to answer “yes” or “no” though the question may have other answer options; some confusion of religious sects and names is detected, which shows lack of knowledge on the religion that is being investigated; moral issues of religion are hardly investigated; and focus is put on the issues that are politically and “mediatically” controversial; Brigitte S. Johansen and Riem Spielhaus, “Counting Deviance: Revisiting a Decade’s Production of Surveys among Muslims in Western Europe,” _Journal of Muslims in Europe_, vol. 1, no. 1 (2012): 81–112. On the media representation of Muslims in Europe, see for example Wasif Shadid and Pieter S. van Koningsveld, “The Negative Image of Islam and Muslims in the West: Causes and Solutions,” in Shadid and van Koningsveld, eds., _Religious Freedom and the Neutrality of the State: The Position of Islam in the European Union_ (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 174–196; for a specific country sample, see Andreas Zick and Jörg Heeren, “Muslims in the European Mediaspace” (London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, German Report, 2011), www.strategicedialogue.org/Muslim_Media_Report_-_German_Academic2.pdf.


A fundamentalist (usūlī in Arabic) is classically one who goes back to or refers to the fundamental sources of the tradition (Qur’an, Sunna, and consensus) and to the Salaf, the companions of the Prophet and their successors. Now, “fundamentalist” is often used as an equivalent to “radical” and/or “violent extremist.”


Roy, Globalized Islam, 335–337.

Ibid., 31.

Ibid., 30–31.

He says: “Theological aggiornamento is not a prerequisite for the emergence of a liberal Islam in practice but will probably be able to give it theological legitimacy after the fact.” Secularism Confronts Islam (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 98–99. This is reiterated in a recent article, where Roy says that the Muslims’ new forms of religiosity “will soon [sic] or later produce their own theological updating.” In “Secularism and Islam: The Theological Predicament,” International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs, vol. 48, no. 1 (2013): 18.


Jytte Klausen conducted 300 interviews with Muslim association leaders, politicians, businessmen, and intellectuals in seven European countries (Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Great Britain, France, and Germany) between 2003 and 2005, and arrived at the conclusion that there is an emerging European Islam. In her data analysis, and in a comment on Roy, she sociologically states what I am arguing for in this work theoretically. She says

I have more fundamental disagreements with Roy. He sees no evidence of any serious rethinking of religious dogma among European Muslims. I am convinced, on the contrary, that a “European Islam” is emerging upon a new epistemology of faith and a new hermeneutics of textual interpretation.


For example, in La Construction de l’islam européen: approche socio-anthropologique [The Construction of European Islam: A Socio-Anthropological Approach] (Paris and Montreal: L’Harmattan, 1996), Felice Dassetto recognizes a “growing new Islamic rhetoric” – meaning a religious discourse that tackles theological matters – which makes of Western Europe “a land of Islam.” In Discours musulmans contemporains [Contemporary Muslim Discourses] (Louvain-la-Neuve: Éditions Académia, 2011), he includes Europe as a field which is experiencing diverse Islamic intellectual dynamisms. Jørgen S. Nielsen is an important figure amid a network of scholars on Muslims in Europe who has edited a journal and a yearbook on Muslims in Europe since 2009; e.g. Oliver Scharbrodt, Samim Akgonul, Ahmet Alibasic, Jørgen S. Nielsen, and Egduunas Raciūs, eds., Yearbook of Muslims in Europe, vol. 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2017). Overall, this research network and its findings
are in line with the idea that there is a European Islam that expresses itself differently, as socio-anthropological and institutional data shows in the various issues and editions of the journal and yearbook. See also Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy Meet*, op. cit.; Cesari, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).


74 Ibid., xi–xiv.
76 By “theosophic approach” I mean “theological philosophy” or “rational theology,” and not only the Eastern and Islamic mystic tradition. I clarify my note when introducing the work of Bidar.
77 The terms are types of “justification” that a particular doctrine is compatible with the concept of the political. Reasoning from a “declaration” position is a view conveyed by a believer, from within; that is, he belongs to this doctrine, as is the case with a Muslim believer or scholar who gives justifications for the compatibility of his religion with the political concept of “justice as fairness.” As to reasoning from “conjecture,” it is carried out from outside, by someone not believing in or a member of this doctrine, as is the case with a non-Muslim scholar who presents Islam as compatible with the concept. John Rawls, “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,” *University of Chicago Law Review*, vol. 64, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 765–807.
78 This form of inquisition that the school went through was a reaction, a result, since the political regime aimed at establishing the Mu'tazila tenets, especially the idea of the “createdness of the Qur’an,” by force, and after about three decades, the dominant Ash'ari school came back and retaliated by fully marginalizing it. Since then, the Ash'aria, which adopts Divine Command Theory in approaching reason and revelation,
has dominated the Islamic thought and political regimes that govern most Muslim-majority countries. This may be the reason that majority Muslim scholars have ever since avoided affiliating themselves to the rationalist Mu'tazila for fear of being called “apostates” or “deviants.” However, resort to this rational tradition has attracted scholarly attention for the last two centuries of search for reform and change.

There is a tendency to see kalam differently from Christian theology; the latter deals mainly with the attributes of God and salvation, and the former, kalam, includes both theological and philosophical debates; it does not deal only with issues of divinity and salvation, it also deals with secular issues that general (secular) philosophy deals with. That is, the *mutakallimin*, practitioners of kalam, were both theologians and philosophers. When I say “Islamic theology,” then, I mean kalam, with its rational tradition. With this definition I follow the views of George Hourani’s *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), Majid Fakhry’s *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), and Mariam Al-Attar’s *Islamic Ethics: Divine Command Theory in Arabo-Islamic Thought* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2010). More on kalam in Chapter 5.

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81 In 2011, for example, the 38 members of the scholarly committee were from the following countries: Qatar, Lebanon, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Mauritania, Egypt, Kuwait, UAE, Pakistan, Germany, Norway, Belgium, UK, Ireland, France, Spain, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Switzerland, Netherlands, USA, and Canada. The European Council for Fatwa and Research, December 2017, www.e-cfr.org/en.


83 The issuing of fatwas is done in a scholarly manner; scholars study the issues raised by ordinary Muslims, in light of the traditional sources, and in consultation with European Muslim experts in the field concerned, e.g. health, economy, family issues. In one case of a woman who converted to Islam, but whose husband remained non-Muslim, and the question of whether she should stay with him or ask for divorce, the Council discussed the case for two years, and at the end it issued a fatwa allowing the woman concerned to stay with her non-Muslim husband to protect the family from division. Alexandro Caeiro, “Transnational Ulama, European Fatwas, and Islamic Authority,” in Martin van Bruinessen and Stefano Allievi, eds., *Producing Islamic Knowledge: Transmission and Dissemination in Western Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 121–141.


87 Jasser Auda, trained in al-Azhar and now based mostly between Europe and Canada, is charting a different approach compared with his colleagues in the ECFR; his latest works demonstrate a closer consideration of Europe as an Islamic land, and not as a land of minority presence, though he does not use terms like “European Islam”: Jasser Auda, *Maqasid al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach* (Herndon, VI, and London: IIIT, 2016); Jasser Auda, ed., *Rethinking Islamic Law for*
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88 Majlis-e-Ulama-e-Shia (Europe), https://majlis.org.uk; the Turkish/Anatolian Alevi, who are of Shi’ite origin, are religious, and have found ways to receive recognition in Germany where they make up a large community; Krizstina Kehl-Bordogi, “Alevi in Germany On the Way to Public Recognition?” ISIM Newsletter, 8/01, (n.d.), 9, https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/17497/ISIM_8_Alevis_in_Germany_On_the_Way_to_Public_Recognition.pdf?sequence=1. The work of the top Iraqi Shi’ite cleric Marje Ayyatollah Ali al-Hussaini al-Sistani (b. 1930) has a wide circulation among some Shi’a Muslims in the West, which reflects the hierarchy of religious authority in the Shi’a tradition, which the Sunnis do not have; he urges them to obey the laws of the countries they reside in: A Code of Conduct for Muslims in the West (n.p.: Freebooks, 2012). Part I of the book focuses on migration (hijra) to non-Islamic lands.


90 These scholars do not necessarily speak as Shi’a religious scholars, but as scholars of Islam (with a Shi’a background); prominent names include: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Omid Safi, Hamid Dabashi, Ziba Mir-Hosseini (between the UK and US), Nader Hashemi, Reza Aslan, Abdolkarim Soroush, and Mohsen Kadivar; the last two are in (self-)exile, for their critique of the regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran.


92 For example, the academic work of the Pakistani-British scholar Mona Siddiqui does not fit the theme of this work; her biography, however, may be part of a different genre of study of texts written by European Muslims; My Way: A Muslim Woman’s Journey (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015). Other female activists and leaders of mosque congregations in Europe, like Halima Krausen in Germany and Sherin Khankan in Denmark, have not yet left us relevant and abundant texts to study.

93 Cesari, When Islam and Democracy Meet, 173.


References


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Conclusion


