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Yusuf al-Qaradawi is arguably the most prominent living Sunni-Islamic scholar. As the author of over 120 monographs, spiritus rector of the Islamic web-portal IslamOnline.net, and regular guest on al-Jazeera, the Egyptian born cleric is a point of reference not only among Muslims in the Middle East, but among European Muslims as well. The guidance of the 83-year-old „global Mufti“ is sought in Cairo, Cape Town and Hamburg. Over the last two decades, the Azhar-educated scholar has emerged as a symbol for the resurgence of Islam in private and public life; a resurgence that, as Qaradawi gladly notes, „did not stop at the boundaries of the Islamic world, but indeed reached all lands which are considered home to Islamic communities and minorities.“

The volume edited by Bettina Gräf and Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen provides the first detailed discussion of Qaradawi's role as a well-connected Islamist scholar and activist. In the light of his close biographical ties to the Muslim Brotherhood and his explicit support for suicide attacks in Israel, he is often considered by Western observers as one of the most prominent representatives of militant Islam. Challenging this unambiguous identification of Qaradawi with radical Islamist currents, the editors offer an analysis of Qaradawi's teaching, and allow situating him in the broader context of contemporary Islamic thought.

The editors identify four biographical components that have contributed to Qaradawi's global prominence both as a scholar and activist: (1.) While his education at al-Azhar University fostered his widely acknowledged reputation as a highly learned 'alim, (2.) his long-standing involvement in the Muslim Brotherhood added to his credentials as a defender of the umma. Despite his close ties to the Islamist movement, he preserved his rep-

utation as an independent voice within an increasingly diversified Islamist spectrum.

(3.) Although Qaradawi had started his religious career in Egypt, it was following his emigration to Qatar in 1961 that he found a basis for his multifaceted activities, profiting from his contacts to the Emir of Qatar and his role in the establishment of local educational and religious institutions. (4.) In Qatar he gained prominence as the host of religious TV programs, and actively sought to establish media outlets to provide Islamic guidance to a global audience.

In his contribution on Qaradawi's relationship to al-Azhar, Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen highlights Qaradawi's understanding of the ulama, the Islamic scholars, and the role he ascribes to them. In contrast to both modernist and Salafi currents that are focusing on the scriptures to seek answers for contemporary life, Qaradawi insists on the persisting importance of scholarly guidance that is built on a profound knowledge of Islamic scholarly traditions. As a graduate of al-Azhar he defines the role of the ulama as „inheritors of the prophets, the hamzat al-wasl (link) between heaven and earth“ (p. 41). It is in this spirit of „wise leadership“ that Qaradawi aims at reestablishing the standing of the ulama as religious authorities, serving as „guardians of change“. In this context, Skovgaard-Petersen also points to Qaradawi's ambiguous understanding of scholarship. While he calls for educational reform and ijtihad, „sceptical questioning of established knowledge and dogma [...] is clearly an evil to be avoided“ (p. 43). Not critical debate and academic knowledge, but unambiguous guidance of the community and self-conscious da'wa, propagation of Islam, are thus the tasks of Islamic scholars.

Husam Tammam's chapter on Qaradawi's relationship to the Muslim Brotherhood touches on another central aspect of Qaradawi's biography. Tammam provides an interesting insider account of Qaradawi's standing with the movement; focusing on Qaradawi's „unique relationship“ with the Brotherhood, Tammam traces his continued impact within the organization. Although Qaradawi played an active role in the internal struggles confronting the supporters of Hassan al-Banna, Hassan al-Hudaybi and Sayyid

Qutb, his persisting reputation amongst the members of the Brotherhood is not based on membership and function. Instead, it is Qaradawi's reputation as a preacher and teacher that gained him influence among the adherents of the movement. Despite such prominence, Qaradawi declined twice – in 1976 and 2002 – the position as the Supreme Guide of the organization. From his point of view, such function within the Brotherhood only risked limiting his impact in a broader Muslim public; already in the 1970s, Qaradawi had turned into „an asset for the whole of the umma“ (p. 72f.).

The characteristics of Qaradawi's thought and activities are at the center of the remaining chapters of the volume. Qaradawi's attempt to establish himself as an authoritative religious reference (*marji'iyya*) is described by Motaz al-Khateeb, who highlights the informal basis of this standing. While the concept of *marji'iyya* is primarily known from Shia Islam where it is closely tied to a formalized clerical structure, Sunni Muslims voluntarily opted for Qaradawi „as there is nothing in Sunni Islamic belief that obliges them to choose Qaradawi rather than someone else“ (p. 87). Khateeb points to various intellectual aspects in Qaradawi's conceptualization of *fiqh* that facilitated such choice. Among these is Qaradawi's insistence on a „comprehensive character“ of Islam (*shumuliyya al-islam*); Islam is meant to provide guidance in all aspects of life. Related to this is Qaradawi's awareness for social issues and his declared intention to offer „facilitation and relief“ – rather than hardship and constraint – through an interpretation of Islamic traditions. His goal, Khateeb argues, is thus part of efforts by contemporary scholars to „overcome obstacles that appeared to prevent contemporary Islam from responding to the necessities of modern civilisation“ (p. 97).

It is in this context that Ehab Galal's analysis of Qaradawi's media ventures is particularly interesting. Insisting on a description of Qaradawi's TV programs as „Islamic“, rather than as „religious“, Qaradawi aims at fostering a comprehensive „way of life“. Not counseling of different alternatives, but unambiguous guidance is the aim of his outreach to the umma.

The concept of *wasatiyya*, which is meant to reflect „centrist“ or „moderate“ positions in Islamic debates, is an additional feature that contributes to Qaradawi's popularity. Bettina Gräf shows that such insistence on centrism echoes in several aspects of Qaradawi's teaching. On a jurisprudential level, centrism opposes both too rigid and too liberal interpretations of traditions; on a political level, the claim of centrism allows distinguishing Qaradawi's thoughts from secular currents on the one hand, and militant Islamist currents on the other. While other Islamic thinkers might have used the term before him, Gräf argues that it was Qaradawi who had turned the claim of *wasatiyya* into a „trademark of a positively viewed Muslim identity“ (p. 228).

Qaradawi's self-positioning as representing the mainstream of the umma is also highlighted in a short chapter by Armando Salvatore. Focusing on Qaradawi's use of *maslaha* („public welfare“) as a concept to open Islamic scholarly debates for social and political activism, Salvatore argues that this concept allows „for devising solutions to new, and in this sense modern, social problems“ (p. 241). Instead of engaging either in abstract scholarly legal debates or in revolutionary militancy, Islamic scholars are thus called on to provide concrete contributions to the common good.

Adding to these general insights into Qaradawi's thought, Barbara Freyer Stowasser provides a detailed case study of Qaradawi's positions on women. It is in this case study that the limits of Qaradawi's self-described search for „moderation“ become most visible. Stowasser highlights the evolution of Qaradawi's positions and his explicit disaccord with many a traditionalist restriction imposed on women; yet, she identifies basic premises in Qaradawi's reasoning that prevent any major transgression from traditional scholarship on women in Islam. While Qaradawi calls for a historical reading of some traditions – for instance those that could be read as denying women any role in public life –, he fails to accept equality of the sexes and equal rights. The „moderation“ of Qaradawi's positions on women's rights thus does not reflect a search for justice, but a pragmatist reading of the traditions in the

interest of the umma. It is, as Stowasser argues, „the collective interest that drives measures of social reform for the individual, not the other way around“ (p. 207).

With regard to the increasing scholarly attention to the evolution of Islam in Europe, the contribution by Alexandre Caeiro and Mahmoud al-Saify offers an important additional perspective. Focusing on Qaradawi's persisting influence among Muslims in Europe on the one hand, and on his conceptualization of Islam in Europe on the other, Caeiro and Saify shed light on the continuing importance of the ulama as religious authorities among European Muslims. While acknowledging the importance of processes of individualization and fragmentation in the context of European societies, they point to the influence played by organizations such as the European Council for Fatwa and Research – an organization that is presided by Qaradawi. Related to this is the popularity of books like *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam* (1960), Qaradawi's first and often translated book providing guidance in daily life.

In this context again, the ambiguity of Qaradawi's position is evident. While his explicit interest in fiqh al-aqalliyyat (Fiqh of Minorities) has echoed in pragmatic solutions to some problems faced by Muslim in non-Islamic societies, in others he remained steadfast in his rejection of change and adaptation. Qaradawi's pragmatism and his interest in ‚easing‘ conflicts, with which Muslims in Europe are confronted, are limited by the absolute priority of the umma.

The interest of this volume lies in its contextualized analysis of a prominent Islamic scholar, whose influence is relevant not only in Islamic countries, but in Europe as well. Yet, it is not only Qaradawi's global impact that renders this case study important; no less relevant is the analysis of Qaradawi's intellectual approach for an understanding of contemporary developments within Islamist thought. Breaking with rejectionist stances of traditionalist and Salafi currents with regard to relations to Europe, Qaradawi's ambiguous dealing with European societies offers telling insights into the potentials and limits of Islamist thought. No less revealing is Qaradawi's „moderate“ approach to poli-

tics and social change, reflecting a shift of emphasis „from ‚political Islam‘ to ‚public Islam‘, from a discourse focused on issues of rulers' legitimacy to practical considerations of public welfare and social justice“ (Salvatore, p. 245). The contributions to this volume allow making sense of the ambivalences of this reasoning, pointing to similarities and differences to other Islamist currents that in previous dealings with Qaradawi had often been missed.

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