Three theological attempts to relate Islam to modernity

Comparing the views of Soroush, Ramadan and An-Na'im

Thesis presented to:
Dr. N. Landman and
Prof. Dr. M.M. van Bruinessen
Department of Theology
Faculty of Humanities
Utrecht University

For completion of the Research Master:
Theology

Ruben den Hertog
0410306

24 February 2010

The relation between Islam and modernity has fascinated me ever since I attended a lecture by Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im in the first year of my bachelor Theology. I was intrigued by his understanding of the Qur'an and I have been captivated by the subject of Islam and modernity ever since.

When I applied for the Research Master programme at Utrecht University, I put this subject forward as the subject of my master's thesis. During the programme I lost sight of the subject for a while, as another issue had caught my attention: Elie Wiesel's questions about God and His justice after Auschwitz. In his very distinct way, Wiesel too was struggling with God in this modern age. I believe it has been this struggle that caught my attention. Meanwhile I attended a lecture series at the Centre for Humanities, organised by Rosi Braidotti, about the post-secular age. Quite often a scholar of Islam would give a lecture, e.g. the Egyptian Abu Zayd. Islam's struggle with modernity was one of the recurring themes.

When it was time to prepare for the thesis I realized I knew too little about Judaism and Elie Wiesel to adequately portray and analyse his struggle with God and modernity. The lecture series at the Centre for Humanities at Utrecht University, had given me the necessary material to return to the original focus of my master: Islam's struggle with modernity. I took some time to read up on the subject and worked out a basic plan for the thesis you now hold in your hands.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my tutor Nico Landman; I could not have done it without his professional coaching. His knowledge about the field provided me with the necessary background information about the Shi'ites, the Muslim Brotherhood, and a realistic portrayal of Muslims living in Europe.

I'm also thankful for the patience and support I received from my family and friends.

CONTENTS

iv

It is a commonly held view that the values of modernity and those of Islam contradict each other. According to this opinion Islam's attitudes to, for example, women, would not be compatible with those of modernity. This incompatibility of values is used by politicians like the Iranian Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the Dutch Geert Wilders. They emphasize the differences between Islam and modernity and exploit them for their political goals.

What contradicts the supposed incompatibility is the large number of Muslims living in Europe and participating in its society. They appear to hardly have any problems with combining their Muslim values and the values of modernity. This might of course just be a pragmatic attitude of those citizens, who abandon some Islamic principles in order to live according to the values of modernity. There are others however, who appeal to just such a conflict of values in their reactions to Western society. There is obviously a problem, and many Muslims are aware of this.

What I will research in this thesis are the theological and philosophical approaches to bridge any supposed conflict of values between Islam and modernity. How have Muslim thinkers harmonized Islam and modernity on the theological level?

For this thesis I shall compare three Muslim thinkers who have written extensively about Islam and modernity from a Muslim perspective. Abdolkarim Soroush, an Iranian philosopher of religion; Tariq Ramadan, a Swiss scholar working on the development of a European Islam; and Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, a Sudanese jurist. All three believe that Islam as it is found in the cultures in Africa, Asia and the Middle-East needs to be brought back to its essence and needs to abandon certain cultural or accidental elements, in order to adapt to the cultures of modernity.

The main question can be broken down into three subsidiary questions: (1) What is characteristic in the authors thought? Which hermeneutical methods have the thinkers used to interpret Islam? The answer to this question will be a general overview of the thoughts and ideas of the authors. (2) How and to what extend do the authors distinguish the essential from the accidental, or temporal, in Islam? To answer this question I will use the ideas of Ninian Smart about the dimensions that constitute a religion. (3) How does this essential Islam relate to modernity? This will be answered within the framework of Peter Berger, a sociologist who identified five defining elements of modernity. The question will be further operationalized

with an analysis of the friction points of Islam and modernity that is visible when the views on human rights are analysed.

The thesis comprises five parts. The first part will be the theoretical framework I use to operationalize the questions 2 and 3. Next three chapters are about the three thinkers who are the subject of my research, Abdolkarim Soroush, Tariq Ramadan, and Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im. And as the fifth and final part the conclusion, where I will answer my research questions.

Note on the transliteration

In this thesis I use different transcriptions of Arabic and Farsi words. This is due to the many transcriptions that are available for the Romanization of the Arab alphabet. In the main texts I used a simplified transcription. In quotes I have followed the transcription of the authors, and in the footnotes I have used the ALA-LC transliteration of the Arab script as used by the American Library Association and the Library of Congress, but leaving out the diacritical dots and strokes.

1. THE SEVEN DIMENSIONS OF ISLAM

The specific examples of friction between Islam and modernity, democracy and women's rights, are part of a larger framework: the understanding of the role of religion and what elements of that religion are most important. A tool in understanding the important elements of religion is the model offered by Ninian Smart to divide a religion into seven dimensions. He presented this model to compare the world's religions and demonstrated how the emphasis on the different elements of a religion varied among the world's religions. He first published this model in *The World's Religions*.[1] These dimensions will also be a valuable tool to understand the different approaches taken by Soroush, Ramadan and An-Na'im to harmonize Islam with modernity.

The seven dimensions of religion

Ninian Smart, a professor of Comparative Religions at the University of California and Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at the University of Lancaster, England, offers a phenomenological approach on the nature of religion, distinguishing seven dimensions. I will now introduce these dimensions and describe what shape they have within Islam:[2]

The Practical and Ritual Dimension as the first dimension consists of the acts of worship, both private and shared: prayer, preaching, sacrifice and meditation. In Islam, examples are the five daily prayers, keeping the fast during the holy month of Ramadan, participating in the Hajj, pilgrimage to Mecca, and also the congregational worship and preaching in the mosque on Fridays.

The second, Experiential and Emotional Dimension would cover a range of religious phenomena like conversion, shamanistic trances, but also less dramatic experiences such as a sense of stillness. For the individual such experiences can be a private affirmation of their faith. The experiences of important figures in a religion, as transmitted by tradition, are also part of this dimension. In Islam this dimension includes the visions of Muhammad, and the experience of the divine that is available through the practice of contemplation found in the Sufi movement.

---

[1] Ninian Smart, *The World's Religions* (Cambridge: University Press, 2003).
[2] Ibid., 13–22, 290–295

The Narrative or Mythic Dimension, as the third dimension, consists of the major stories or scriptures of a religion on which much of the religious teaching is based. Examples are creation myths, and stories about primary figures of the religion. The Qur'an and the Sunnah are part of the mythic dimension of Islam.

The fourth dimension, the Doctrinal and Philosophical, is the dimension in which the official teachings of the world's religions are found, explaining their respective narratives and myths, and the cosmological truths of the religion. In Islam the central doctrine of *tawhid*, the oneness of God, is such an explanation.

The Ethical and Legal Dimension, being the fifth dimension, is the dimension of the rules and laws that are based on the narrative and doctrinal dimensions of each religion. In this dimension the Islamic divine law, that is shari'a, is included, as part of the political task of founding a good and just society under the guidance of God.

The sixth dimension is the Social and Institutional Dimension; this includes the living embodiment of a religion, its social institutions, and hierarchies. In the social dimension of Islam is included the concept of the Muslim community, the *umma*, in theory unified under a successor to Muhammad, known as the *khalifa* or caliph. The payment of *zakat*, alms tax, is the way the community looks after the welfare of the poor.

The final dimension in Smart's scheme is the Material Dimension, this is the physical dimension of a religion, including architecture, dramatic performances and art. In Islam this is represented by, for example, the dance of the dervishes, the mosques and calligraphy.

The dimensions of Islam that are under most pressure of modernity are the doctrinal and philosophical dimension, the ethical and legal dimension and the social and institutional dimension.

The problem with the ethical and legal dimension is that it conflicts with the modern values of equal rights for women and the people instead of God as the basis of the authority of a government. Another problematic aspect of this dimension in Islam is the use of corporal punishments based on shari'a.

Problematic in the doctrinal and philosophical dimensions is the absolute authority of God. This goes against the movement in modernity where God and religion lose their plausibility and their place in social and political life.

The emphasis of modernity on individuation and liberation conflicts with the social and institutional dimension of Islam. Islam attaches great value to collective identity and responsibility and this conflicts with choice and individual identities.

These dimensions offered by Smart can be used to specify the second research question "How and to what extend do the authors, who are the subject of my thesis, distinguish the essential from the accidental, or temporal, in Islam?". In looking for the distinction the authors make between the essential and the accidental, I will try to determine how their distinction between the essential and accidental in Islam relates to one or more dimensions of Smart. In other words, on which of these dimensions do they focus their thoughts? And what are the implications of their hermeneutic methods for the other dimensions?

2. MODERNITY

Introduction

In this thesis I will be comparing the approach of three authors towards modernity, but what is that modernity? Is it Western; secular; individual; technological? What is it that makes modernity conflict with Islam? That modernity is often seen to be in conflict with Islam can be derived from the ever growing number of books dealing with those difficulties.[3] To be able to compare the ideas of the three authors, I will first discuss what modernity is exactly. I will also discuss what it is in modernity that gives friction with Islam.

The key elements of modernity

What are the key elements of modernity? There have been several attempts to define modernity, defining the characteristics that set it apart from past eras. The sociologist Peter Berger has identified five defining elements of modernity, which have become classic, with his five "dilemmas of modernity":[4]

Abstraction (especially in the way life confronts bureaucracy and technology). Instead of a local grocery shop around the corner where the clerk knows our name, we now have a nationwide supermarket chain, where we need a barcode for discounts.

Futurity (the future is a primary orientation for both imagination and activity). The Golden Age, for the Dutch, is no longer in the seventeenth century, or, for Islam, in the seventh century. The Golden Age lies in the future, when the world is at peace and all people live happily ever after with their human rights fully respected.

---

[3] Kurt Almqvist, "The Secular State and Islam in Europe: Perspectives from the Engelsberg Seminar 2006" (Engelsberg, Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation, June 15–17, 2006, 2007).; Clinton Bennett, *Muslims and Modernity: An Introduction to the Issues and Debates* (New York: Continuum, 2005).; Muhammad Khalid Masud, Armando Salvatore and Martin van Bruinessen, eds., *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates* [Islam and modernity] (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 296.; Tariq Ramadan, *Islam, the West and the Challenges of Modernity* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 2001).; Bassam Tibi, *Islam's Predicament with Modernity: Religious Reform and Cultural Change* (London: Routledge, 2009).

[4] Peter Ludwig Berger, *Facing Up to Modernity: Excursions in Society, Politics, and Religion* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), 101–112.

Individuation (the separation of the individual from any sense of a collective entity, thus producing alienation). People are not primarily regarded as part of a group, based on religion or ethnicity. They are first of all individual citizens, and each citizen is free to make his/her own choices.

Liberation (life viewed as dominated by choice and not fate; "things could be other than what they have been"). People are free to make choices, varying from clothes, to profession and religion.

Secularisation (the massive threat to the plausibility of religious belief and of the place of religion in social and political life). Religions are no longer the sole source of authority, scientists have taken over their position regarding nature, and God is no longer the basis of the authority of government, but the people are.

Another attempt to characterize modernity, loosely based on Berger's "five dilemmas", are the five "pillars of modernity" as presented by Harvey Cox:[5]

– The emergence of sovereign national states as legally defined entities in a global political system, most of which have emerged in their present form at most 200 years ago.
– Science-based technology as a principal source of images for life and its possibilities.
– Bureaucratic rationalism as a way of organizing and administering human thought and activity, where institutions take on their own intellectual life producing people who feel alienated, powerless and apathetic ("I am only an employee here").
– The quest for profit maximization as a means to motivate and distribute goods and services (both within capitalism and socialism) as manifested in, for example, the capitalist mode of production and marketing.
– Secularization and trivialization of religion and the use of the spiritual for profane purposes manifested in the removal of religion's concern with politics and economics.

These five pillars of modernity partly coincide with Berger's dilemmas. What is added is the modern notion of nation states, and profit maximization. The elements defined by Berger and Cox present a good starting point if we try to define what it is that constitutes modernity.

---

[5] Harvey Gallagher Cox, *Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 183.

The dilemmas of modernity that are especially relevant when comparing Islam to modernity are futurity, liberation, individuation, and secularization. The other elements may also be troublesome from an Islamic perspective, but these four are causing the most obvious friction. Futurity is almost implies a blasphemy, of the perfect Islamic society as it existed under the guidance of Muhammad and the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs. Liberation is a deviation of the Islamic principle that God is in control of everything and that He knows best. Individuation is contrary to the emphasis in Islamic cultures on the collective identity. Secularization is in total opposition with the Islamic notion of religion as the ultimate source of all authority: God is the Supreme Ruler and man is only His vicegerent, man's duties are defined accordingly.

As I will be comparing modernity with Islam especially on the level of values, I will use documents from both cultures which exemplify these values. It is nearly impossible to give a definitive evaluation of the differences that exist between Islam and modernity. Islam covers some very different cultures, with the religion being the only thing they have in common, and even this religion is understood differently throughout the Islamic world. I will therefore limit the comparison with modernity to the issue of human rights, using the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights.[6]

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a document presenting the values of modernity, as I will demonstrate shortly. I will use the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, generally regarded as the Islamic response to the Universal Declaration, as a document presenting the Islamic perspective on human rights.

In the following I will demonstrate how the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was proclaimed by the General Assembly of United Nations in 1948, is a product of modernity with its emphasis on individuality, the authority of the people and plurality in religious issues. In 1990 the Foreign Ministers of Muslim countries met in Cairo to discuss human rights and their relation to Islam. The result was the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, adopted and issued by the Nineteenth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on August 5. This declaration is generally seen as in Islamic response to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam was adopted by 45 countries, to serve as guidance in matters of human rights. Comparing these documents will reveal the differences between modern and Islamic values.

---

[6] *Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam,* 49, 19–P sess., (August 5, 1990), http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/fm/19/19%20icfm-political-en.htm (accessed February 12, 2010).

Modernity and human rights

Abstraction, futurity, individuation, liberation, and secularization, which characterize modernity, demand an answer to the question of how we are to live in a humanly tolerable way in the world created by modernization. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights offers guidelines for such a way of life.

As with many political projects, the project of human rights was triggered by a shared trauma, the traumatic experience of the Second World War. The rights of soldiers had been protected by the Geneva Convention, but the rights of civilians were violated on a mass scale. The Second World War, like the First World War, or Great War, was a reminder that enlightenment and reason were not enough to help society on the way to progress. It was in fact reason that had led to the industrial destruction of a significant part of European society, to the killing of the Jews in Nazi concentration camps. "This never again" was the motto, and the United Nations, established in 1945, included the protection of human rights as one of the reasons for their existence.

Previously the protection of human rights was considered a domestic matter, but the horrors of the prisoner-of-war camps in Asia, and of the concentration camps in Europe, had shown how an industrial, cultured and advanced states such as Germany and Japan failed in that task. The notions on human rights in the founding charter of the UN were to be elaborated in an international Bill of Rights.

In 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations with forty-eight countries in favour, eight countries abstaining (the Soviet bloc countries, South Africa and Saudi Arabia), and two countries absent.[7]

The articles of the Universal Declaration and the dilemmas of modernity

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a product of its time and place. It was born out of the horror of the Second World War, and in an age of modernity. The relation between modernity and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can be demonstrated by a close examination of a few articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The eighteenth article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would only seem to be possible in a modern society where religion is of less importance than it is in pre-modern societies:

---

[7] UN, "Historic Overview," http://www.udhr.org/history/overview.htm (accessed February 3, 2010).

> Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.[8]

This freedom of thought, conscience and religion is only necessary in a pluralistic, relativistic world, which is a result of modernity. The religious wars of sixteenth century Europe had already demonstrated the need for tolerance and religious freedom as a condition for peaceful coexistence. This, in combination with the acceptance of secularity as a world view, has led to a need for freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Article 21 about the relation between citizens and their government demonstrates how the elements of abstraction, individuation, liberation and secularization of modernity have shaped the Declaration:

> (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
>
> (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
>
> (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

The voting system, the right of everyone to take part in government and the right to vote are both examples of individuation, liberation and in a way, also of secularization. The notion that the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government replaces the earlier concept of the divine authority of the state, and is, in that sense, an example of the modern element of secularization.

Another good example of the modern notions of liberation and individuation in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can be found in the equality of all human beings, which is apparent throughout the Declaration. All human beings regardless of their race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, are entitled to the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, rights and freedoms such as the rights to liberty, life, security, recognition as a person before the law without discrimination, freedom from cruelty, degrading treatment and slavery.

This examination of the articles of the Universal Declaration demonstrates the influence of modernity on the document. The Universal Declaration may be compared with its Islamic

---

[8] *Universal Declaration of Human Rights,* 217A, 3rd sess., (December 10, 1948): Art. 18.

pendant, the Cairo Declaration, to see to what extent influential voices in the Islamic world accept or resist modernity.

Islam and modernity

Article 10 of the Cairo Declaration stands out as an illustration of the Islamic perspective that is the basis for this document:

> Islam is the religion of true unspoiled nature. It is prohibited to exercise any form of pressure on man or to exploit his poverty or ignorance in order to force him to change his religion to another religion or to atheism.

The Islamic character of the declaration exemplified by this paragraph is also emphasised in its preamble. The preamble starts with "the place of mankind in Islam as vicegerent of Allah on Earth". The rights are not based on some intrinsic human value; they are implied by more primary "divine commandments." Thus, for example, the will of the people as ground for the authority of government, as it is declared in the Universal Declaration, is in jeopardy.

Where the Universal Declaration boldly declares that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, the Cairo Declaration limits article one to equal dignity and basic obligations and responsibilities. This demonstrates the difference between Islam and modernity, with Islam emphasising obligations and modernity emphasising rights. It also demonstrates the absence of equal rights of all human beings in Islam, an absence that is further underlined by article 6a:

> Woman is equal to man in human dignity, and has her own rights to enjoy as well as duties to perform, and has her own civil entity and financial independence, and the right to retain her name and lineage.

According to this article women have their own rights, duties, and civil entity that separate them from men. The rights of men are not universal, the *basic* obligations and responsibilities are.

These deviations from the Universal Declaration are explained by the 25th and final article of the Cairo Declaration: "The Islamic Shari'ah is the only source of reference for the explanation or clarification of any of the articles of this Declaration." The Islamic Conference basically adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as far as it was consistent with shari'a, with shari'a being the ultimate norm, the divine law, "binding divine commands", "contained in the Revealed Books of Allah".

Islam and democracy

On the matter of Islam and democracy the Cairo Declaration clearly highlighted the principle difficulty: God as the source of all authority as opposed to the people as the basis for the authority of government. The Cairo Declaration illustrates the Muslim concept that the authority of the state is based on its adherence to shari'a.

However, there are more causes for friction between Islam and modernity, as is illustrated, for example, by article 23b of the Cairo Declaration:

> Everyone shall have the right to participate, directly or indirectly in the administration of his country's public affairs. He shall also have the right to assume public office in accordance with the provisions of Shari'ah.

The problem with this article is that it is not specific enough. Its meaning is dependent on the shari'a interpretation of the signatory nation. In some instances this would mean that it is prohibited for Muslims to submit to the rule of non-Muslims. Participation of non-Muslims in government would, for that reason, be problematic.

It does not have to be problematic in a Muslim majority country, but in Europe, where there are few Muslim participating in government, this means that Muslims are ruled by non-Muslims. Most Muslims living in Europe do not appear to be troubled by this fact. They seem to be pragmatic about it and don't take this notion of shari'a too serious. They accept their non-Muslim governments and don't appear to be troubled by the idea that the authority of the state is based on the will of the people rather than adherence to the shari'a. While the friction is virtually non-existent on the practical level, it still needs to be dealt with on the theoretical level.

Islam and women's rights

One of the hurdles that stand between Islam and modernity is the Islamic concept of *qawama*, which means male guardianship of women. The concept is often used to support the claim of male superiority. While this could be read into the emphasis of the Cairo Declaration on "her own rights" in article 6, it is contradicted in the same Declaration in article 1:

> All human beings are God's subjects, and the most loved by him are those who are most useful to the rest of His subjects, and no one has superiority over another except on the basis of piety and good deeds.

However, the inequality between men and women is again visible in: article 5, which states that Muslim women are not allowed to marry non-Muslim men; article 6b, where the husband is given the sole responsibility of maintaining the family; and article 12, where the man is given right of free movement, while the right for a woman to move freely is not mentioned. As implementation of this article depends on the interpretation given in any particular nation's shari'a, this declaration has a hollow ring. This declaration thus allows the signatory states to continue the treatment of women as before, using shari'a as their legal basis.

Conclusion

A comparison of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam has revealed some values of Islam cause friction with modern values. The first cause that appeared was the Universal Declaration's emphasis on human rights, whereas the Cairo Declaration emphasised obligations and responsibilities. This different emphasis was again visible in the views on women's rights. While the Universal Declaration was adamant in its pronouncement of equal rights of all human beings regardless of their race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, the Cairo Declaration gave women their own specific rights. Those rights are limited to the rights available to them in shari'a.

The view that people form the basis for the authority of government, part of article 21 of the Universal Declaration, is not shared by Islam as becomes clear in the Cairo Declaration, where God is the source of all authority, and His will can be found in shari'a.

It appears that women's rights, and the will of the people as basis of authority are not compatible with shari'a. If the values of Islam and modernity are to be compatible, then a way must be found around shari'a while still keeping true to Islam.

These two friction points, the basis of the authority of government and the rights that women enjoy in their understanding of Islam, will be the focus of my comparison of Soroush, Ramadan, and An-Na'im on their stance towards modernity.

3. ABDOLKARIM SOROUSH

Introduction

Abdolkarim Soroush is an Iranian philosopher of religion, science and history. In this chapter I will show how Soroush has changed from a scholar who believed that all philosophical questions could be answered with Islamic philosophy into a scholar who believed that religious understanding uses human culture to understand religion. How his new theory then resulted in a well founded theory to support a religious democracy with room for the dynamics of dissent yet allowing for a religious hue.

Before I turn to the development of Soroush, I will situate Soroush in his socio-political background. This will be followed by an exposé on one of his influential mentors Ali Shari'ati and a brief summary of Soroush' academic influences. Having situated Soroush, I will then discuss his theory of contraction and expansion and how this theory opened the door for the influence of the broader human culture on the seven dimensions of Islam. I will then discuss the effects of this theory on his proposal for a religious democracy. This will answer the question of the compatibility of his ideas with the principles of democracy. This will be followed by his views on women's rights and a I will then give a concluding summary.

Socio-political background

Born in 1945, Abdolkarim Soroush grew up during the reign of Muhammad Reza Shah. While Iran was officially a constitutional monarchy, since the 1953 coup d'état all power was concentrated in the Shah. Muhammad Reza Shah controlled the military, the police, and the majority of parliament.[9] The religious authority, vested in the *ulama*,[10] tacitly collaborated with the Shah after the defeat of Mossadeq. Mossadeq was a nationalist politician in Iran. In his function as prime minister he had tried to nationalize the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in 1951, but due to an international boycott the Iranian economy collapsed and the Muhammad Reza Shah was able to regain control.

Firmly in control in the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century, Muhammad Reza Shah was able to steer towards some major reformations and modernizations. He organised

---

[9] Ira Marvin Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge; New York; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 480.

[10] The collective term for the scholars or learned men of Islam. (Ibid., 882)

education throughout the country, provided medical care and took steps towards the suffrage of women.[11]

The reformations of Muhammad Reza Shah in this so-called White Revolution disrupted political structures and the suffrage of women caused some opposition among the *ulama*. The *ulama* at the time of the White Revolution could be divided into four groups; the "radical" *ulama*, of which Khomayni was a leading figure; the social reformers; the "conservative" wing; and finally a faction that was willing to cooperate with the government of Muhammad Reza Shah. While all factions pursued Islamic justice, the "radicals" were the only *ulama* vocally advocating a parliamentary system, limiting one-man rule and protesting against "urbanization, industrialization and over-reliance on foreign investment."[12] While their protests were fuelled by "social exploitation of the poor and corruption in high places" they did not advocate workers councils, women's suffrage or nationalization of the economy.[13] As the "radicals" were the main *ulama* voicing the objections of the *ulama* in public speeches and rallies, they were the ones arrested by the regime. The leader of the radicals, Khomayni, was arrested in June 1963 and exiled to Turkey.[14]

The social reformers among the *ulama* were not politically active because they focussed on reforms within the clerical system, primarily dealing with social and educational problems within this system. Mehdi Bazargan, a main figure in this movement, used the Qur'an and the Shi'i religious traditions to justify a more active role of the *ulama*. No longer should they passively await the return of the twelfth imam, but rather actively prepare the way. As custodians of Islam they should assume a political role and guide the state with authoritative religious advice.[15] This reform movement took a different direction when Dr. Ali Shari'ati took the wheel in 1967. During his popular lectures at universities in Mashhad and Tehran he tried to reconcile Islamic teachings with European social sciences. For this purpose Shari'ati also co-founded the Hosayniyyeh-e Ershad, a centre for the study of Islam, where he gave popular lectures about the sociology and culture of Islam.

---

[11] Ibid., 479–482

[12] Shahrough Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavī Period* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), 101.

[13] Ibid., 101

[14] Ibid., 103–104

[15] Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 482–483; Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran*, 110–116

Ali Shariʿati made a large impression on the student Soroush with his blockbuster lectures in which he combined Islam with Marxism. While Shariʿati is regarded as the most influential thinker of his time[16] and an influential mentor of Soroush, I will give a short exposé on his life and ideas.

Shariʿati was born in 1933 in a town near Sabzivar, Iran. He and his father were members of prime minister Mossadeq's National Front. During a national purge of partisans of the National Front in 1957, Ali Shariʿati and his father were imprisoned. Upon their release in 1960 Ali went to France and studied sociology and religion at the Sorbonne. In the year that Khomayni was exiled, 1964, Shariʿati returned to Iran. After a short imprisonment for importing illegal books, Shariʿati went to the Firdawsi University in Mashhad. Here he taught a short while until he joined the Hosayniyyeh-e Ershad in Qulhak, north of Tehran. He was the centre's most productive contributor and probably also the most radical thinker. What made his thinking radical was how he bridged the gap between religion and left politics.[17]

Religion had long been considered as a reactionary and conservative tool to support the powers that be. Vice versa the ideas of the left had long been regarded as anti-religious. It was this contradiction that Shariʿati solved with Shiʿism. True Islam according to Shariʿati not only applied the principle of unity (*tawhid*) to God and religion, but also to sociology and politics, resulting in a classless society.[18] This classless society has a dialectic relationship with the class society that is prevailing through the ages. Using *tawhid* to justify a classless society, Shariʿati used the Shiʿite *ijtihad* to discover the theory of Marx in Shiʿite sacred texts.

First of all we should note the difference in the Sunni and the Shiʿite understanding of *ijtihad*.[19] *Ijtihad* was used by Sunni scholars to cover the subjects of religious law and social customs that had not been covered by the Qur'an and the Sunnah.[20] Once a consensus had been reached about a subject, it was no longer necessary to discuss it again. This was based on the idea that "our fathers stood closer to the Prophet Mohammed, and our grandfathers even closer." Once all subjects within society had been covered, it was no longer necessary to reach consensus. Therefore the gates of *ijtihad* in Sunni Islam could be closed. Yet it should be

---

[16] ʿAbd al-Karim Surush, Mahmoud Sadri and Ahmad Sadri, *Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of ʿAbdolkarim Soroush* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2000), xii.

[17] Ibid., xii

[18] E. van Donzel, H. A. R. Gibb and P. J. Bearman, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. 9 (Leiden: E. J. Brill. London: Luzac, 1960), (9) 328.

[19] 'Ijtihad: "exerting oneself" in Islamic Law; reasoning by analogy, free from received opinions, in order to reinterpret Islamic law' Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 877

[20] The Sunnah, "the trodden path," is the custom or practice of Muhammad and the early community, found in *hadith*, reports of sayings and deeds of Muhammad written down by his companions. Ibid., 876, 882

noted that Wael Hallaq demonstrated how *ijtihad* was still used and always has been an essential part of Sunni Islam, although after the tenth century the emphasis has been on *taqlid*, imitation.[21] In a response to Western domination of the Muslim world there has been a revival of *ijtihad* to adapt Islam to current situations.[22]

The concept of *ijtihad* was different in Shi'ite Islam. The true source of believe of each generation was not found in tradition, consensus of jurist or piety of the other Muslims, but the loyalty to Caliph Ali and his descendants. This was based on the special role of the Imams in this brand of Islam, who had a direct link with God. Since the ninth century CE it was believed that the imam was vested with an indwelling spirit of God and that he was the Mahdi, the messiah that would restore the true Islam and establish justice and the kingdom of Heaven.[23] The final Imam (whether this was the seventh or twelfth imam, depending on the specific Shi'i group), however went into hiding, starting the era of "occultation." From that day onwards it was the task of the *ulama* to emulate the first imam Ali and wait for the return of the final Imam. *Ijtihad* was used in the context of this emulation, and as the attention was focussed on the return of the Mahdi, this *ijtihad* was looking forward and as such never closed.

Shari'ati made a distinction between Red and Black Shi'ism, Red Shi'ism being the Religion of Martyrdom and Black Shi'ism the Religion of Mourning. It was Red Shi'ism that stood up for justice, acknowledged the true Imam and was willing to die for it. Black Shi'ism on the other hand acknowledged the true Imam, yet remained passive in the face of injustice and tyranny.

Abu Dharr, and Fatima, important figures in Islamic and especially Shi'ite traditions, were presented as role-models for the original Islamic classless society and its revolutionary ethos. Abu Dharr was described as a "God-worshipping socialist".[24]

Black Shi'ism prevailed for the last seven centuries, yet in the face of the current tyranny [that of the Shah] it was time to become active once again and stand up for justice.[25]

While at first glance the political Shi'ism of Shari'ati made him a likely ally of Khomayni, they never cooperated. Shari'ati regarded Khomayni as a great Shi'i leader that could lead the Red Shi'ism, Khomayni however mainly ignored Shari'ati. Khomayni's attitude may have

---

[21] Wael B. Hallaq, "Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16, no. 1 (Mar., 1984), 3–41, http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.uu.nl/stable/162939.
[22] Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 517
[23] Ibid., 94–98
[24] Ibid., 483; Donzel, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (9) 328
[25] Ali Shari'ati, "Red Shi'ism (the Religion of Martyrdom) vs. Black Shi'ism (the Religion of Mourning)," http://www.iranchamber.com/personalities/ashariati/works/red_black_shiism.php (accessed January 11, 2010).

been based on Shari'ati's lower level of erudition and his many theological errors in his earlier speeches.[26] What united these to scholars was their treatment of certain basic themes: the social exploitation of the poor, and the corruption in the higher circles of government. Another thing they had in common was their use of religion as a political force.

What divided them was their approach. Shari'ati was inspired by the revolutionary left he encountered in Paris and strived for an Islamic socialist or maybe even Marxist society based on his interpretation of *tawhid*, the doctrine of God' unity.

Khomayni on the other hand favoured an Islamic solution for the social injustice brought about by Muhammad Reza Shah. He believed that the social injustices could best be mended with the implementation of Islamic law, Shari'a. This could best be done in a state guided by the clergy through the principle of absolute *velayat-e faqih* or custodianship of Islamic jurists.

The education of Soroush

Abdolkarim Soroush was born in Iran in 1945. During his high school years at an `Alavi private school, Soroush learned about an approach that reconciled Islam with modern physics. His teacher Reza Rouzbeh showed how scientific principles could be derived from Qur'anic texts. Rouzbeh, who was a scholar educated at university and at seminaries in Qum,[27] belonged to the "traditionalists" who used *ijtihad* to prove that the theories of modern science could be found in the Qur'an. It was a way of incorporating science and avoiding the question of the implication of these modern discoveries on Islam. For instance the human conquest of space, the importance of vitamins, the hazards of microbial infections could all be read in the Qur'an, if only you knew how to read the text.[28] Soroush however was not persuaded by Rouzbeh's arguments, as he found Rouzbeh's interpretations "contrived and forced." However, the discussions with Reza Rouzbeh focussed Soroush' attention on the relationship between religion and science, a relationship Soroush would study the rest of his career.[29]

He successfully enrolled in the Tehran University in the early sixties, majoring in pharmacology. Soon after he took up tertiary education Soroush approached the Islamic philosopher Morteza Motahheri. This philosopher introduced Soroush to a clergyman and imam of one of the Tehran mosques, with whom he studied for several years. Soroush learned

---

[26] Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran*, 150
[27] Iran Chamber Society, "Iranian Personalities: Dr. Abdolkarim Soroush,"
http://www.iranchamber.com/personalities/asoroush/abdolkarim_soroush.php (accessed December 12, 2009).
[28] Hossein Kamaly, "The Theory of Expansion and Contraction of Religion,"
http://www.drsoroush.com/English/On_DrSoroush/E-CMO-19950200-1.html (accessed January 11, 2010).
[29] Surush, *Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam*, 4

about philosophical arguments and how they could be found within religious principles and traditions. This method convinced him that Islam is philosophically sound.[30]

In his biographical interview with Mahmoud and Ahmad Sadri, Soroush tells how the events of 1964 made politics unavoidable for university students. These events were the White Revolution and the subsequent protest of members of the *ulama* and the exile of Khomayni. Due to the more despotic nature of the imperial regime, guerrilla groups were gaining popularity. Among these guerrilla groups the *Mojahedin-e Khalq*[31] had a special allure to religious people because of the religious language they used in their rhetoric. What Soroush learned from the *Mojahedin-e Khalq* about the relationship between religion and politics contradicted what he had learned in school. He had been taught that religion should avoid politics, but during this decade Soroush learned otherwise and the bloody events awakened his political sensibilities. As a result he studied Marxism and leftist thought of Iran, i.e. the ideas of the Marxist Toudeh party.[32]

Meanwhile he had started following courses provided by the religious organisation Anjoman-e Hojatiyyeh. In their courses the organisation "dealt with the historical origins and texts of the Shi'ite religion and the Baha'i faith." Their goal was to face the theological challenge posed to the orthodox Islam by the existence of the Baha'i faith.[33]

Soroush continued with the study the book of Tabataba'i "Al-Mizan", a comprehensive exegesis of the Qur'an. Other exegetes followed, Sunni and Shi'ite, classic and modern. Learning about the broad spectrum of interpretations for the Qur'an laid the foundations of his later theory of contraction and expansion.

Apart from Motahheri, Soroush was also inspired by two other contemporary Iranian thinkers: Mehdi Bazargan and Ali Shari'ati. As Shari'ati's lectures at the Hosayniyyeh-e Ershad gained popularity, Soroush graduated from university and started his two years of military service. During these years Soroush attended "as many of Shari'ati's lectures as possible."[34]

He had finished his military service and worked for more than a year as a supervisor in a laboratory for food in the southern city of Boushehr. When in 1973 the centre for the study of Islam, home for the popular lectures of Shari'ati, was shut down, Soroush had started working on his post-graduate degree in analytical chemistry in London, England. After obtaining his

---

[30] Ibid., 4, 201
[31] "The Mojahedin of the People," it combined Islam with Marxist ideology. In 1975 the majority of the group abandoned Islam, and the group then strived for a Marxist-Leninist society.
[32] Ibid., 5
[33] Ibid., 5
[34] Ibid., 6–7

degree in analytical chemistry, Soroush turned to the philosophy of science. For this purpose he went to Chelsea College, where Heinz Post, a close friend of Karl Popper, taught Popper's philosophy.[35] The philosophy of science argued for by Popper abandoned the theory of verifiability for Poppers theory of falsifiability. Theories are only scientific when they are falsifiable and should be abandoned when falsified. All the evidence supporting a scientific theory was merely corroborating its claim, yet could not prove it. This theory gave ground for Soroush idea of the relativity of knowledge, more particularly religious knowledge. While he studied at Chelsea College the theory of Thomas Kuhn, a critic of Popper, also gained popularity. Kuhn claimed that a theory was always situated in a paradigm and that no theory could ever solve every puzzle it was presented with. It was only when too many theories didn't fit that a paradigm was at crisis. A new paradigm had to be found that solved this crisis.[36]

When in 1978 the revolution gained momentum Soroush reflected on the relation between revolution and religious thought.[37] He also became active in the Iranian society in London, giving lectures at an Imam-barah, a Shi'ite building used for ceremonies. Some of his lectures were transcribed and later published. *Dialectical antagonism* was a collection of these lectures. It dealt with the leftist influence on the revolution in Iran and sought to counter the influence of *Mojahedin-e Khalq*. At the same time Soroush wrote *The Dynamic Nature of the Universe*. A book on traditional metaphysics as it presented Mulla Sadra's[38] thoughts as a firm philosophical base for *tawhid* (unity of God) and *ta'ad* (resurrection) as objects of belief. The scholars Tabataba'i, Motahheri and even Khomayni read and praised the book.[39]

The events of 1979

Though Ali Shari'ati had died in London in 1977, the call for reform did not die. In the final months of 1978 the protesters against the Shah united. What sparked their united protest was a demonstration by religious students in Qom against an alleged assassination by SAVAK, the secret police and intelligence agency. A number of demonstrators was shot by the police. This

---

[35] Ibid., 7; 'Abd al-Karim Surush, "Biography," http://www.drsoroush.com/Biography-E.htm (accessed January 11, 2010).

[36] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 145–146, 157.

[37] Surush, *Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam*, 11

[38] Mulla Sadra (d. 1640CE) was a Persian Muslim thinker who "combined Shi'i scripture, theology, and mystical reflection to create a Shi'i version of Sufism and give a philosophic basis to individual religious consciousness and to Shi'i loyalty to the imams." Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 243; Muhammad Kamal, *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 9,39.

[39] Iran Chamber Society, *Iranian Personalities: Dr. Abdolkarim Soroush*

provoked a new demonstration the following day to mourn the fallen of the last demonstration. Every forty days this march was repeated and the demonstrators grew in number. Other opposition groups like the *Mojahedin-e Khalq* and the *Feda'iyan-e Khalq* joined the protests. As the demonstrators grew in number, oil workers refused to work, the bazaar merchants closed their shops and the army would or could not interfere. This led to the Shah fleeing the country in January 1979 and the return of exiled religious leader Ayatollah Khomayni in February.

A few months later Khomayni declared Iran to be an Islamic Republic. The constitution was accepted with a large majority in a referendum held in September, with general elections following a little later.[40]

Soroush in post-revolutionary Iran

Soroush returned to Iran a few months after the Islamic Revolution in September 1979. He was appointed chair of the department of Islamic culture in Tehran's Teacher' College. When the universities were closed in 1980, Soroush also became a member of the Advisory Council on the Cultural Revolution. Initially the task of this council was to establish a new curriculum for the Iranian schools and universities so they could be reopened.

In his biographical interview Soroush states that he joined the council because its aim was to reopen the universities that had been closed due to the revolution. However he resigned from the council as soon as he found out that the council was a tool for the purging of non-Islamic elements (sciences and people) from the universities. He then went back to teaching at the Academy of Philosophy and the Research Centre for Humanities and Social Sciences.[41] After his position at the Advisory Council on the Cultural Revolution, Soroush has not held another official position in the ruling system of Iran.[42]

In the initial chaos of the revolution there was immense political and ideological freedom. Soroush was frequently asked to enter ideological duels, and on numerous occasions Soroush used these duels to explain his relationship to religion and religiosity, and "the relationship of religion to social institutions."[43] These themes returned in his later work, to which I now turn.

---

[40] Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 484; R. R. Palmer, Joel G. Colton and Lloyd S. Kramer, *A History of the Modern World* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2007), 980–989.
[41] Surush, *Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam*, 12
[42] Surush, *Biography*
[43] Surush, *Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam*, 12

Fundamental to the ideas of Abdolkarim Soroush is his theory of contraction and expansion.[44]

The terminology for this theory appears to be taken from Sufism, a form of Islamic mysticism. Within Sufism expansion is the state of being where the individual opens up to the divine being and experiences joy and happiness. Contraction on the other hand is a state of being where the individual has lost his link with the divine and is experiencing sadness and solitude.

Soroush states that science is a human endeavour to understand nature; metaphysics is a human endeavour to understand the system of being; and religious understanding is the human endeavour to understand religion.[45] As our understanding of nature and the system of being is changing, it is conceivable that our understanding of religion is changing. The problem is that this observation contradicts the belief that religion is eternal. Soroush has come up with the theory of contraction and expansion to explain how religion can be eternal, while religious understanding is temporal. The theory of contraction and expansion is basically a hermeneutical theory. Holding on to an absolute element in religion, while allowing for change in its manifestations. The theory can also be used to take religion from one culture and implement it in another. In the phase of contraction the non-essential elements can be stripped from religion, leaving religion bare. In the next phase of expansion the receiving culture is used to read and explain religion, resulting in a new religious knowledge.

Religion is understood through religious knowledge. This religious knowledge should be recognised as a variation of human knowledge.[46] The "sacred texts are (in the judgment of followers) flawless; however, it is just as true that human beings' understanding of religion is flawed." What brings about this difference between religion and the understanding of religion (religious knowledge) is the influence of culture. It is up to God to reveal religion, *din*, and up to human beings to understand religion through religious knowledge and insight, *ma'refat-e dini*.[47]

Although religious knowledge has its limits, it is still a valuable perspective on religion. Using the theories from the extra-religious fields of sociology, cosmology, linguistics etc. one gets a more distinct picture of what religion is and what it brings about. Comparing it with

---

[44] Ibid., 26–38.
[45] Kamaly, *The Theory of Expansion and Contraction of Religion*
[46] Surush, *Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam*, 30
[47] Ibid., 31

other sciences one can learn how social or cosmological concepts influenced religious understanding through the centuries, but also how religion influenced those very concepts. Using the tools that are available in the social sciences one can learn what is a temporal and what is an eternal element of religious knowledge. In this respect the temporal culture is a tool for understanding the message of religion.[48] Turning outward through the theories of sociology, cosmology, anthropology, and then as a whirling dervish turn inwards to the core of religious understanding, religion itself.

This theory of contraction and expansion involves the following principles:[49]

– The principle of coherence and correspondence: Any understanding of religion (whether correct or incorrect) draws from the body of human knowledge and tries to be in coherence with the latter.

– The principle of interpenetration: A contraction or expansion in the system of human knowledge may penetrate the domain of our understanding of religion.

– The principle of evolution: The system of human knowledge (i.e., human science and philosophy) is subject to expansion and contraction.

The revolutionary idea that a theory doesn't need to be based within Islam or Islamic tradition could be considered a change in paradigm. Setting up a new structure for Islamic thinking in modernity.

The theory of contraction and expansion related to ijtihad

This theory is typically Shi'ite yet also completely revolutionary. The theory of contraction and expansion could only be based on the Shi'ite concept of *ijtihad*. It draws on the idea that even now we can read new theories in the sacred texts. An example is the use of *ijtihad* to find the hazards of microbial infections in the Qur'anic text. It was this use of *ijtihad* that enabled Khomayni, Bazargan, and Shari'ati to discover that Shi'ite Islam called for a political participation of the *ulama* and maybe even a revolution. Shari'ati found Marx' sociological theory of a classless society in *Rivayat*, the Shi'ite traditions.[50]

What is revolutionary is the idea that theories don't have to be found in the sacred text, or even in Islam itself, to be applicable to an Islamic society. This concept has far reaching

---

[48] Ibid., 36

[49] 'Abd al-Karim Surush, *Qabz Va Bast-e Teoric Shari'at - Ya Nazariyeh-Ye Takāmol-e Ma'refat-e Dini*, 1991), 278. As translated in Kamaly, *The Theory of Expansion and Contraction of Religion*

[50] Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavī Period*, 115; Donzel, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (9) 328

implications. Thus, for example, in Soroush' view, the political system of democracy doesn't have to be based on the principle of Shura.

Soroush' essential Islam

The theory of expansion and contraction has a major impact on all seven dimensions of Islam. The essential Islam is beyond those dimensions. If the approach of Soroush would have to be situated in the model of Ninian Smart, then the philosophical dimension would be the only candidate. Soroush' view on religion is based on the philosophical assumption that reason can be used to understand religion and guides the believer to know God. This presumption could be understand as a result of the Shi'ite background of Soroush. Part of the Shi'ite doctrine about the nature of God is based on the views of a philosophical school of Islam that flourished during the 8th-10th centuries in Basra and Baghdad. The members of this school were called Mu'tazilites, "separatists", a nick name given to them by their opponents. The name they used themselves was *ahl al-tawhidwa'l – 'adl*, "people of unity and justice".

The Mu'tazilites believed that human reason guides a human to know God, His attributes and the basics of morality. While they were critical towards tradition, they still accepted revelation as the ultimate source to reach conclusions on matters of right and wrong.

Abdolkarim Soroush calls himself a neo-Mu'tazilite in one of his articles:[51]

> Let me also add here that I consider myself a "neo-Mu'tazilite". I believe that the Qur'an is God's creation. The Mu'tazilites said this. But we can take one step further and say that the fact that the Qur'an is God's creation means that the Qur'an is the Prophet's creation. The Mu'tazilites didn't explicitly take this step but I believe it is a necessary corollary of their creed and school of thought.

This philosophical approach of Soroush led to a complete re-evaluation of all the dimensions of Islam. All the current shapes of those dimensions are shaped by human culture. The dimensions that are least troubled by this constant change in response to human culture are the ritual dimension and the narrative and mythic dimension of Islam. The Qur'an, with the rituals of Islam are the only elements of Islam that approach the essential Islam, the religion. This is why the practical and ritual, and the narrative and mythic dimension of Islam will hardly be affected by the influences of human culture.

---

[51] 'Abd al-Karim Surush, "I'm a Neo-Mutazilite," http://www.drsoroush.com/English/Interviews/E-INT-Neo-Mutazilite_July2008.html (accessed December 14, 2009).

The Qur'an is sacred because it is so close to the essential Islam. For Soroush this does not mean that people should have to read the Qur'an in Arabic. Translations should be made to allow people to form their own beliefs, theology, and religiosity:

> I believe that if, when the Qur'an first came to Iran, it had been translated into good, readable Persian, and if Iranians had also always read and studied the Qur'an in Persian, alongside reading it in Arabic, we would undoubtedly be different Muslims than we are today. The fact that the Qur'an is out of reach for Iranian Muslims and the fact that it is locked in the Arabic language has had an impact on our Muslim-ness.[52]

The other dimensions of Islam, the doctrinal philosophical, the ethical and legal, the social and institutional and of course the material dimension, are a largely shaped by the cultural influence. As they are shaped by human culture, these dimensions will change when the surrounding culture changes.

Soroush' view on politics and the rights of women.

In this thesis I am comparing the authors on their view towards modern concepts like democracy and women's rights. On the subject of democracy Soroush has written quite extensively, unfortunately he has not written so much about women's rights.

Soroush' political theory

It is important to understand the change from duties to rights of citizens and from rights to duties for rulers that took place in the modern world. While in history God and in His stead the king was sovereign and had all the rights, and the subjects had the duties, this balance shifted with modernity. During the transformation the citizens had the liberty to learn without interference of the government.[53] Later this liberty evolved into a demand and now, in modern times, the governments should actively provide education. This transformation could explain the failure of the modern world to comprehend the Iranian principle of *velayat-e faqih*.[54]

Soroush gives in to the shifted balance, not because the same shift has taken place in Iran, but because not a single person is infallible. Therefore no one should have the power to appoint the supreme judge, select the candidates for parliament and be the supreme

---

[52] Ibid.
[53] The right of education is just an example, any other modern human right can be substituted here.
[54] Surush, *Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam*, 61–64

commander of the army. For a person to have such powers, he should be infallible and incorruptible. As no person matching these prerequisites can be found, as history has taught us, no one should have all these powers combined and the power of one person should be limited. The Islamic revolution and the following Islamic Republic is part of that history that taught us the fallibility of humankind. In this context Soroush witnessed the corruptibility of humans firsthand.[55]

According to Soroush the political system found in democracy is best suitable to curb the errors of individual men. Its system of checks and balances is the only system that is not based on the assumption that one person or institution knows best.[56]

Some Muslims might object and say that democracy is the autocracy of the people and as such opposed to sovereignty of God. Soroush counters this argument with the thesis that democracy and religion share the notions of justice, human rights and limited power. These issues have a rational and not a religious origin. Religion and religious understanding rely on these rational precepts. With the status of reason acknowledged, and the theoretical, practical, and historical advances of humanity applied to the understanding of religion, religious understanding itself can be rationalized. This rationality paves the way for a epistemological pluralism, to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. In a society with such an understanding of religion, a religious government can be born. It guarantees the religious and the democratic character of the government. This type of government can only be called a religious democracy if it seeks "to combine the satisfaction of the Creator and that of the created;" when it is both true to the religious and extrareligious concerns.[57]

If a religion wishes to participate in the political domain then it should match a few demands. It should first of all accept the language of reason in the political debate. Secondly it should have an anthropology, and corresponding human rights, that is compatible with democracy. And thirdly it should allow for non-religious people to participate in government. If these criteria can be met, then the religion can participate in the political debate and the democracy could have a religious hue. If these criteria cannot be met then a secular democracy is preferable to a religious dictatorship.[58]

During a debate with Tariq Ramadan, held in Amsterdam in May 2007, Soroush gives a clear explanation of his argument for a democratic state:

---

[55] Ibid., 192
[56] Ibid., 148, 153, 180
[57] Ibid., 130, 133, 151
[58] Ibid., 126

I said that I never use the term 'Islamic democracy'; instead, I always approach this issue in terms of whether or not Muslims can live in a democratic society or under a democratic State. My answer is in the affirmative. I believe that, without wanting to extract the distinguishing and essential elements of democracy from Islamic teachings – which is an inappropriate thing to do – we can look at the issue in terms of the fact that many of the elements of a democratic State do not contravene Islamic thinking. For example, although the separation of powers doesn't appear in Islam's primary teachings, no Muslim theologian has ever issued an edict against it either and it can easily be accepted in an Islamic society, as can issues such as the accountability of office holders or having a strong and independent judiciary.[59]

To further support his argument for a democratic state with freedom of religion, Soroush compares faith with love. He uses this metaphor to demonstrate how neither love nor faith can be forced, and why religiosity should not be enforced by the state. He also uses this metaphor to demonstrate how everyone has an individual stance towards their object of affection. Similarly everyone has an individual stance towards religion in their individual faith. "True faith is contingent upon individuality and liberty." In a religious society this freely obtained faith is preferable to forced "faith". The state does not have the task to guide the faith of its citizens.

Surely, the faiths of the emulators, not unlike their minds and their actions, are uniform, tame, and suggestible. But how about the faith of the sages and lovers? And which is nobler? A religious society becomes more religious as it grows more free and freedom loving, as it trades diehard dogma with examined faith, as it favours inner plurality over outer mechanical and nominal unity, and as it favours voluntary submission to involuntary subservience. This is the spirit that breaks the tyrannical arm of religious despotism and breathes the soul of free faith in the body of power.[60]

The communities founded by prophets were not legal-corporeal; they started from faith and hearts. Only when solidly based in faith they turned to rights and obligations. These rights and obligations are part of the expansion of religion, the *Bast*. As such it should be possible to return to the core of religious rites, faith, through contraction, *Qabz*. This contraction would mean letting go of the rights and obligations I mentioned above. To allow this to happen there in a society must be freedom of religion. This freedom is again best achieved in a democracy.

---

[59] 'Abd al-Karim Surush, "Amsterdam Debate," http://www.drsoroush.com/English/Interviews/E-INT-Amsterdam%20Debate.html (accessed December 14, 2009).

[60] Surush, *Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam*, 145

> A religious government over a faithful and alert society that respects liberty and dynamism of religious understanding cannot help but be a democratic society.[61]

The freedom for a dynamic of contraction and expansion is needed in the individual as much as it is needed in society at large. Only with the dynamics as described in the theory of contraction and expansion can society keep religion alive and meaningful for this present day.

This argument that Soroush presents for tolerance, as necessary to finding the truth and keeping the understanding of truth alive by constant questioning through dissenting views, resembles that of John Locke. John Locke was an English philosopher who believed as Soroush that the government should not involve itself in care of souls – this is a religious matter – and true faith is not taught at the tip of a sword but through persuasion. Tolerating different religious views would constantly question the religious claims of the people. Through argumentation incoherent views would fall away and the support for coherent and contextual views would be strengthened with every debate won. Religious truths would not solidify into accepted truths, but through the constant questions for every generation they would be experienced truths.[62]

Even though democracy is not based on religion or religious principles, Soroush says that it does rely on religion. Religion offers a comprehensive doctrine that is a foundation of respect for "the will of the majority, the rights of others, justice, sympathy and trust."[63] As a bulwark of morality religion can be a major contributor to the checks and balances that constitute democracy. Here Soroush quotes Alexis de Tocqueville who said: "Although religion has no direct role in the government of the American society, it should be considered among the basic foundations of the political system of the country."[64] It is this contribution to democracy that in a religious society gives democracy its religious hue, hence the "religious democracy" of Soroush.

Soroush believes that for a society to enjoy all the fruits of the dynamics of contraction and expansion, it should allow for freedom of thought, conscience and religion. These freedoms are best guaranteed in a democracy. When the anthropology of a religion allows people to be the basis of the authority of government, and regards humans as autonomous, then this religion could play a vital role in the public debate of a society and offer a moral compass.

---

[61] Ibid., 145
[62] John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* [*Epistola de Tolerantia*], trans. William Popple (London, 1689).
[63] Surush, *Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam*, 152
[64] Alexis de Tocqueville and J. P. Mayer, *Democracy in America* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1969). as quoted in Surush, *Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam*, 153

Women's rights according to Soroush' principles

The rights of women are not a major concern for Soroush. This much becomes clear when reading his few statements regarding these rights. As part of the human rights debate, the rights of women are one of the issues that Soroush believes should be addressed universally rather than locally. Muslims should deal with these issues globally and then reap locally what they have sown universally.[65] Unfortunately Soroush does not specifically deal with the women's rights. The only things mentioned in his book regarding women is how he is abhorred about the way women are described as beasts disguised as humans by Mulla Sadra and how this is taught at the seminaries in Iran, the *hawzahs*.[66] Soroush also believes that the divorce laws should be re-evaluated when women in south-east Asia have to turn to apostasy laws to obtain a divorce from their husbands.[67]

Although in his published work Soroush hardly mentions the position of women, he has discussed the issue in a series of unpublished lectures held in Iran. The content of those lectures have been made available through the work of Ziba Mir-Hosseini. She studied the religious debate on the position of women in contemporary Iran.[68]

The view of Soroush on women's rights is also visible in a manifesto he published on behalf of the Green Movement in Iran. Since the elections of June 2009 a broad protest movement against the current regime has developed, dubbed the Green Movement. Early January Soroush and four other exiled Iranian intellectuals published a manifesto on behalf of this movement. As one of the major contributors to this manifesto the content of the manifesto can also be used to see what Soroush deems important. On that regard it is interesting to see that out of the ten demands of the manifesto the fourth goes as follows:

> Recognizing the rights of all the lawful political groups, university student and women movements, the NGOs and civil organizations, and labor unions for lawful activities and the right to peaceful protest according to Article 27 of the constitution.[69]

All this shows how Soroush does think it important for women movements to have room to fight for their rights; this alone implies that they have equal right to fight for their rights.

---

[65] Ibid., 25
[66] Ibid., 181
[67] Ibid., 29
[68] Ziba Mir-Hosseini, *Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000).
[69] Robin Wright and 'Abd al-Karim Surush, "The Goals of Iran's Green Movement," http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2010/0106/Abdolkarim-Soroush-The-goals-of-Iran-s-Green-Movement (accessed January 9, 2010).

That he does not elaborate on the issue and states how he envisions the role of women in society could mean one of the following: (1) He does not wish to discuss this issue as it is too politically charged as being one of the corrupting influences of the West; (2) his mind is currently focused on the more fundamental issues of an Islamic society, and details like the rights of women can be discussed at a later point; (3) he is a man and simply has no interest in this issue; (4) The debate on women's rights has not yet reached a point of urgency in Iranian society.

Option one is highly unlikely as Soroush is not afraid of defending concepts like democracy, a secular state, freedom of religion and the authority of reason in the intellectual debate against traditionalist attacks.[70]

The second option is a likely option. In his work Soroush is focusing on fundamental issues as the principles on which a state should be founded, how much room there should be for dissent and why reason can be used in these debates. These issues do appear to precede the issues of women's rights.

It is not unlikely that the third option also plays a role. This would mean that even if the fundamental issues are covered, he would still not pay much attention to this cause.

Option four is also a likely motive for Soroush' lack of attention for women's rights. Further developments may enable us to give a more definite answer to this question.

The analysis of Soroush' lectures by Mir-Hosseini do give some insight in Soroush view on the position of women. The analysis shows how he bases his view on women not on the legal level of Islam, but rather on the spiritual level. In basing his view on the spiritual level, he can only speak on the matter in an abstract manner. Although his theory of contraction and expansion has opened the doors for women to enter the debate on this issue, his theory is too abstract to be useful in the debate on women's rights.[71]

All in all I will not be able to definitively demonstrate Soroush' view on women's rights. Although I expect Soroush to follow the road that is implied by his views on other human rights, I will need more research to conclusively say that he believes that women have rights equal to men.

---

[70] Surush, *Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam*, 54–68, 88–104, 122–155
[71] Mir-Hosseini, *Islam and Gender*, 217-246

Conclusion

Abdolkarim Soroush' thinking has been influenced by his time and his tradition. As an Iranian Twelver Shi'ite Muslim, Soroush carries with him the tradition of *ijtihad* and the expectation of the just kingdom of heaven introduced with the return of the Twelfth Imam, who was still in occultation.

From the guerrilla group *Mojahedin-e Khalq* he had learned that Islam was not necessarily passive regarding politics, contrary to what he had learned in high school. The lectures of Shari'ati taught him that contained within the sacred texts of Islam and Shi'ite tradition were the concepts of a classless and just society, approximating the just kingdom of heaven that would be introduced with the return of the Twelfth Imam. Studying in England Soroush became familiar with the Philosophy of Science of Karl Popper. He learned that even the theories of natural sciences were subject to corroboration and falsification. How even the theories of the natural sciences were a product of changing paradigms he learned from Thomas Kuhn. Combined with his experience of competing interpretations of Islam's sacred text by the Sunnis, Shi'ites and even the Baha'i, this led to his theory of contraction and expansion. This theory separated religion from the religious understanding that is under constant influence of human culture. The theory allowed for different interpretations of Islam's sacred texts, the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It also explained why they were different and what the influence of human culture was on this difference. The discovery of theories of natural sciences and sociology as they were discovered in the Qur'an by Rouzbeh and Shari'ati were examples of these interpretations as they were influenced by human culture. The theory of contraction and expansion also allowed for non-Islamic theories to be acceptable in the discourse on Islam and modernity. This aspect of the theory is revolutionary in Islamic scholarly debate, where scholars use precedents in Islamic sources and history to present modern theories as essentially Islamic.

The next step Soroush took was using his theory in politics. The dynamic of contraction and expansion needs room in the political system. A religious or autocratic government does not allow for this space. For this reason Soroush proposes a religious democratic government. With a religious understanding that supports a view of humanity and human rights in which religion is seen non-essential, religious reasoning could be allowed in the public sphere. This religious understanding could contribute to the political system of democracy as a moral compass.

It is not clear how from this political philosophy a vision is or should be developed on the rights of women in the religious, social or political sphere. It is clear, however, that there should be room to debate this issue in this political system.

Soroush has changed from a scholar who believed that all philosophical questions could be answered with Islamic philosophy into a scholar who believed that religious understanding uses human culture to understand religion.

4. TARIQ RAMADAN

Introduction

Tariq Ramadan, born in 1962, is a Muslim scholar living in Europe. Having grown up in Geneva as the youngest child of his exiled Egyptian parents, Ramadan is a child of Egyptian and Swiss culture. He speaks Arabic and French fluently, watches Louis de Funès and reads the Qur'an. Although he was initially prevented from travelling to Egypt, he heard the stories of his parents and knew about his family living there. Living in Geneva he was very much aware of his Egyptian heritage. At school he was asked to give presentations about the Pharaohs. This experience gave Ramadan a positive affirmation of his heritage.

Currently Ramadan is attempting to fashion a "European Islam". Where this Islam has its roots and what it entails is what I will show in this chapter. The shape of the European Islam that is presented by Ramadan appears to be influenced by the ideas of Ramadan's grandfather on the maternal side, Hassan Al-Banna. Hassan Al-Banna was the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928. The Muslim Brotherhood presented Islam as a valid alternative to Western concepts such as socialism and capitalism. This Islamic alternative for these Western economic and social systems also figures in Ramadan's thinking about non-Western countries with a Muslim majority. Ramadan adopts the piety preached by his grandfather for the Muslim spirituality in Western countries, where Muslims are looking for harmony between Islam and modernity in their daily lives.

Western countries are non-Muslim by origin, but due to large scale migration in the last century a Muslim minority has been established. Before that, Muslims used to live in predominantly Muslim countries. The reality of being a minority in a non-Muslim country confronted them with new questions, as they could no longer follow the Islam of their fathers, who lived their lives in Muslim countries.

Ramadan has adapted the ideas of his grandfather to the European context. Those ideas were implemented in the Muslim Brotherhood founded by Al-Banna. I shall therefore first review the history of the Muslim Brotherhood and then turn to a major offshoot of this Muslim Brotherhood in Europe, the European Council for Fatwa and Research. This will help to position Tariq Ramadan in the debate about Islam in Europe. Having addressed the backdrop of Ramadan's European Islam, I will give an overview of a concept that is fundamental to his European Islam, Ramadan's understanding of *tawhid*. His understanding

of *tawhid* demonstrates what Ramadan believes to be essential in Islam, which I also will discuss before I show how *tawhid* influences Ramadan's idea's about democracy and women's rights.

Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in a period marked by the abolition of the caliphate in 1924 and by the suffering related to British colonialism in Egypt. A few decades earlier Muhammad Abduh had called for a modernization of Islam, ignoring what were considered the non-essential or "accidental" aspects of religion. This modernization was needed because Islam had to come to terms with the new political reality, as non-Muslims dominated world-politics, and even dominated Muslims. Before, Muslims had believed that God was on their side, winning their wars for them. This belief was shaken with after the arrival of Napoleon in Egypt, when European powers started to dominate the Middle East.

This European domination led to questions like: Is the God of the West stronger? Are the Muslims no longer "good Muslims"? Were the leaders of the Muslim world, for example the Sultan in Istanbul, led astray by their foreign advisors? etc.[72]

Muhammad Abduh believed that Islam itself had to return to its principle sources to find a new direction for the present times. He believed that this modernized Islam could counter European domination. Abduh accepted the Qur'an and the Sunnah as guidance from God, but in matters not covered by the Qur'an or the Sunnah individual judgement and reason were essential. This applied to matters concerning worship, s*hariat al-'ibadat*, as well as matters concerning social relations, *shariat al-mu'amalat*. Where the Qur'an and the Sunnah were silent, individual judgement or *ijtihad* was essential.

In Egypt, where the Sunni branch of Islam prevailed, the understanding of *ijtihad* was different from the *ijtihad* of the reformers in Iran.[73] The Islamic jurists in Egypt mainly based their rulings in jurisprudential matters on *taqlid*, and *ijtihad* was hardly applied. *Ijtihad*, individual judgement of the jurist, had more or less been abandoned in Sunni jurisprudential schools, as most issues had been covered at the end of the tenth century. *Taqlid* was the imitation of previous rulings of the jurisprudential school to which the Islamic jurist adhered to. Muhammad Abduh's new emphasis on *ijtihad* was truly a revolution in Sunni thinking.[74]

---

[72] Andrew Rippin, *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge, 2005), 175–199.
[73] See for the different Muslim understandings of *ijtihad*, the paragraph on this term on page 18.
[74] Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 517–519; Hallaq, *Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?*, 3–41

Along with a nationalist movement, this Islamic reform movement was the prevailing political movement of the time. At the end of the First World War, the nationalist movement got the upper hand in the political power struggle between the nationalists and the Islamic reformists. The leader of the Nationalist Party, Sa'd Zaghlul, managed to convince the victors of the First World War to grant Egypt almost complete independence, with mass rallies in the streets of Cairo.

His personality combined with this historic achievement gave the Nationalist party a leading position in Egyptian politics. Only when Zaghlul passed away in 1928 did the strong nationalist movement fall apart and give way to smaller movements. The Muslim Brotherhood of Hassan Al-Banna was one of the movements that filled the gap, bringing Muhammad Abduh's views to the fore once again.[75]

While his ideas were mainly aimed at a religious reformation, Hassan Al-Banna's Society of Muslim Brothers, founded (by Al-Banna) in 1928, politicized this reformed Islam as a valid alternative to the Western models of capitalism and socialism. To start with, it was only a youth group, but soon it acquired a following under Al-Banna's leadership. He preached the return to the Qur'an and Islamic piety aiming at the restoration of Islamic principles. To achieve this goal Hassan Al-Banna also set up an extensive network of followers who organised schools, mosques and clinics. The Society was committed to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, an affirmation of an Islamic social and political identity, and the adaptation of Islamic principles to the needs of a modern society.[76]

Ijtihad was used to demonstrate how the principles found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah can be adapted to modern times, and how Islam is not only a religion, but offers a complete way of life. This idea that Islam offers a complete way of life is also of fundamental importance in thinking of Ramadan.

Hassan Al-Banna defused the tensions between the competing schools of Islamic jurisprudence: Hanafi; Hanbal; Shafi'i and Maliki. He promoted a tolerant attitude by stripping Islam from its "accidental aspects" and focussing on the Qur'an and the Sunnah rather than siding with one of the competing schools of jurisprudence.

Al-Banna used the schools and mosques, founded by his followers, to promote his ideas throughout Egypt, and beyond in other Arab countries in the Mashriq and the Maghreb (resp. the sunrise and the sunset, i.e. the East and the West). The strength of Al-Banna was

---

[75] Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 519–522

[76] Ibid., 522; Brigitte Maréchal, *The Muslim Brothers in Europe: Roots and Discourse*, trans. Jeff Lewis, Vol. 8 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 19–21.

especially visible in his activities. He did not just develop theories, he was an organiser. He organised the before mentioned mosques and schools, its funding and staff. He also ventured into the social area, setting up cooperative work opportunities for members of the Society, seeking to meet the needs of the population. Around 1948 the organisation counted over one million members. With such a large support it became a substantial political entity.[77]

Muslim Brothers in Europe

The potential political force of the Muslim Brotherhood became a threat to the ruling class. In 1948 prime Minister Mahmud Fahmi Al-Nuqrashi decreed the disbanding of the Brotherhood after a series of assassinations by a violent fringe group of the Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Banna distanced himself from the assassinations but refused to dissolve the Brotherhood. Two months after the decree Al-Banna was assassinated, and there was disagreement on the question who was to be his successor.[78]

In the 1940s the Free Officers, a clandestine revolutionary movement of army officers led by Gamal Abd Al-Nasser, initiated a relationship with the Muslim Brothers. The Free Officers led a successful coup against the Egyptian monarchy and established the Egyptian Republic in 1953. Once he came to power Nasser, who had gained large popular support thanks to his allegiance to the Muslim Brothers, considered the Brotherhood an unacceptable potential competitor to his power. The state repression of the Brotherhood was intensified as a result.[79]

The leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood was exiled and found refuge in neighbouring Arab countries and also in the West. These exiles were the first to establish a foothold in Europe. They set up community houses and funded student homes of Muslim students studying in Europe. The father of Tariq Ramadan, Said Ramadan, was one of them. He took up refuge first in Cologne and later in Geneva.[80]

The work of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe continued. Magazines and publishing houses were established, and regional, national and European Muslim societies were founded. Their organisational skills gave them a leading position in bringing together the forces of the Muslim minorities throughout Europe.

---

[77] Ibid., 20
[78] Ibid., 26
[79] Ibid., 27
[80] Ibid., 59–60

European Council for Fatwa and Research

One of the organizations recently founded by members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe was the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR), established in 1997. Al-Qaradawi, who was the Council's first president, was a disciple of Hassan Al-Banna and he still is one of the most important religious references of the Muslim Brotherhood.[81]

The purpose of the council was to offer answers for juridical and ethical challenges that Muslims in Europe encountered. These questions varied from the question of interest on a mortgage for a house, where Islam prohibited the charging of interest, to the question whether or not it is allowed to work in a grocery store where pork is sold.

The Council's sensibility for European challenges was to be guaranteed by limiting the number of non-European members of the council to twenty-five percent. The members of the council should further meet the following requirements:[82]

– To be of appropriate legal (*shari'a*) qualification at university level, or to have been committed to the meetings and circles of scholars and subsequently licensed by them, and to have a sound knowledge of the Arabic language.

– To be of good conduct and show commitment to the regulations and manners of Islamic Shari'a.

– To be a resident of a European country.

– To have knowledge of legal jurisprudence (*fiqh*) as well as an awareness of the current contemporary culture.

– To be approved by the absolute majority of members.

The Council's religious advice, in its fatwa's, is based on the Qur'an, the Sunnah, consensus (*ijma'a*) and analogy (*qiyas*). Its use of *ijma'a* and *qiyas* is consistent with the idea of the Muslim Brotherhood. These principles of jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*) are used to overcome the differences that exist between the developed jurisprudence (*fiqh*) of the four major Sunni schools of jurisprudence.

Fundamental to the Council's rulings is the principle of *fiqh al-aqalliyyat*, the religious law for minorities. As the Muslims live in a non-Muslim country, they are absolved from some of the laws of Shari'a. They should follow the laws of the host country on matters concerning the

---

[81] Ibid., 149. Al-Qaradawi is mostly known in the West for his approval of suicide operations in Palestine and his restricted support for the principle according to which a husband has the right to beat his wife (mildly).

[82] European Council for Fatwa and Research, "Statutes of the European Council for Fatwa and Research," ECFR, http://www.e-cfr.org//en/ECFR.pdf (accessed January 11, 2010). The most recent membership list of the council (July 31, 2008) shows that fourteen of the thirty-eight members do not live in Europe, thirty-seven percent.

public interest. On private matters they should follow the principles of Shariʿa. The adage they follow in their deliberations is: "Everything is permitted unless a text from the Qur'an or from the prophetic tradition clearly and explicitly stipulates the contrary," a principle of Muslim law that has become famous in Muslim Brotherhood circles since it was introduced by Al-Qaradawi. Ramadan also uses this guideline in his search for a European Islam.[83]

Another principle of Al-Qaradawi that has been a guiding principle of the ECFR's fatwa's is the principle of *wasatiyya*, "middle way" or "happy medium". It comes down to a gradual application of Islamic law, based on the understanding of Islam that exists in a certain community. The European society does not (yet) allow for a complete Islamic life, and in that context parts of Islamic law are suspended. The ECFR uses these principles to implement an Islamic jurisprudence that recognizes the rights of Muslim minorities in non-Muslim societies.

These principles show how the Council tries to imitate the Islamic law of the home countries of Islam in the host countries of the European Muslims, as far as the context of the host country permits. In the European context it also means that the Council believes that it is impossible to be a good Muslim in Europe. The European context simply does not allow Muslims to follow shariʿa as a whole.

Ramadan's position

Tariq Ramadan is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe. His position as Muslim in Europe and European in Islam makes it difficult to define him. He is easily misunderstood, and because of that some have described him as a wolf in sheep's clothing.

The reason he is often misunderstood is that he addresses different audiences. In his writings and speeches he addresses three audiences: non-Muslims, Muslims living in Europe, and Muslims living in Muslim countries. To the non-Muslims he demonstrates how Islam can be a valid partner in questions about identity and ethics, and he uses the language of reason to convey his message. When he talks with Muslims he does not just speak as a scholar using reason, but as a fellow believer, using religious language to convey his message. A message that is different as it has a different goal.

With Muslims living in Europe he talks about establishing an inner harmony between Islam and modernity that they can apply in their daily lives as Muslims living in the West. With Muslims living in Muslim countries Ramadan discusses the possibility of a state based on

---

[83] Maréchal, *The Muslim Brothers in Europe: Roots and Discourse*, 148

Islam, with fair representation, independent judges and the protection of human rights. The principle sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunnah, provide legitimacy for all these matters. With his proposal for a state based on Islam and safeguarding human rights he seeks a harmony between Islam and modernity on the state level. In this thesis I will focus on what he has to say to his Muslim audiences.

The principle guiding his ideas about harmony between Islam and modernity is the principle of *tawhid*, the doctrine of Gods unity. The doctrine of God's unity is applied by Ramadan to God's creation and to His creatures. In the European context this points to the harmony to be realized through a European Islam, where a Muslim is not split between his life as a pious Muslim and his life in a secular society.

In countries with a Muslim majority the harmony between Islam and modernity is to be actualized in the state, meaning that not man but God has the highest authority, and there is no other authority beside Him. How this works out I will demonstrate after I have explained the concept of *tawhid* itself.

Tawhid

The concept of *tawhid* is vital to Ramadan's European Islam. The concept is introduced on the twelfth page of his book about Muslims in the West. The first meaning of this word is the oneness of God. He is the first Principle, Creator of all and eternally present. "He is the One (*al-Wahid)*, the Only One (*la ilaha illa Hu*), the Absolute (*al-Samad*), Justice (*al-Adl*), Truth (*al-Haqq*), and Light (*al-Nur*)."[84] However, on the level of human beings, this oneness is not immediately given. Whereas everything in nature, the whole of creation, follows the laws of nature and rule of instinct, and is thereby submissive to and at peace with God, only humans do not naturally submit to God. They have been given consciousness and freedom, opening up another dimension of faith, nature, submission and peace. In this dimension they have to listen, hear, understand, search, begin, resist, reform. They have to learn how to celebrate and pray with nature in submission before God.

God has given humans consciousness so that they may learn to recognize Him. To help them He has revealed signs (*Ayat*) in creation, and He revealed His message in the Qur'an. The names of God as they have been made known in these revelations show the need humans have of Him: Infinitely Near; All-Hearing; All-Seeing; All-Merciful. Revelation also teaches

---

[84] Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 12. In this book he continues on his idea of a European Muslim started in Tariq Ramadan, *To be a European Muslim: A Study of Islamic Sources in the European Context* (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1999).

humans to study their own inner lives. Looking inward could lead to a search for God and a sense of "the need of Him." The knowledge of the self leads to the knowledge of God and vice versa.[85]

The two Revelations, the written Book and the Book that is spread out, that is the universe, uncovers a harmonious concept of the human being. They teach humans the meaning of the effort towards bringing about harmony and justice, and how this effort is a requirement for humanity.

> The encounter with the Only One, the "full and natural faith" of the created universe, the "need of Him" as the essence of being human, are, I suggest, the three fundamentals of the universal at the heart of Islamic civilization. Flowing from our observations about the Transcendent and His names, we find a special concept of humankind.[86]

Man is created in the mirror image of God. "If God is one, everything in creation is in pairs, double, seeking union." The oneness that is found in the transcendent is only available for created beings through marriage, fusion or movement. As creation of the One, humans must find the unity of their own being, unity in their heart, soul, mind and body.[87]

The apparent duality in creation should not be confused with the duality that is found in Greek philosophy, where each concept of a pair of concepts opposes the other and each is characterized with a positive or negative quality. In Islamic tradition two constituent elements of humankind, for example body and soul, are not opposed to each other but rather complimentary. The human being is responsible for finding a balance, establishing harmony and making peace. Awareness of *tawhid* invites the human being to the divine path towards control of the contradictions within its being. This union brings humans to a oneness of the Being.

This Islamic teaching gives human beings responsibility and optimism. It demands that the conscious human being assumes responsibility to take control of his own life. It also is optimistic because it acknowledges every part of being human. Within this understanding a relationship of obligation and trust is established with the divine that is only fully achieved when the humans cross the threshold into the realm of inner peace.[88]

Awareness of the divine surpasses the opposition between faith and reason, setting in motion a quest for the original breath that needs reason to confirm the tenets of faith.[89]

---

[85] Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, 13
[86] Ibid., 14
[87] Ibid., 14–15
[88] Ibid., 15
[89] Ibid., 16

Each heart is born with a longing for a dimension that is "beyond", a quest for the transcendent. This is a direct result of the original covenant: In the Creation story in the Qur'an, the offspring of Adam is asked by God if He is their Lord, they affirm that He is, thereby confirming the original covenant between God and Adam. This original covenant is opposed to the Christian concept of original sin. According to Islam, humans are born innocent. They have a longing for a dimension that is "beyond", and then humans become responsible for their own actions, on the basis of the original covenant between God and man. Those humans who do not believe when they become responsible are the *kafir*. They are those who have abandoned the original covenant.

All human beings are required to turn to themselves to rediscover the original breath, so that they can revive and confirm it. For this purpose the two Revelations are given to humankind. Again faith and reason must be coupled. Faith is needed for the intellect to accept the signs, and reason is needed for faith to understand and acquire more self-understanding.[90]

> With awareness of the divine, facing the universe, individuals think of themselves above all as beings with responsibility. The faith and humility that surround this last idea carry persons to an understanding of the meaning of their obligations before any affirmation of their rights.[91]

This understanding offers people the awareness of their limitations so they have a better understanding of their freedom and rights. The primacy of obligations above rights is what sets the Islamic understanding of human rights apart from the formulation found in 1948 declaration.[92]

Tawhid applied to spirituality and ethics of a Muslim in a European society.

I will now show how the principle of *tawhid* is used in Ramadan's search for harmony between Islam and modernity in Europe, for Muslims living in Europe.

Tariq Ramadan was confronted with his European identity when he visited family in Egypt and he experienced a culture shock. Eating with his family he learned how different the Arab way of speaking was from the European way. Rather than bluntly saying what was meant, his family members were not explicitly saying what was meant and he had to listen between the lines. The culture shock was not just on the level of talking. Tariq Ramadan also experienced

---

[90] Ibid., 17

[91] Ibid., 18

[92] The whole UDHR is focussed on rights and freedoms, see UN, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

that he in fact had grown up in a European culture and realized how different for instance the sense of humour was.

His search for a European Muslim identity, confirming both his European and his Egyptian heritage, stemmed in part from this culture shock.[93]

Having been educated in French Literature, Philosophy, and Islamic Studies, Tariq Ramadan was well equipped for his quest. Also, his family heritage was of influence. He used the principles for reform that his grandfather had applied to update Islam to the context of the British colonization of Egypt. The sacred scriptures, the Qur'an and the Sunnah, retained their importance, but were subject to a new interpretation. This new interpretation was guided by judgement and reason. Ramadan states that Islam should evolve and respond to contemporary challenges. The interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah should be refined to provide solutions for actual social, economic and political problems.[94]

He is quick to add that Islam should not simply follow in the footsteps of Christianity and go through a period of reformation or enlightenment. Islam on its own has enough to offer to be able to cope with the challenges presented by modern culture.[95] The European Muslim should therefore step out of his marginalized position and participate in European society on an equal footing. Islam can provide the ethical theories necessary to question the goals of contemporary liberal societies, which apparently have abandoned all ideals and are driven by the economy and advanced technology.[96]

In opposing the marginalization of the Muslim minority in Europe, Ramadan does two things. He challenges Europeans to accept Muslims as full citizens with their own Muslim identity, and he challenges Muslims to abandon their role as a marginalized minority, and instead to fully participate in European society. Taking their role in European society the Muslims should bring their rich heritage with them. In doing so Ramadan opposes the idea that Muslims should follow the principle of *fiqh al-aqalliyyat*, religious law for minorities. This principle, used by the ECFR, claims that it is impossible to be a good Muslim in the European context. Ramadan believes that it is possible to be a good Muslim in the European context, but the practice of imitation, *taqlid*, should be abandoned for individual *ijtihad*.

---

[93] Joris Luyendijk, Tariq Ramadan and Karen de Bok, *Joris Luyendijk Ontmoet Tariq Ramadan* (Hilversum: VPRO, 2009), http://www.vpro.nl/programma/wintergasten/afleveringen/40824144/ (accessed January 25, 2010).
[94] Ramadan, *Islam, the West and the Challenges of Modernity*, 228
[95] Ibid., 228
[96] Ibid., 257–259 Ramadan is here drawing from the observations of Serge Latouche, an emeritus professor of Economics at Paris-Sud, who promotes de-growth of the economy.

The individual *ijtihad* that Muslims living in Europe can use to find harmony between Islam and modernity is an example of *tawhid* applied to the position of Muslims living in Europe. Ramadan is seeking a way for Muslims to live in harmony with their faith within the European context, claiming that being a good Muslim is possible in Europe. The imitation of Islamic law as found in the respective home countries should be disregarded, as adherence to that form of Islamic law in fact goes against the core values of Islam, as found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. "[T]he formalistic imitation of models in an age other than one's own is in fact betrayal of principles."[97]

Rather than learning how to imitate the Islamic law of their respective home countries, European Muslims should be handed the tools to bring the ethics of Islam along when they take part in European society. While this could be offered in Islamic education, this is as of yet not offered in Islamic schools. In Islamic schools Muslims only learn to imitate and copy old models (*taqlid*). Instead, Ramadan says, students should learn the principles of *ijtihad* to be able to exercise it on their own. Having these tools Muslims can then participate fully in society, using judgement and reason, founded on the religious points of reference of Islam, to find solutions for challenges they find on their individual paths. As a result they are not only Muslims when inside the mosque, and not only citizens when participating in society. They are Muslim citizens who participate in society and go to the mosque. They have found harmony, *tawhid*, in their life.[98]

On the basis of this new-found harmony European Muslims will be able to contribute to European society with their Muslim heritage, and they will be ready to participate in this society on an equal footing. Especially on the level of human rights the Islamic emphasis on obligation may balance the Western emphasis on individual rights. Ramadan himself challenges the European claim of the universality of human rights as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The 1948 human rights are a Western claim, according to Ramadan, and only in discussion with other claims on human rights can true universal rights be found. Islam as a comprehensive doctrine offers such a claim and should be allowed to challenge the Western view of human rights. The balance that could develop out of this discussion resembles the unity that humanity seeks in every aspect of creation, again being an example of *tawhid*. This example, moreover, shows how harmony between Islam and modernity could lead to harmony on the global level of human rights.

---

[97] Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, 133
[98] Ibid., 214–223

Ramadan's essential Islam

The European Islam that Ramadan is aiming at is based on his essential Islam. This essential Islam is primarily based in the ethical and legal dimension of Islam. The shape of Islam is based on the unambiguous in Islamic law. This covers most of the *shariat al-ibadat*, the laws concerning the personal religious life, i.e. the rituals of Islam. The Islamic laws concerning the social relations, *shariat al-mu'amalat*, are more ambiguous and thus open to a re-evaluation, based on *ijtihad*.

The need for Ramadan to develop a European Islam that is based on a harmony between Islam and modernity leads him to a development in the use of *tawhid*. *Tawhid* is developed from the doctrine of God's unity to a philosophical anthropology. Man is created by God in a constant tension between extremes, and it is man's responsibility to establish a harmony between those extremes. Ramadan calls this harmony *tawhid*.

Apart from being based on Islamic doctrine *tawhid*, as the inner harmony of the believer, is also part of the experiential and emotional dimension of Islam. With the inner stillness that it creates, *tawhid* is an affirmation of the individual's faith.

This *tawhid* can be achieved by an observance of the *shariat al-ibadat*, while re-evaluating the *shariat al-mu'amalat* to adapt it to the European context.

As Ramadan takes the ethical and legal dimension as basis for his essential Islam, the other dimensions are hardly affected at all. There is some room for cultural adaptation, but not in the practical and ritual, the experiential and emotional, the narrative and mythic, and the doctrinal and philosophical dimensions. The social and institutional and the material dimension are open to cultural adaptation. With the ethical and legal dimension of Islam, these dimensions contain the accidental elements of Islam, according to Ramadan.

The view of Ramadan on democracy and women's rights

In this thesis I am comparing the approach of the authors towards democracy and women's rights, in order to understand their view on the relation between Islam and modernity. The principle of *tawhid* is applied to Ramadan's view on the role and the shape of the state. His view on the rights of women rests on a different principle, his use of *naskh*, the abrogation of Qur'anic verses.

Ramadan states that the *usul al-fiqh*, the principles of jurisprudence, have taught Muslims how to differentiate between the universal principles and their implementation in a given culture. His principle of integrating Islam in a culture (consider Islamic everything that does

not oppose Islam) does allow him to consider certain implementations as Islamic. Some forms and regulations concerning women could be considered Islamic because they were not opposing Islam, however these implementation should not be confused with the principles of Islam. Perpetuating the customs of the home country, Muslims living in Europe, confuse the implementation of Islam with Islam itself. What was customary back there is not essentially Islamic, it is accidental and for that reason can be abandoned for other customs that are not opposing Islam.[99]

It should be noted that it is only the accidental that can be discarded. The essential of Islam, on which the Qur'an is unambiguous, must be maintained. The Qur'an cannot be made to say anything. On matters, like the five daily prayers or the headscarf, the Qur'an and the Sunnah are unambiguous; other matters that are ambiguous should be the subject to the principles of Islamic jurisprudence, the *usul al-fiqh*. With these principles of Islamic jurisprudence it is possible to look for a new interpretation of an ambiguous text that relates to the new context. The *usul al-fiqh* guarantee that these interpretations do not oppose Islam, and everyone can do this when taught the principles of *ijtihad*.[100]

This use of the Islamic sources combined with the *usul al-fiqh*, is the groundwork for Ramadan's view on the status of women, as I will demonstrate after I have discussed Ramadan's view on the state.

Tawhid on the state level

On the level of the state harmony between Islam and modernity leads to a complete political model. This political model could be, or should be, implemented in countries where Muslims are a majority. The political model based on Islamic heritage can be a valid alternative to democracy.

Ramadan demonstrates how fundamental human rights are protected by the Islamic call for a "social jihad", where independent judges safeguard justice. In his model of s*hura* fair representation is safeguarded as it is in Western democracy. The advantage of the Islamic society that Ramadan proposes is that, on top of human rights, justice and fair representation, this society gives God His due place in society. And giving God His due place in society extends the harmony that Muslims can find in their individual lives to the state level.

---

[99] Ibid., 139
[100] Ibid., 140

These fundamental human rights are safeguarded by Ramadan's principle of the so-called "social jihad". Jihad is usually divided in a major and minor jihad, or inner and outer struggle. The outer struggle, the minor jihad, refers to armed combat, while the inner or major struggle signifies any non-violent struggle for harmony in oneself, inward purification. Ramadan positions his "social jihad" in the major jihad, or the struggle for harmony. He compares his "social jihad" to the struggle for social justice found in the Latin-American liberation theology. Fighting in the path of God is interpreted as fighting against injustices, poverty, illiteracy, delinquency and exclusion. Fighting against these obstacles to an ideal life, to respect, and coexistence might lead to a direct confrontation and armed struggle, but, as Hassan Al-Banna already said: Dying in the way of God is difficult, but living in the way of God is still more difficult. It is a jihad for life, so that every human being is given the rights which are his.[101]

It is each individual's responsibility to fight for the principle of justice, which consists of the following rights: the right to life and a vital minimum; the right of the family; the right to housing; the right to education; the right to work; the right to justice; the right to solidarity. These rights, this principle of justice should be the goal of shari'a.[102]

Shari'a should not be confused with "Islamic Laws" that are implemented by some dictatorial regimes to maintain themselves with an arsenal of the most repressive laws against their people. These regimes confuse the project of social reform, the real application of shari'a, Ramadan says, with the application of a penal code. It is a confusion of the façade of Islam with the essence of Islam. This confusion is a recurring theme in the thinking of Ramadan. Social jihad, the goal of Ramadan's shari'a, safeguards the fundamental human rights that are Islamic.[103]

Justice is safeguarded by independent judges, who exercise their function in an autonomous fashion, according to the principle of equality before the law. "The separation of powers is one of the fundamental principles of the city, and this was respected from the moment Abu Bakr succeeded to the Caliphate."[104]

The principle of fair representation is safeguarded by Ramadan's proposal for a national Council of Deliberation, *shura*. Its members are elected by the people, either directly or by representative local councils. The members of this Council of Deliberation should be chosen

---

[101] Maréchal, *The Muslim Brothers in Europe: Roots and Discourse*, 223; Ramadan, *Islam, the West and the Challenges of Modernity*, 59–69
[102] Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, 149–152; Ramadan, *Islam, the West and the Challenges of Modernity*, 39–43
[103] Ibid., 39–46
[104] Ibid., 85

based on their competence in either the knowledge of the "acknowledged principles of Islamic orientation," which guarantees the representation of God in politics, or their knowledge of social, political, economic and medical sciences.

Every law in the nation should be tested on its compliance with the Qur'an and the Sunnah by the *shura*. If these principles of Islamic orientation have nothing to say on the matter, then reason and judgement (*ijtihad*) should be used by the *shura*.

The president of the nation should be chosen by the people, either directly through general elections or indirectly by vote of the Council of Deliberation or by regional councils. The people are asked to pledge allegiance to the person chosen by the majority of the people. However, a president that spreads injustice and corruption, and denies the citizens their rights, cannot receive allegiance.[105]

This political model safeguards the sovereignty of God in all matters, extending the harmony between Islam and modernity to the level of state.

The position of women presented by Ramadan

I have discussed Ramadan's approach to democracy above and will now turn to his views of women's rights. Tariq Ramadan acknowledges that women in Western Muslim communities are still far from the Islamic ideal of equality before God, complementarity within the family and in social relations, and financial independence. Ramadan emphasizes again that it is not outer appearances which define customs as Islamic. Female circumcision or the lower social position of women might be considered Islamic in sub-Saharan Africa, but it should not be seen as proof of true Islam, as they are not to be considered as the core of Islam at all, but rather the accidents of cultural circumstances, and thus they are "accidental" elements of Islam.

It is not by simply adhering to the forms and regulations that were handed down through the generations that an Islamic ideal is achieved. Often these forms and regulations are not Islamic but cultural and thus accidental elements of Islam. The way to differentiate between the essential and the accidental of Islam is simple, according to Ramadan. On matters on which the Qur'an and the Sunnah are unambiguous, like the veil, these scriptural sources should be followed, that part of Islam is essential. Matters on which the Qur'an and the Sunnah are ambiguous, like the status of women, there is room for cultural influence, as long as it does not oppose Islam. This can be done by applying the principles of Islamic

---

[105] Ibid., 84–86

jurisprudence, *usul al-fiqh*, for a new deliberation, in short by applying *ijtihad*. Every Muslim who is sufficiently educated on the principles of Islam and the method of *ijtihad* can do this.[106]

By following this principle Ramadan is able to demonstrate that Islam offers women absolute equality before God and inalienable rights that all societies must respect. Some scholars might claim that the Qur'an mentions men's guardianship over women, *qawama*. This verse is an example of an issue on which the Islam is ambiguous, with on the one hand the *qawama*, and on the other hand the emphasis on the equality of men and women before God. Ramadan deflects the claim of those scholars with a reference to the historical context of the revelation. Simply citing a verse from the Qur'an does not definitely demonstrate anything, especially when other verses appear to contradict that verse. Ramadan states that the successive revelations matured the people of Medina, who lived in a patriarchal society, so that they could accept the equality between men and women.

This equality is found in the last public words of Muhammad concerning women: "O people! Your women have a right to you as you also have a right on them"; "Treat women with kindness! Have fear of God in relation to women and make sure to want good for them". These last public words of Muhammad corresponded with last revealed verse regarding the life of a couple:

> And of His signs is that He created for you, of yourselves, spouses, that you might repose in them, and He has set between you love and mercy. Surely in that are signs for people who consider. (Qur'an 30:21)

The example of Muhammad (the Sunnah) and the Qur'an show the true status of men and women, equal before God. The best among human beings, man or woman, is the one who is more pious.[107]

For women to be pious, they should be given their individual responsibility to, for instance, wear the veil. Society should give women the freedom and education that is needed to take that responsibility. The parents and teachers should hand the children the knowledge about Islam, so that women know how to make that choice. The women need to learn what is essentially Islamic, wearing the veil, and what is accidental, the lower status of women, female circumcision. With that knowledge they will be in a position to freely choose to accept Islam and do what it requires.[108]

---

[106] Ibid., 52; Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, 139
[107] Ibid., 140
[108] Ramadan, *Islam, the West and the Challenges of Modernity*, 54

Women have a right to education and from this education their personal responsibility before God and society is born. This responsibility has no sense if women don't have the freedom to determine and choose for themselves. Islam therefore demands that women have that freedom. It is in fact not Islam that is the enemy of women's rights but ignorance and illiteracy. In the West the inherent freedom of Islam is visible in how women freely choose whether or not to wear the veil and how they respect each other's choice.[109]

For society at large this means that women should receive proper education, to hand them the tools that are available in Islam to liberate them from local customs, the accidental elements of Islam. First they will have to learn about the rights that are available for them in Islam, in order to defend them.[110]

The view of Ramadan on the position and the rights of women could be perceived as an influence of the individualistic element of modernity, as every women needs to make her own choice, but it lacks the liberation element of modernity. They can choose to accept or reject Islam; they cannot choose what Islam is.

Conclusion

The Muslim Brotherhood's new approach to Islam and their application of *ijtihad* to update Islam to the contemporary context has influenced Tariq Ramadan's concept for a European Islam, which establishes harmony between Islam and modernity. He too believes that principles of Islamic orientation are to be found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, while the matters not dealt with by these sources are open to judgement and reason, *ijtihad*. This *ijtihad* is no longer a joined effort of the whole Muslim society, as appeared to be the case in the Muslim Brotherhood. In Ramadan's concept of inner harmony, *tawhid*, *ijtihad* is a tool for individuals to incorporate Islam in their daily life.

Ramadan mobilised the Brotherhood's method of *ijtihad* to hand the Muslims living in Europe a tool to be fully Islamic in a non-Muslim society. The adage "Everything is permitted unless a text from the Qur'an or from the prophetic tradition clearly and explicitly stipulates the contrary" is now a guiding principle for individual Muslims.

Ramadan believes that, while every Muslim should be able to apply *ijtihad* in combination with the Qur'an and the Sunnah, the European Muslims especially should learn how to use *ijtihad* in their day to day live. This will enable them to establish harmony with their faith,

---

[109] Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, 142
[110] Ramadan, *Islam, the West and the Challenges of Modernity*, 51–59

tawhid in a Western context. This harmony will be the foundation of a European Islam, integrating the principles of Islam with life in Europe. Outside the Western context the same method can be used to guide a legislative Council of Deliberation (*shura*) to extend this harmony between Islam and modernity to the state level.

In both instances the "social jihad" is a tool that Muslims can use to establish a just society, where rights that are intrinsically human are given to every human being, including women. Women in Muslim and non-Muslim countries could use the method presented by Ramadan to learn what the rights are that Islam offers women, so that they can defend those rights. They then can use it to liberate themselves from local patriarchal customs with the principles of Islamic orientation.

In short, Muslims should use the tools available in their own Muslim heritage to establish a harmony between Islam and modernity, allowing them to bring their heritage with them when they enter modernity.

5. ABDULLAHI AHMED AN-NA'IM

Introduction

Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im is famous for his revolutionary approach towards not only Islam in general but to the Qur'an itself. An-Na'im was born in 1950 in Sudan, where he studied law. He joined the Republican Brothers of *Ustadh* (revered teacher) Mahmoud Mohamed Taha. Taha drew a radical conclusion from the distinction that exists between the surahs revealed in Mecca and those revealed in Medina. This ultimately led to his execution by the Sudanese authorities, and to An-Na'im's flight from Sudan. An-Na'im later worked for the African Division of Human Rights Watch, where he made the observation that the universal human rights would have more support if that support was based in the local cultural tradition. In his ideas about a secular state and a re-evaluation of shari'a, both experiences have been a major contribution.

I will first summarize this radically new approach of Mahmoud Taha, in the context of Taha's life, and then I will turn to the life of An-Na'im. Next, I shall demonstrate how he combined the approach of his mentor Taha with the human rights found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I then situate the view An-Na'im has on the essential Islam in the model of Ninian Smart. This demonstration will be followed by An-Na'im's argument for a secular state and a re-evaluation of shari'a. This argument will naturally lead to his stance toward democracy and the rights of women.

Mahmoud Taha, his life and ideas

Mahmoud Taha was either born in 1909 or 1911 in Rufa'h, central Sudan. Sources are not conclusive about the birth date, as there was no birth registry at the time. He studied engineering at the Gordon Memorial College in Khartoum, and started work at the Sudan Railways. Sudan at the time was ruled by a British-Egyptian coalition, after the successful negotiation of Egyptian Nationalist leader Zaghlul with the victors of the Great War.

Taha became active in politics, striving for an independent Sudanese republic. With other intellectuals he formed the Republican Party in October 1945. In the course of the struggle for independence Taha was arrested and detained by the British for two years. During these years Taha took up meditating on the Qur'an, which he continued after his detention. After his time of imprisonment and isolation three years of self-imposed religious seclusion, called *khalwah*

followed. In those years he meditated about the meaning of the Qur'an and the role of Islamic law, shari'a.

His five years of meditation resulted in a revolutionary reading of the Qur'an and a new understanding of the concept of abrogation. Abrogation is a principle used to solve the problem of conflicting verses in the Qur'an. Taha articulated his insights as "the Second Message" of Islam.[111]

The Second Message of Islam

Traditionally, the concept of abrogation was used to explain opposing texts in the Qur'an. The Qur'an was not revealed in one instance, but over the course of thirty-two years (609-632 CE).[112] At the time of his first revelations Muhammad lived in Mecca, in a hostile environment. The revelations at this time were of a moderate, universal nature. Eventually Muhammad had to flee Mecca and he took up residence in Medina. This was the Hijrah, the start of the Islamic calendar. In Medina Muhammad met a friendly audience and was able to start the first Muslim community/state. The revelations from this period were of a different character. They were more concrete, more outspoken and some more hostile towards others. An example of these more hostile verses is the following verse in the Qur'an:

> O believers, take not Jews and Christians as friends; they are friends of each other. Whoso of
> you makes them his friends is one of them. God guides not the people of the evildoers.
> (Qur'an 5:51)

The principle idea of abrogation, also called *naskh*, was that the latest revealed surah superseded the previous revelation about the same subject as it was revealed in what was more, from an Islamic perspective, an ideal environment. In the Muslim community of Medina Muhammad finally was able to fully implement Islam. The principle itself is based on the following verse in the Qur'an:

> And for whatever verse We abrogate or cast into oblivion, We bring a better or the like of it;
> knowest thou not that God is powerful over everything? (Qur'an 2:106)[113]

Mahmoud Taha turned this principle around. Abrogation was not a permanent abrogation of the earlier revelation; it was a concession to the limited belief of the Medina community. The

---

[111] Mahmud Muhammad Taha, *The Second Message of Islam* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 2–5.
[112] T. J. Winter, *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 19–22, 183.
[113] The word that is here translated as "verse" (*ayat*) could also mean sign or miracle.

earlier, more universal revelations, were only suspended. Temporary revelations were revealed to offer the believers in Medina a doorstep to the eternal message revealed in Mecca. Once the believers were able to fully incorporate the universal principles of the earlier revelations, they could let go of the temporary revelations.

> The Meccan and the Medinese texts differ, not because of the time and the place of the revelation, but essentially because of the audience to whom they are addressed. The phrase "O believers" addresses a particular nation, while "O, mankind" speaks to all people.[114]

With the universal principles incorporated in the Meccan verses of the Qur'an, Muslims would freely choose to submit their will to the will of God. Those who have incorporated Islam have achieved the state of ultimate Islam, as opposed to the initial Islam. The temporary verses of the Qur'an are part of the First Message of Islam; the universal verses are part of the Second Message.

Taha illustrates the ascend from the initial First Message to the ultimate Second message by a seven step ladder: *al-islam* [submission]; *al-'iman* [faith]; *al-ihsan* [perfection]; *'ilm al-yaqin* [the knowledge of certainty]; *'ayn al-yaqin* [the eye of certainty]; *haqq al-yaqin* [the truth of certainty]; *al-islam*. The last step, *al-islam*, is the first step in a new cycle. Once the first ladder is mastered the following cycle begins, on and on into infinity. "Islam is a spiral, having its beginning with us in the law of the community and its end is with God in infinity."[115]

Once this ultimate state of Islam is reached, the believers will no longer need the crutches of the temporal message to support the just and good in their society. They will be able to support the good and just from within. They have gone through an inner enlightenment.

The good and just society is based on three equalities: economic, political and social. Economic equality is found in socialism, political equality in democracy and social equality is characterized by a lack of social classes and discrimination based on colour, faith race, or sex.[116]

An-Na'im made use of Taha's application of abrogation, *naskh*, to support universal human rights in Islam. The argument Taha made for a social and democratic society is used by An-Na'im to support his own argument for a secular state.

---

[114] Taha, *The Second Message of Islam*, 125
[115] Ibid., 168
[116] Ibid., 153

Taha and shariʻa

This new view on the authority of the verses revealed in Mecca naturally leads to a reform of shariʻa, as much of the existing shariʻa is based on the verses from Medina. Islam and its by-product shariʻa are in constant development, a journey towards unity with God:

> The progress of Islam by means of the Qurʼan is progress towards God in infinitude (*al-itlaq*).
> As such it has not been, and never can be, fully and conclusively explained.[117]

Mahmoud Taha used this argument to separate the type of shariʻa, used in Sudanese family law, from the eternal Islam, affirming the limits of human interpretation, and understanding shariʻa as part of that human interpretation of God's divine law.

Shariʻa, Taha stated, had to be updated in concordance with the new insights in the understanding of the Qurʼan, before it could once again be used in an Islamic society. This updated shariʻa would have to safeguard the economic, political, and social equality of all citizens.

This would also lead to a support for a real democracy in Islam:

> The First Message was not democratic, it approached democracy at a time when society as a whole was not yet ready for true democracy.[118]

This true democracy has as its objective to realize the dignity of man. To this end democracy has established the following principles:[119]

– Recognition of basic equality between all individuals.
– The value of the individual as above that of the state.
– Government as the servant of the people.
– The rule of law.
– Appeal to reason, experiment, and experience.
– The rule of the majority, with the utmost respect for rights of any minority.
– Democratic method and procedures used to achieve objectives.

The dignity of man is based on his capability, beyond that of other living beings to learn and develop. Democracy is the political model that provides the best opportunities for man to realize his dignity. In contrast to dictatorship, democracy is based on the right to make mistakes. This does not mean that man is encouraged to make mistakes, but is allowed to use his freedom to learn from those mistakes. That this freedom to err is necessary in Islam, Taha

---

[117] Ibid., 147
[118] Ibid., 166
[119] Ibid., 159

says, is based on a quote from a Hadith: "If you do not make mistakes, and then ask for forgiveness, God shall replace you by people who make mistakes, ask for forgiveness, and are forgiven."[120]

Even the Prophet had no dominion over the believers, Taha claims, quoting 88:21-22 of the Qur'an: "Then remind them, as you are only a reminder. You have no dominion over them." This leads to Taha's conclusion that no human being is perfect enough to be entrusted with the freedom of others.

The Islamic political concept *shura* was a temporary solution where the rule of a mature individual prepared the nation to become democratic. It was only in place until the people were ready to assume their individual responsibility. It is the task of present-day Muslims to elevate legislation by basing Shari'a law not on the subsidiary, temporary verses of the Qur'an, but on the eternal Meccan verses. This elevation of shari'a will usher in the age of democracy and socialism and open the way to individual freedom. "It is the duty of the people of the Qur'an to pave the way for *al-muslimin* [those who have reached the state of ultimate Islam]."[121]

The vision of Taha in the community life of the Republican Brothers

The political reality of Sudan kept Taha from fully implementing his vision. When Taha came out of his self-chosen seclusion, he transformed the Republican Party into the Republican Brothers, a movement to propagate his new views.

Despite the difficult political reality in Sudan, he established a community which applied his vision of Islam as far as possible, that is within the confines of prevailing shari'a, which was based on the verses revealed in Medina and according to the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence.

The community of Republican Brothers managed to apply the principles of equality between men and women. Women members participated fully in the group. The existing marriage laws, that were derived from the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence, were stretched as far as possible. For example, they used the possibility that was available in the Hanafi school, to allow men to give their women the permission to unilaterally divorce from their husbands. Husbands extended the right to divorce in the marriage contract, and arbitration clauses were added to keep marital differences out of the court-system.

---

[120] Ibid., 160
[121] Ibid., 160

55

Another problem in the Sudanese society was the high bride-price. It was so high that it kept most young couples in Sudan from marrying. To counter this problem the bride-price was reduced to the absolute minimum, signifying that no price is sufficient to purchase a wife and that marriage was an equal partnership. With this plan the Republicans resolved the legal and social problems of marriage that existed in Shari'a family law in Sudan.[122]

This equality of women was also an element of Taha's ideas which An-Na'im promoted. He also used it to support the concept that all human beings are born free and equal "without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin" in Islam.[123]

The Republican Brothers under the rule of Numeiri

The life of Mahmoud Taha came to an abrupt end in 1985 during the reign of Gaafar Numeiri.

In 1969 Gaafar Numeiri overthrew the civilian government of President Al-Ghazali with four other army officers. In 1971 he signed the Addis Abeba agreement, granting autonomy to the South and ending the civil war between the Christian-Animist south and the Islamic north that had started shortly after independence in 1956. Numeiri nationalized banks and industries and introduced a number of social and pan-Arabic reforms.

Initially the Republicans of Taha were left alone, but in 1973 Mahmoud Taha's public lectures were banned, and his disciples operated with increasing difficulty. Mid-1983 this culminated in the imprisonment without charge of the Republicans' leadership.

In August 1983, a few weeks after the imprisonment of the Republican's leadership, Shari'a law was imposed by various presidential decrees – Numeiri had been elected president in a referendum held in 1973 – in the whole of Sudan, including the autonomous South. Shortly after civil war broke out again. The Republicans were one of the groups protesting these presidential decrees, because it undermined national unity between the Muslim north and non-Muslim south and led to harsh and repressive policies in the country as a whole.[124]

In December 1984 the Republicans were all released. It is unclear if this was done in response to mounting international pressure, or as a trap to prosecute the Republicans under the newly enacted Shari'a laws. Two weeks after his release Mahmoud Taha, on January 2, 1984, was again arrested and now charged with apostasy and creating religious turmoil

---

[122] Ibid., 5–7
[123] UN, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Art. 2
[124] Taha, *The Second Message of Islam*, 8

(*fitnah*) among the public. He was tried on January 7 and convicted to death, unless he repented and recanted his views. This sentence was confirmed by a special court of appeal. The special court of appeal did not offer Taha the chance to repent and recant his views. The judges believed that he had proven to be too stubborn. A few days later the President of the Republic, Numeiri, reaffirmed the previous rulings. The sentence was to be executed by hanging on Friday January 18 at dawn. Taha's body was buried at an unknown location somewhere in the desert.

Several months after Taha's execution, An-Na'im found an opportunity to leave Sudan and left for the United States. The experience of witnessing Taha's execution probably marked An-Na'im's ideas, and he made a promise to publish and develop the ideas of Mahmoud Taha. In April 1985 Numeiri's regime was overthrown after mass demonstrations culminating in a coup d'état, seventy-six days after Numeiri had Taha executed.[125]

Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im

Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im was born in 1950 in Sudan. He studied Law at the University of Khartoum (1970). He continued his studies in the UK, where he received a master's degree in Law and Criminology at Cambridge University (1973). At the University of Edinburgh he obtained his PhD in Law (1976). In 1976 An-Na'im returned to Sudan as a lecturer of Law at the University of Khartoum.

Since 1968 An-Na'im was active in the Republican Brothers movement of Mahmoud Taha. When the leadership of the Republican Brothers was imprisoned in 1983, An-Na'im was among the detainees. He was never interviewed by police officials, and was released with the others on December 19, 1984.

A few months after Taha's execution An-Na'im went to the United States, where he took up a position as Visiting Professor of Law at the University of California at Los Angeles. In 1987 he published the English translation of Taha's book *The Second Message of Islam*. An-Na'im made it his primary mission, when he left Sudan, to publish and develop the ideas of his mentor Taha. The translation of *The Second Message of Islam* was the start of that mission. The publication of *Toward an Islamic Reformation* and *Islam and the Secular State*[126] was

---

[125] Ibid., 8–17

[126] 'Abd Allah Ahmad Na'im, *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights, and International Law. Syracuse.* N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1990, and *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari'a* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008).

part of the further development of Taha's ideas. In these books he used the Second Message of Taha as a basis for human rights in Islam.[127]

Hoping that he could return to Sudan one day, An-Na'im took another temporary position at the College of Law, University of Saskatchewan in Canada. When the Islamic fundamentalist regime that took power in 1989 consolidated its power in the early nineties, An-Na'im abandoned the hope of returning to Sudan. He then accepted the position of Executive Director of Africa Watch, now the African Division of Human Rights Watch, from June 1993 until April 1995. In 1995 An-Na'im joined the Law faculty as Professor of Law at Emory University, in Atlanta, Georgia.[128]

In the position of Executive Director of Africa Watch An-Na'im discovered the importance of cultural support for universal human rights. In his academic life he combined his efforts for a liberal modernist understanding of Islam, propagating the views of Mahmoud Taha, with the promotion of an overlapping consensus over the universality of human rights between different cultural and religious traditions all over the world. It is his firm belief that every cultural or religious tradition should find support for universal human rights in their own traditions. Once human rights are seen to be supported by tradition, individuals would be more inclined to support them. Over the last decades the focus of An-Na'im's scholarship has been on cultural legitimization of human rights and modernization of shari'a.[129]

The Second Message of Islam and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

It was in the Second Message of Islam, worked out by his mentor Taha, that An-Na'im found the support for universal human rights in Islam. Taha's idea of an ultimate Islam as goal for every individual believer combined with his understanding that Islam ultimately demanded a democratic and socialist society, provided An-Na'im with the necessary support for the idea of a democratic state based on a constitution. This democratic state would offer the freedom that Taha had needed for every individual believer, so that they could take responsibility for their faith, a sign of reaching the ultimate Islam.

---

[127] Taha, *The Second Message of Islam*, 9; 'Abd Allah Ahmad Na'im, "Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im," http://www.law.emory.edu/aannaim/ (accessed January 11, 2010).

[128] 'Abd Allah Ahmad Na'im, "CV 2009," http://www.law.emory.edu/aannaim/docs/CV2009.doc (accessed January 11, 2010).

[129] Na'im, *Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im*

An-Na'im makes an important choice in the narrative and mythical dimension of Islam. Following Taha he distinguishes between the verses of the Qur'an that were revealed in Mecca, and those verses revealed in Medina, and gave priority to the verses of Mecca over the verses of Medina. The main goal of Islam is not a good and just society under the guidance of God. The main goal of Islam is to bring the individual closer to God, eventually even oneness with God (*tawhid*). This oneness with God, which was an ideal in Sufi mysticism, is now presented as an ideal for all the Muslim believers.

An-Na'im's preference for the Meccan verses leads to a complete re-evaluation of all other dimensions of Islam. The choice in the narrative and mythic dimension of Islam also has its consequences for the doctrinal and philosophical, the ethical and legal, and the social and institutional dimensions of Islam. With more emphasis given to universal Islam, rules that are based on a contextualized Islam are abrogated. This means doing away with stoning, and corporal punishment. It also means that there is no need for Muslims to return to the guidance of the Caliphate.

Shari'a, according to An-Na'im, should not be understood as a legal system that justifies repression of women, corporal punishment and stoning. Shari'a should be understood as "the way that leads to the source", a set of rules that guides the individual to oneness with God. In the past the social rules of the *shariat al-mu'amalat* have been useful as a tool for the state to guide its citizens, when they were not yet ready to accept the ultimate message of Islam. The scaffolding of the *shariat al-mu'amalat* was needed to steer society to a maturity that was a necessary condition for acceptance of that ultimate message, the Second Message of Islam.

Now that society has reached a certain maturity, it is able to guide itself towards goodness and justice thanks to each individual's relationship with God. The state no longer has the task of steering towards a good and just society under the guidance of God. The part of shari'a that guided the social interactions of a society is a fossil of the old task of government. With the guidance from God now being situated in individuals, society needs to let go of this fossil.

The scaffolding of the fossilized shari'a can now be taken away, as humanity has grown into maturity and can now accept what is necessary for the ultimate Islam: democracy and social justice.

The higher authority given to the more universal Meccan verses also demonstrates the view held by Mahmoud Taha and consequently by Abdullahi An-Na'im, on the society of Medina. This view deviates from the traditional view on this first Islamic state as the ideal society for

every Muslim. Taha and An-Na'im believe that the society of 7th century Medina is not an ideal that Muslims should strive for today. It was a temporal phase for Islamic society, and the fact that Muhammad ruled this society does not sanctify that society.

This view on the Islamic state in Medina has a consequence for the social and institutional dimension. There is no need for a Caliph for Muslims to be good Muslims, and therefore there is no need for the reinstitution of the Caliphate.

The practical and ritual and the experiential and emotional dimension of Islam are least affected by An-Na'im's preference for the Meccan verses, as they are mostly about the individual's relationship with God. The material dimension isn't even mentioned by An-Na'im, probably because he considers it a purely cultural element of religion.

The secular state and shari'a

In *Islam and the Secular State* An-Na'im sets out an Islamic argument for a secular state and a re-evaluation of shari'a, understood as "the way that leads to the source". The secular state, guaranteeing human rights as determined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, provides the platform for this re-evaluation. The basis of this re-evaluation is the same as what supports universal human rights, the Second Message of Islam. Having provided a forum for discussing the shari'a in the secular state, An-Na'im invites his fellow Muslims to root shari'a in the Second Message. This re-evaluated shari'a is not to be enforced by the state.[130]

Enforcement of shari'a by the state goes against shari'a itself. Shari'a demands of the Muslim to be a believer by conviction and free choice. Any enforcement of shari'a goes against that principle. It is for this reason that the state should be secular, with a secular state being a state that facilitating the possibility of religious piety out of honest conviction, but neutral regarding religious doctrine.[131]

Throughout history every enforcement of shari'a in public law has been the result of the political power of the state, and not of religious law. The fact that some states claim that they are enforcing shari'a does not necessarily make it valid. No state, An-Na'im holds, has ever been Islamic, neither the present Iran, Saudi-Arabia or Pakistan, nor the historic state of Abu Bakr in Medina.[132]

---

[130] Na'im, *Islam and the Secular State*, vii
[131] Ibid., 1
[132] Ibid., 1–2, 280

An-Na'im bases this view on shari'a not solely on his own observations. The view that shari'a cannot be codified as state law, is supported by one of the principle thinkers about an Islamic state, Rashid Ridda. Ridda made a distinction about the ideal Caliphate of the righteous caliphs, and the actual caliphate under which Muslims lived for the best part of their history, and even in the ideal Caliphate, shari'a is a criterion to judge public law, not a lwa in its own right. The judgement of public law would then only apply to matters concerning religion; other areas of law can be independent of religion.[133]

Shari'a then, cannot be implemented by the state, as it is an ideal/divine law. Individual believers are welcome to follow that divine law, but it is their individual responsibility to do so. It is the responsibility of the state to create the conditions and provide the individual with the freedom to take that responsibility. A secular democracy based on a constitution, safeguarding the rights of all citizens, is best equipped to provide individuals the maximum possible freedom. For this reason a secular state with a constitution is preferred by An-Na'im.

An-Na'im's view on democracy and women's rights

As An-Na'im believes in the universality of human rights of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, he opposes the principles such as male guardianship of women, which is called *qawama*; sovereignty of Muslims over non-Muslims, which is known as *dhimma*; and violently aggressive jihad.

These principles should not only be abandoned by the state, the peoples' understanding of shari'a should also be subject to reform. Without such a reformed understanding, even when principles like *qawama* and *dhimma* are not enforced by the state, they would still be a powerful influence on social relations and the political behaviour of Muslims.[134]

An-Na'im's secular state and democracy

In the above I already mentioned An-Na'im's preference for a secular state. This state would have to be a democratic one, following Taha's belief that this was the ultimate goal of Islam, and his own conviction that a democracy would best provide the citizens of a state with the freedom needed to a re-evaluation of Islam. This democracy would have to be maintained on the basis of a constitution, safeguarding the principle rights of the citizenry, including

---

[133] Ibid., 2; Hamid 'Inayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 71, 79–83.

[134] Na'im, *Islam and the Secular State*, 39

minority rights. The basis for this democracy is to be found within the universal message of Islam.

In this way, Islam could be one of the religions that provide the secular state with moral guidance for the political community. Religion could help satisfy and discipline needs of believers that are non-political.[135]

An-Naʿim's view on women's rights

It is beyond dispute that women and non-Muslims are subject to restrictions under the traditional interpretations of shariʿa. For instance verse 4:34 of the Qur'an has been used to establish men's guardianship over women (*qawama*). Apart from just betraying a demeaning attitude towards women, this principle denies them the right to hold public office. In public office they might have some authority over men, contradicting the principle of men's guardianship over women. This restricting principle would therefore have to be among the principles that should be re-evaluated in the re-evaluation of shariʿa that An-Naʿim proposes.[136]

The critique of An-Naʿim is directed both towards both extremes of, on the one hand, a society dominated by one interpretation of religion, and, on the other hand, of a society dominated by a complete secular way of life. An-Naʿim beliefs that prohibiting women from wearing a headscarf in school in the name of *laïcité*, as happens in France, is an objectionable exclusion of persons and groups. Prohibiting women from wearing headscarves is an unnecessary intrusion on the freedom of religion. Citizens should be free to choose whether or not to wear them. An exception could be made in specific situations where wearing a headscarf could lead to dangerous situations.

This example of the headscarf shows that An-Naʿim strives for complete freedom for women within the boundaries of civic reason, as of every citizen in a modern society.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how An-Naʿim has taken the ideas of his mentor Taha and combined them with his own in his search for cultural support for universal human rights. With Taha's understanding of the Second Message of Islam, An-Naʿim has found the support for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the sacred text of Islam, the Qur'an. An-

---

[135] Ibid., 41
[136] Ibid., 109

Na'im made a choice in the narrative and mythical dimension of Islam. This choice, for the Second Message, has major consequences for the doctrinal and philosophical, the ethical and legal, and the social and institutional dimensions of Islam.

Having found support for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Islam, An-Na'im can argue for a secular state, safeguarding fundamental human rights as found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and, as he explains, in the Second Message of Islam. With the emphasis now lying on the earlier verses in the Qur'an, rather than the verses revealed in Medina, the divine law that is shari'a should also be re-evaluated. This re-evaluation of shari'a should take place in the public domain created by the secular state.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this thesis I have discussed three Muslim thinkers: Abdolkarim Soroush, Tariq Ramadan and Abdullahi An-Na'im, and their attempts to harmonize Islam and modernity.

To do so I posed three questions: (1) What is characteristic in the authors thought? Which hermeneutical methods have the thinkers used to interpret Islam? (2) How and to what extend do the authors distinguish the essential from the accidental, or temporal, in Islam? (3) How does this essential Islam relate to modernity? In the following I will compare the three on these topics.

General approach of the authors

The three have each found a very distinct way to combine the values of Islam and modernity. They each have their own hermeneutical approach to interpret Islam.

Soroush used a philosophical approach. He made a distinction between religion and religious understanding, and showed how religious understanding is constantly influenced by human culture. Democracy and human rights such as equality between the sexes are part of the contemporary culture and therefore available for current religious understanding.

Ramadan turned *ijtihad*, which was promoted by the twentieth century reformists as a task of theologically trained scholars, into a tool for each individual Muslim. He demonstrated how this application of the scriptural sources of Islam could help in establishing a harmony between Islam and modernity, *tawhid*. This individual harmony would also enable European Muslims to bring their Muslim heritage to the European forum, allowing Muslim ethics to question Western concepts on their own terms.

With the Second Message of Islam of his mentor Taha, An-Na'im was able to find a solid basis in Qur'an itself for the human rights as declared in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. With this new basis he has laid the foundation for a secular state that protects human rights, such as freedom of religion and the equality of women. This secular state is acceptable for Muslims as it is based on the universal message of Islam.

Despite these different approaches they all managed to harmonize Islam and modernity.

The essential and the accidental in Islam

Using Smart I have been able to demonstrate how each author took another dimension of Islam as their vantage point, and how this different vantage point led to a different view on the essential dimensions of Islam.

Soroush has used an abstract philosophical approach to separate religion not only from tradition but also from religious knowledge. In Soroush' understanding religion is so completely different from the human realm that in every other era and culture a new attempt must be made to grasp that otherworldly realm with human understanding, using words which are available in that time and place. Religion, and for that matter essential Islam, can be brought down to this abstract concept that lies beyond the reach of humanity.

For Ramadan the essential Islam is not so abstract. The key which he uses to distil the essential of Islam is tradition. Islamic tradition offers a clear view of what is eternal, or essential in Islam and what is temporal, or accidental. On the essential elements of Islam the primary sources are unambiguous: the profession of faith, the five daily prayers, the giving of alms, fasting during Ramadan and the Hajj. Apart from the five pillars of Islam the Qur'an and the Sunnah are clear about the women's veil and the equal status of women.

An-Na'im used the concept of universality to get to the essence of Islam. The universal message of Islam is to be found in the original Meccan message of the Qur'an. The Medinan community that was established after the Hijrah had need of a contextualization. The Medinan verses of the Qur'an offered that contextualization. The universal message is about establishing an individual relationship between the believer and God.

When these approaches are analyzed in the terms of the dimensions of Smart we find the following. Soroush and An-Na'im took vantage points that led to a re-evaluation of the three dimensions I identified in part 1 as prone to friction, the doctrinal and philosophical, the ethical and legal, the social and institutional. Ramadan was unique in choosing the ethical and legal dimension of Islam as his vantage point.

I have shown how Soroush' concept of essential Islam is primarily focussed on the doctrinal and philosophical dimension. Soroush' theory of contraction and expansion pulls his abstract understanding of religion out of the seven dimensions of a religion defined by Smart. With this theory of contraction and expansion Soroush separates the accidental elements of religion, the religious understanding, from the essential Islam. All dimensions of Islam are mere attempts of humanity to understand the abstract entity that is religion, and in those attempts

humanity used human culture. Thus, in Soroush' theory, Smart's seven dimensions are largely irrelevant.

Soroush uses the philosophical tradition of the Mu'tazilite school, which prefers human reason over tradition to get to a closer understanding of God, His attributes and the basics of morality. The dynamic he ascribes to religious understanding is named after the dynamic of Sufi mysticism, *qabz va bast*.

This philosophical approach of Soroush leads to a complete re-evaluation of all dimensions of Islam. All the current shapes of those dimensions are shaped by human culture. The dimensions that are least troubled by this constant change in response to human culture are the ritual dimension and the narrative and mythic dimension of Islam. The Qur'an, and the rituals of Islam are the only elements of Islam which approach essential Islam, the essence of religion. This is why the practical and ritual, and the narrative and mythic dimension of Islam will hardly be affected by his theory, as they are least influenced of human culture.

The other dimensions of Islam, the doctrinal philosophical, the ethical and legal, the social and institutional and of course the material dimension, are largely shaped by the cultural influence. And as they are shaped by human culture, these dimensions will change when the surrounding culture changes.

The essential part of Islam according to Ramadan departs from the ethical and legal dimension of Islam, to be more specific, in the shari'a. He uses the capacity that exists in traditional Islamic jurisprudence, shari'a, to adapt to different eras and cultures. In other words his Islamic legal system contains in itself the ability to adapt to the culture of the European host societies. Using the capacity of traditional shari'a to adapt to other cultures will also safeguard the core doctrines of Islam found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Every adaptation of Islam is based on what is unambiguous in Islamic law. This covers most of the *shariat al-ibadat*, laws concerning personal religious life, i.e. the rituals of Islam. The Islamic laws concerning social relations, *shariat al-mu'amalat*, are more ambiguous and thus open to a re-evaluation, based on *ijtihad*.

As Ramadan takes the ethical and legal dimension as basis for his essential Islam, the other dimensions are hardly affected at all by Ramadan's understanding of essential Islam. There is some room for cultural adaptation, but this does not apply to the practical and ritual, the experiential and emotional, the narrative and mythic, and the doctrinal and philosophical dimensions. The social and institutional and the material dimension, however, are open to cultural adaptation. Ramadan believes that a modern Muslim state should be under the

guidance of God, but this is done through consultation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah by the *shura* and not by the Caliph. While the ethical and legal dimension of Islam are the basis for essential Islam, the social and institutional and the material dimensions contain the accidental elements of Islam, according to Ramadan.

What An-Na'im believes to be essential in Islam is based on his view of the narrative and mythic dimension of Islam.

He believes that a distinction can be made within the Qur'an between a universal and a contextualized message. The universal message is about the relation of the individual with God, and is mostly found in the Meccan verses. The contextualized message was given as a temporary support for humanity to reach the maturity necessary for the universal message. This message is found in the Medinan verses of the Qur'an. An-Na'im goes against traditional Islam when he gives the verses of Mecca higher authority than the verses of Medina.

The contextualized message as it has been handed down through the ages can now be abandoned for the universal message, which demands individual responsibility of the believers, true democracy and real scientific socialism.

This preference for the Meccan verses leads to a complete re-evaluation of all other dimensions of Islam. The choice within the narrative and mythic dimension of Islam also has its consequences for the doctrinal and philosophical, the ethical and legal, and the social and institutional dimensions of Islam. With more emphasis given to universal Islam, rules that are based on the contextualized Islam are abrogated. This means doing away with stoning, and corporal punishment. It also means that there is no need for Muslims to return to the guidance of the Caliphate.

The practical and ritual and the experiential and emotional dimension of Islam are least affected by An-Na'im's preference for the Meccan verses, as they are mostly about the individual's relationship with God. The material dimension isn't even mentioned by An-Na'im, probably because he considers it a purely cultural element of religion.

How Islam can relate to modernity

Soroush and An-Na'im both embrace modernity and have found a way to adapt Islam to the modernity. They have removed religion's concern with politics and economics, either by removing religion from these spheres (Soroush), or by adhering to the principle of separation between religion and state (An-Na'im).

Ramadan did not solve the frictions between Islam and modernity by choosing the ethical and legal dimension as his vantage point. To establish the harmony between Islam and modernity that Ramadan was looking for, he needed the capacity of shari'a to adapt to different cultures. This enabled him to justify fair representation, justice, and an equal position for women.

For the friction points between Islam and modernity that I highlighted in this thesis, i.e. democracy and women's rights, this attitude towards modernity has the following consequences.

Democracy and Islam

Soroush, Ramadan and An-Na'im all agree that Islam allows for, or even demands, a fair representation of the people in their government. They base this on the principle of *shura*, a council of deliberation that is found in the Qur'an.

For Ramadan this council of deliberation, combined with a constitution based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah, is sufficient to guarantee a fair representation and justice for all citizens, including minorities. In fact, he believes that minorities are even better protected in the model of a *shura*-governed state that he elaborated, because they are allowed to deal with their internal matters as they please. In the democracies which exist today, it has proven to be difficult to protect the rights of minorities. Another advantage of *shura* over democracy is that in a *shura* type government, God remains the highest authority because of the consultation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

For An-Na'im this reference to God in political matters is a contradiction in terms. All political matters are human; even if people consult sacred texts, the decision made will ultimately be the result of political will. Faith is an individual endeavour and should be regarded as such by the state. The individual responsibility of the believer should not be annexed by the state. The state has no guardianship over its populace. The state should therefore be based on a constitution that protects the individual responsibility of the (non-)believer, the universal human right of religious freedom. The adherence to all the rights found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would not only protect the responsibility of the (non-)believer, it would also protect the rights of (religious) minorities. With a constitution that protects universal human rights, all citizens of a state are primarily a citizen, with all the rights that come with citizenship. The religious affiliation of those citizens is of no

consequence for their citizenship. This equal citizenship is the basis of a true democracy, a democracy that is needed to listen to the Second Message of Islam.

Soroush does not believe that democracy needs a foundation in Islam. Democracy, like any political model, is part of human culture. Concepts of an Islamic state, like that of his homeland Iran, are part of religious understanding. This religious understanding is influenced by human culture. Human culture changes, and as it is dependent on human culture, so does the understanding of religion. This is what causes religious knowledge to be dynamic. The best suited political model to allow for the dynamic that is inherent to religious understanding is a democracy. In a democracy the rights of dissidents are protected, and reason is the highest authority. The constant discussion that is allowed in a democracy will strengthen the search for truth, an idea that is loosely based on the argument for toleration by John Locke.

Although all three thinkers consider Islam reconcilable with justice and freedom of speech, they differ in their actual ideas about the state. An-Na'im and Soroush believe that it is best for the state to leave religion to the religious, and separate Islam and state. Ramadan believes that the state ought to be guided by the divine principles found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It is not impossible to be a good Muslim if the state does not adhere to those principles, but it would make it a lot easier to establish an inner harmony, *tawhid*.

Women's rights and Islam

The rights of women are not extensively discussed by all authors. Ramadan appears to be the one with the most attention to this issue. This probably is because Ramadan did not solve the frictions between Islam and modernity by choosing the ethical and legal dimension as his vantage point. As Ramadan believes that women are equal to men before God and therefore also equal on earth, he needs to reinterpret the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

The equality between men and women which is protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is threatened by the Islamic principle of *qawama*, male guardianship over women. This is an issue which Ramadan has to discuss if he wants women to have more freedom and equality than the women receive in the cultures that presently exist in the Islamic world.

Ramadan has found that equality in his use of *naskh*, the abrogation of Qur'anic verses. The verses supporting the lower status of women were revealed in a time when the believers of Medina were not yet ready to accept total equality. The few rights that women were granted would help the believers to mature into accepting the equality that was revealed to

Muhammad, a few months before he died. Ramadan's preference for the Qur'an and the Sunnah and his subsequent critique of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights explain the relative importance of women's rights in his thought.

Application of the principle *naskh* is completely opposite to the application of that same principle as borrowed by An-Na'im from his mentor Taha. According to An-Na'im the people of Medina did not reach the maturity needed to cross the threshold of the First Message, the verses revealed in Medina, to the level of the Second Message, that was primarily revealed in Mecca. As people today have reached that maturity, Islam can leave behind the First Message and enter the Second Message of Islam, with true democracy, individual freedom and real socialism. With universal human rights supported by the ultimate Islam, there is no need to hold on to the previous stage of development. Muslims should welcome this era of ultimate Islam and embrace equality of women and individual freedom.

In their statements about democracy and about the position of women, but also in other, Soroush and An-Na'im have little difficulty in relating their essential Islam to modernity. Modernity is just another human culture that can be used to understand religion, and with democracy it offers people enough freedom to renew their understanding of religion.

Ramadan's understanding of essential Islam has more difficulty relating to modernity. In his view, there are some frictions between Islamic tradition and modernity. With his proposal for an Islamic state based on the principle of *shura*, offering fair representation, independent judges and the protection of fundamental human rights, as found in the Islamic sources, he is able to smooth over most difficulties. Ramadan holds on to some causes of friction with modernity, where he believes modernity has gone a wrong path. Examples of these wrong turns are the quest for profit maximization and the trivialization of religion. Also, the emphasis of modernity on individual rights as opposed to obligations and duties could be balanced by his Islamic counterweight to modernity.

An-Na'im appears to be the only thinker who believes that Islam needs modernity, with its emphasis on rights, the will of the people as the basis for the authority of government, and the freedom of religion. These are all necessary for him to be a good Muslim, who freely chooses to follow the path to the source, the shari'a based on the Second Message of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Final remarks

Having compared the three on the characteristics in their thought, how they distinguish the essential from the accidental in Islam, and how that essential Islam relates to modernity, I have answered the main question of this thesis. The three authors have each a very distinct approach, this leads to different regard of the essential in Islam, but they all manage to harmonize Islam and modernity.

EPILOGUE

In this thesis I have presented three distinct views on the relationship between Islam and modernity. I have pointed out the possible frictions that exist between Islam and modernity with a comparison of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam. Two of those frictions proved to be the rights of women and the people as basis for the authority of governments. I have presented the three authors with their individual backgrounds and main ideas. I then compared their views on the essence of Islam with the seven dimensions of a religion as offered by Ninian Smart. Along with an analysis of their lives, this gave an impression on the differences that exist between the authors and what could be the cause of those differences. I would now like to give a reflection on those views.

Soroush, Ramadan as well as An-Na'im have a good theological framework to offer Muslims who are struggling with modernity, but as with any system they have their flaws.

If I were asked whose approach would be my favourite, it would have to be Soroush. His theory of contraction of expansion of religious understanding is first of all very helpful in understanding some of the dynamics in religiosity. The theory also is extraordinary in its reconciliation of the eternal and the temporal in a religion. It explains how so many different forms of a religion can still be a valid understanding of religion.

In presenting the Qur'an as the closest to the eternal element of Islam, his theory could be easily accepted by Muslims who value their tradition. The space for human culture in the religious knowledge allows for political models that are not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, to be acceptable for an Islamic society. This opens the way for models like democracy to be accepted as a political model in an Islamic state.

The space for human culture in the religious knowledge also allows that religious knowledge to be influenced by extrareligious concepts like universal human rights.

An-Na'im is also able to have Islam accept human rights, but his desire to solidly ground it in religion leads him to embracing the radical view of his mentor, Mahmoud Taha, on the Qur'an. The distinction that Taha made in the Qur'an between the verses revealed in Mecca, the eternal message, and those revealed in Medina, the temporal message. This distinction is not likely to be broadly accepted by Muslims, which in turn might lead to a split between Muslims adhering to their tradition and Muslims adhering to this new insight into the Qur'an.

The radical turn away from tradition would make it difficult for the majority of the Muslim population to follow, this is a flaw of An-Na'im's view. However, his Second Message is

helpful for non-Muslims. The universal message that is highlighted by An-Naʿim demonstrates that Islam is not just a "religion of violence", but that in Islam the universal human rights can be supported.

The view of Ramadan would certainly be helpful for European Muslims, affirming their Muslim religious identity as a positive trait in European society. This affirmation of their religious identity and its integration with their European identity would allow Muslims that now feel marginalized as incomplete Muslims and incomplete Europeans, to find the harmony that is needed to fully participate with their whole identity in the European society.

There are however some flaws in his political theory. The first flaw is Ramadan's emphasis on a thorough foundation on the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It appears as if the foundation of the society on the Qur'an and the Sunnah would lead to a just and good society under the guidance of God. A possible religious dictatorship as found in Islam appears to be deflected with the separation of powers. The president would have the executive powers, the *shura* would have the legislative power, and the judges would have the judiciary power. But all powers are subject to guidance of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This leaves the authority in those closest to God, the religious intellectuals, those who know how we should read the Qur'an and the Sunnah. While in the distribution of powers, all powers appear to be separated, they come together in the interpretation of the Qur'an and the Sunnah by the religious scholars. This could very well lead to another religious dictatorship.

Another problem with the political model presented by Ramadan is the treatment of minorities. In his system minorities are free to apply their minority laws to internal matters. This appears to be tolerant to differences, for individuals it is discriminatory. They are not treated as equals before the law, they are discriminated against on the basis of race, religion, nationality, birth or whatever might be the identity of the minority.

For this reason I believe that the view of Soroush is preferable to the others, as it allows for the acceptance of human rights, while still acknowledging the tradition.

<center>**BIBLIOGRAPHY**</center>

Organisation of the Islamic Conference. *Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam.* 49. sess. 19–P (August 5, 1990) http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/fm/19/19%20icfm-political-en.htm (accessed February 12, 2010).

'Inayat, Hamid. *Modern Islamic Political Thought*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982.

Akhavi, Shahrough. *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavī Period*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980.

Almqvist, Kurt. "The Secular State and Islam in Europe: Perspectives from the Engelsberg Seminar 2006." Engelsberg, Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation, June 15–17, 2006, 2007.

Bennett, Clinton. *Muslims and Modernity: An Introduction to the Issues and Debates*. New York: Continuum, 2005.

Berger, Peter Ludwig. *Facing Up to Modernity: Excursions in Society, Politics, and Religion*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979.

Cox, Harvey Gallagher. *Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984.

Donzel, E. van, H. A. R. Gibb, and P. J. Bearman. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Vol. 9. Leiden: E. J. Brill. London: Luzac, 1960.

European Council for Fatwa and Research. "Statutes of the European Council for Fatwa and Research." ECFR. http://www.e-cfr.org//en/ECFR.pdf (accessed January 11, 2010).

Hallaq, Wael B. "Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16, no. 1 (Mar., 1984): 3–41, http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.uu.nl/stable/162939.

Iran Chamber Society. "Iranian Personalities: Dr. Abdolkarim Soroush." http://www.iranchamber.com/personalities/asoroush/abdolkarim_soroush.php (accessed December 12, 2009).

Kamal, Muhammad. *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy*. Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006.

Kamaly, Hossein. "The Theory of Expansion and Contraction of Religion." http://www.drsoroush.com/English/On_DrSoroush/E-CMO-19950200-1.html (accessed January 11, 2010).

Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Lapidus, Ira Marvin. *A History of Islamic Societies*. Cambridge; New York; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Locke, John. *A Letter Concerning Toleration* [*Epistola de Tolerantia*] . Translated by William Popple. London: 1689.

Luyendijk, Joris, Tariq Ramadan, and Karen de Bok. *Joris Luyendijk Ontmoet Tariq Ramadan*. De Mooiste Film- En Tv-Momenten Van Tariq Ramadan. Hilversum: VPRO, 2009, http://www.vpro.nl/programma/wintergasten/afleveringen/40824144/ (accessed January 25, 2010).

Maréchal, Brigitte. *The Muslim Brothers in Europe: Roots and Discourse*. Muslim Minorities., edited by Jorgen S. Nielsen, Felice Dassetto and Aminah McCloud . Translated by Jeff Lewis. Vol. 8. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008.

Masud, Muhammad Khalid, Armando Salvatore, and Martin van Bruinessen, eds. *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates* [Islam and modernity]. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.

Mir-Hosseini, Ziba. *Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2000.

Na'im, 'Abd A. A. "Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im." http://www.law.emory.edu/aannaim/ (accessed January 11, 2010).

———. "CV 2009." http://www.law.emory.edu/aannaim/docs/CV2009.doc (accessed January 11, 2010).

———. *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari`a*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008.

———. *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights, and International Law. Syracuse*. N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1990.

Palmer, R. R., Joel G. Colton, and Lloyd S. Kramer. *A History of the Modern World*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2007.

Ramadan, Tariq. *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

———. *Islam, the West and the Challenges of Modernity*. Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 2001.

———. *To be a European Muslim: A Study of Islamic Sources in the European Context*. Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1999.

Rippin, Andrew. *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*. London: Routledge, 2005.

Shari'ati, Ali. "Red Shi'ism (the Religion of Martyrdom) vs. Black Shi'ism (the Religion of Mourning)."

http://www.iranchamber.com/personalities/ashariati/works/red_black_shiism.php (accessed January 11, 2010).

Smart, Ninian. *The World's Religions*. Cambridge: University Press, 2003.

Surush, 'Abd a. "Biography." http://www.drsoroush.com/Biography-E.htm (accessed January 11, 2010).

———. "I'm a Neo-Mutazilite." http://www.drsoroush.com/English/Interviews/E-INT-Neo-Mutazilite_July2008.html (accessed December 14, 2009).

———. "Amsterdam Debate." http://www.drsoroush.com/English/Interviews/E-INT-Amsterdam%20Debate.html (accessed December 14, 2009).

———. *Qabz Va Bast-e Teoric Shari'at - Ya Nazariyeh-Ye Takāmol-e Ma'refat-e Dini*1991.

Surush, 'Abd al-Karim, Mahmoud Sadri, and Ahmad Sadri. *Reason, Freedom, & Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of 'Abdolkarim Soroush*. New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Taha, Mahmud Muhammad. *The Second Message of Islam*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1996.

Tibi, Bassam. *Islam's Predicament with Modernity: Religious Reform and Cultural Change*. London: Routledge, 2009.

Tocqueville, Alexis de and J. P. Mayer. *Democracy in America*. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1969.

UN. "Historic Overview." http://www.udhr.org/history/overview.htm (accessed February 3, 2010).

United Nations General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. 217A. sess. 3 (December 10, 1948).

Winter, T. J. *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Wright, Robin and Surush, 'Abd a. "The Goals of Iran's Green Movement." http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2010/0106/Abdolkarim-Soroush-The-goals-of-Iran-s-Green-Movement (accessed January 9, 2010).