

# Europeanisation, not Islamisation - Written by Bassam



***Bassam Tibi argues for Euro-Islam as a bridge between civilisations. French philosopher Pascal Bruckner accused Ian Buruma and Timothy Garton Ash of propagating a form of multiculturalism that amounts to legal apartheid. His fiery polemic unleashed an international debate. By now Timothy Garton Ash, Necla Kelek, Paul Cliteur, Lars Gustafsson, Stuart Sim, Ulrike Ackermann, Adam Krzeminski and Halleh Ghorashi have all entered the ring.***

When I was asked to give my opinion on this debate, I was just returning from the USA. They have an expression over there which is a good way to challenge to people who like to talk but have little to say: "What are we talking about?" The topic of "Europe and Islam" is more important than profiling Tariq Ramadan and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who are often thrown together in a meaningless comparison. The issue is also more important than the debate between prominent authors such as Timothy Garton Ash or Ian Buruma, who share not only celebrity status, but also the tendency to talk incompetently about Islam. My sense is that this debate, which is of extraordinary importance to the future of Europe, needs to be made less personal and more objective. This is as essential for Europe as it is for Muslims like myself, who found home in this continent.

Despite this call to de-personalisation, I'll allow myself two comments on Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Tariq Ramadan, around whom this debate is revolving, to its detriment. What Hirsi Ali says about Islam is an affront to Muslims and to anyone who knows anything about Islam. When, for instance, she claims that our prophet and our holy book, the Koran, are a fiction, she insults all Muslims and puts a smirk on the faces of all historians of Islam. Of course, Hirsi Ali has every right to turn her back on Islam in the name of religious freedom and this is what she has done. But she should not abuse the religion just to score points cheaply for herself.

As for her opponent in this objectionable debate, Tariq Ramadan, who calls himself an Oxford professor (he is there for a limited term as a fellow – a fellowship is not a professorship – but it is not unusual for him to treat facts in this manner), I would certainly not ascribe to him the "reform of Islam" as many do. What has he reformed in Islam? When he glorifies his grandfather Hassan al-Banna as the main source of the "Renouveau Musulman," (Muslim Renewal) as he does in

his book, even in the title, is this reform? In my research, I come to the conclusion that al-Banna is the spiritual and political source of Jihad Islamism, which represents totalitarianism in its latest manifestation. I refer here to my most recent essay, "The Totalitarianism of Jihadist Islamism and its Challenge to Europe and to Islam", which appeared in *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religion* (1/2007 issue with an abstract). This contention is the result of decades of research. And does it qualify as Islamic reform when Ramadan outlines "The Mission of Islam for Europe" at a conference in Sweden or when he tells Muslims in Jakarta that al-Islam Ya'lu, or Islam is superior?

I will not dwell any longer on the Ramadan / Hirsi Ali debate, as I consider it irrelevant to a discussion of Europe and Islam, nor will I address the inflamed polemics on, for instance, "Enlightenment fundamentalism." Suffice it to say that if the people taking part in this debate so deform the Enlightenment as to consider Hirsi Ali its representative, I suggest they read Jürgen Habermas' "The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity" – this will help them to answer the question of what we are actually talking about.

Now to the problem at hand. I start with a reference to Henri Pirenne's thesis "No Charlemagne without Mohammed" (1937). What this means is that without the challenge of Islam, Charles the Great's Christian Occident would never have come into being. Pirenne shows that both these greats – Europe as Occident and Islam as civilisation – have from the very beginning a shared historical development, and are mutually challenging one another. The most recent shape that this relationship is taking can be seen in the massive migration of Muslims to Europe today (in 1950, there were only 800,000 Muslims in Western Europe, today there are 20 million). This process belongs in this context of mutual challenge, and is the contemporary expression of the classic confrontation between Islam and Europe which Henri Pirenne reconstructs. In my book "Kreuzzug und Djiha"

(crusade and jihad), in which I reconstruct this history in eight epochs, I try to take a fresh look at Pirenne's thesis and suggest interpreting the relationship of Islam to Europe as one of a century-long mutual "Threat and Fascination." Each has threatened the other, be it with Jihad conquest, crusades or colonisation, but has equally enriched the other in cultural and civilisational terms – be these medieval Islam's borrowings from Hellenism or the influence of Islamic rationalism on the European Renaissance. One may place the 20 million Muslims living in Europe today as part of this history into the overall context of threat and fascination. The American scholar of Islam John Kelsay speaks of "Islamic enclaves which are in Europe." Is it not possible to find a bridge between the two, as Europe and Islam did earlier? I propose such a bridge as a Reform Muslim, as presented in my concept of Euro-Islam in Paris in 1992.

Is this something that can be discussed freely? My experience as a Muslim living as an immigrant in Europe and doing my research in the USA is that I have greater freedom of speech on this subject in America. It was at Berkeley and Cornell (between 1998 and 2006) that I was able to further develop my concept of Euro-Islam in the understanding of an Europeanisation of Islam as an inter-civilisational bridge. In Germany on the other hand, my Euro-Islam was ostracised – for instance, by an Orientalist at the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* who called it the "one man sect of Professor Tibi." What's this all about? Before I go any further, I would just like to mention that Tariq Ramadan talks about Euro-Islam without referring to his sources and in my opinion distorts the concept. To address Islamic immigration while at Berkeley I coined the formula "Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam?" This is also the title of a book which outlines the results of a UC Berkeley project on Islam and the changing identity of Europe in which my research on the tension between Islamisation and Europeanisation was included. Euro-Islam, in my definition, demands that this tension be overcome by cultural cross-fertilisation. I shall now explain precisely what this entails and how and why the concept of Euro-Islam came into being, but then was distorted by Ramadan and Olivier Roy.

In November 1992, experts from the Institut du Monde met in Paris to try to find new concepts for dealing with assimilation and integration. The earlier ideas of assimilation as a prerequisite for "citoyennite" were buckling under the huge influx of new immigrants from the Islamic world, who were insisting on holding onto their cultural identity and demanding that this be recognised in Europe.

Which is why these experts were suggesting that assimilation be abandoned in favour of the newly drawn up concepts of integration. Integration does not demand cultural surrender of the self through total conformity, but merely the participation in the civil society's system of civic values. Unlike assimilation, integration limits itself to the adoption of a citizen identity within civil society, it focusses on the rights and duties of the "citoyen". And so the question being asked in Paris was "Integration ou insertion communautaire?" This is also the subheading of the book on Islam in Europe with a concept for integration edited by Robert Bistolfi and Francois Zabbal (Paris 1995).

Islam was at the centre of the debate because by now Muslims constitute approximately twelve percent of the French population, making them the single largest group of immigrants. It was in Paris that I first presented my concept of Euro-Islam, which is why it should be located within the context of the French debate. I first coined the term Euro-Islam in my paper "Les Conditions d'une Euro-Islam" included in the cited volume of Bistolfi /Zabbal: "Islams d'Europe: Integration ou Insertion Communautaire". On December 7 1992, the FAZ reported on the convention in Paris in an article entitled "Euro-Islam or Ghetto-Islam? Muslim immigrants and integration in EU countries." Time Magazine also recognised the origins of Euro-Islam in 2000.

The concept of Euro-Islam derives from observations that I had made a decade earlier in West Africa – in the 80s. In Senegal I was able to identify an Africanisation of Islam. Having seen how Islam had been adopted in West Africa despite its Arab origins, how it had become part of the autochthonous culture, I asked whether it would not be possible to attempt to make Islam indigenous to Europe along similar lines. In Europe, the Islam of immigrants remains utterly alien because it is not European. I tell this story in chapter 12 of the new edition of my book "Im Schatten Allahs" (in the shadow of Allah) and then ask, how can we make Islam European in Europe, in the way that it has become African in Senegal and South East Asian in Indonesia? But first I should make it clear that Euro-Islam is impossible without cultural change involving religious reforms. And this is not something Tariq Ramadan is pursuing. By now there is lot of nonsense going on in the name of Euro-Islam, and at the same time it is becoming an increasingly meaningless buzzword. Tariq Ramadan is not the only one to make sloppy use of the term, Olivier Roy has also given it a completely new meaning without once referring to its origins. Tariq Rama-

dan presents Orthodox Islam as Euro-Islam presumably with the intent to deceive. But I say there can be no Europeanising of Islam unless Salafist concepts like Sharia and Jihad are abandoned through cultural-religious reforms, and this goes too for the vision of Islamisation through Da'awa and Hidjra. Only an Islam that is in tune with the fundamentals of cultural modernity (democracy, individual human rights, civil society) and embraces pluralism deserves to be defined as Euro-Islam. And furthermore, the concept of Euro-Islam applies only to Europe, in other words unlike the earlier universal vision of Westernising the world - the world of Islam included - it is not universalism.

The validity of the argument for Europeanising is limited to Muslims who are settled in Europe, as well as to countries (like Turkey for example), which want to become European. We are talking here about a vision of Euro-Islam which has yet to become reality. Of course we should also consider the Islamic countries surrounding Europe which the EU refers to as the "European Neighbourhood." The integration of Muslims in Europe could contribute positively to the democratisation of this European "neighbourhood."

Muslim immigrants are expected to recognise that Europe has a civilising identity and the right to preserve it. This statement is not directed against Muslims, because the idea of Europe is inclusive. It can respect the identity of immigrants, while expecting them to be integrated without surrendering their sense of self. This is the sense in which Islam and Europe fuse into Euro-Islam. It is half-witted of Garton Ash to confuse the demand for a reform of Islam in Europe with the demand for Muslims to give up their faith. No one would make such a demand. All he is doing is kowtowing to Ramadan. Europe doesn't need such Europeans, who do not stand up to European identity challenged by Islamic proselytization.

The European identity, when understood in a democratic, enlightened manner, should therefore be seen as an inclusive identity which envisions a Europeanisation of Islam in Europe, also within an expanded EU. As a Muslim, I learned to appreciate the idea of Europe as an "island of freedom in an ocean of despotism" from my Jewish teacher Max Horkheimer. Horkheimer was a survivor of the Holocaust, and only too familiar with the other side of Europe. We are dealing here solely with the Europe of freedom and Enlightenment, not with Europe of totalitarianisms. The Europeanisation of Islam aims at cultural synthesis. With the murder of filmmaker

Theo van Gogh, the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London, the Islamic intifada in Paris and finally the conflict ignited by the Danish Muhammad cartoons, the debate over Euro-Islam has widened considerably. Yet it should not be distorted through personification or polemic. The Islamists have repeatedly declared war on Europe. And the press silenced the fact that the words "Europe, you're next" appeared in the letter attached to Theo van Gogh's slain body. This was made public by Dutch prime minister Balkenende in Rotterdam in December 2004, at a summit meeting held under the question "Europe. A Beautiful Idea?".

In the wake of the Amsterdam murder, the Nexus Instituut in the Netherlands launched a major European and trans-Atlantic project with the support of the Dutch government, dealing with the idea of Europe. Discussions were held in several European cities, from Rotterdam to Berlin and Warsaw. Among other topics, the project, which bore the inviting name "Europe, a Beautiful Idea?" dealt with the idea of Euro-Islam. Notwithstanding its ugly colonial past, two World Wars and Nazi crimes, Europe also has another side: the Europe of freedom, individual human rights, democracy, pluralism and civil society. That is a beautiful idea, one which can also be shared by non-Europeans, and so also by Muslims. Euro-Islam is an attempt to make the idea of a "European identity" palatable to Muslims, as a synthesis with Islam. At my presentation in Rotterdam, I asked whether over and above legal citizenship, Muslims can become "Citizens of Heart" by appropriating European values in the context of Euro-Islam, which shapes their migrant identity.

We must be careful in this discussion through distinguishing between Islam and Islamism. Islam is a religious faith and a cultural system, while Islamism is a totalitarian ideology. With the Enlightenment, Europe brought forth a "disenchanted world" comprising a universalism of values that is neither ethnic nor religious, and which is consequently inclusive. This inclusiveness consists in openness to others. Far from being merely academic jargon, this is a model for reality that I as a Muslim and Arab am familiar with from my own life in Europe. Europe is challenged to achieve this model of inclusiveness in the context of immigration. What the immigrants for their part needs to achieve is an effort to bring their identity into harmony with Europe and its cultural system. Euro-Islam is a vision that aims to realise this. Despite allegations to the contrary, the European idea is not Christian: it is secular and its sources lie in Hellenism. At the highpoint of Islamic

civilisation, the same Hellenism was among the sources of medieval Islamic rationalism. So there is a bridge linking the two.

A Muslim can be European without being Christian, and without having roots in Europe. The sole precondition is adopting the European civic values that are the result of the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. And if you do that, you can remain Muslim. But how can Muslims wholeheartedly become European citizens and espouse "Europe, a Beautiful Idea" without reforming and rethinking Islam? The Islamists nestled in among the Islamic Diaspora don't share the idea of a "beautiful Europe" and are enmical to the need of a reform. They view integration in Europe as camouflaged Christian proselytism, and reject it offhand. Islamists aren't after integration, they want to Islamise Europe through the Jihad. Europeans can only parry this attempt together with Euro-Muslims. In this conflict it is crucial to determine the exact content of Euro-Islam. Numerous European politicians make speeches in favour of the idea of Europe, but do they take themselves and their pronouncements seriously? Many Muslim citizens of Europe look sceptically on the vision of Euro-Islam, because while Europeanisation of the Islamic challenge is propagated as inclusion, words are not followed by deeds. As stated above, European inclusiveness is a model to be achieved, not yet reality - similar to the vision of a Euro-Islam. In other words: for bringing Islam and Europe together on European soil, both Muslims and Europeans are challenged to do their homework in a project for the inner peace of Europe.

It should be seen as a positive development that today's Europeans are turning away from their former Eurocentrism. Unfortunately, however, there is also a negative aspect to this trend, since for many it has also meant renouncing European values. The debate we are concerned with here, in which the Enlightenment has been passed off as a sort of fundamentalism, demonstrates not only intellectual confusion but also a lack of orientation. Postmodern value relativism is not the opening that Europe needs. The vision offered by Euro-Islam stands in contrast to the value-relativism of today's Europeans, first and foremost regarding the EU as a value community. Here it assumes a commitment to European values not shared by Islamism. The moderate Islamist Hasan Hanafi correctly recognised that Europe is in a crisis and suffers from a lack of orientation. His solution? Islam! Is this Islamisation the solution that will bind Europeans and Muslims? I fear not! In a Cornell project chaired by Prof. Peter Kat-

zenstein I established a scenario for Europe's future with the formula "Europeanisation of Islam or Islamisation of Europe".

With the Muslim influx from Asia and Africa, but also - and primarily - from the southern and eastern Mediterranean where identity is a matter of a collective consciousness, some Muslim clerics are demanding that Dar al-Islam/The House of Islam should be extended into Europe. Orthodox Islamic doctrine prescribes that Hidjra/migration should serve the worldwide dissemination of Islam. The emergence of parallel societies is the first step in this direction, and it must be possible, notwithstanding the rules of political correctness, to discuss this openly.

However we must proceed with care. When Tariq Ramadan, whom the newspaper *Die Zeit* terms a "double agent", calls Europe a Dar al-Shahada, he is doing nothing other than applying the term Dar al-Islam/ House of Islam to Europe as an Islamic territory. The implication is clear: Europe becomes a part of Dar al-Islam, and so to all intents and purposes appropriated, simply because it has opened up to Islam. The London-based imam Zaki Badawi, who was decorated by the queen, argued along these lines when he said at the World Economic Forum in Davos that any territory where Muslims live belongs to Dar al-Islam. Against naive Europeans, orthodox Salafites and Islamists, Euro-Islam seeks to make Islam part of Europe and share its identity, and not the other way around. To be sure, these are two different projects for the future of Europe, as suggested in the Cornell formula cited above.

And now the head of the Turkish Justice and Development Party, Tayyip Erdogan, is also talking of a "shared value community." What is that? What are the European values, and what constitutes the identity of Europe? Must Western universalism go hand in hand with European value relativism? These questions are not addressed, and even taboo, in European discourse today. As a Muslim and a European by choice, I claim my right to freedom of speech in seeking to dispel taboos about Europe.

Despite Bush's escapades, America remains the land of freedom. As a Muslim, I have had more room to discuss these questions in the USA than in Europe. The concept of the Europeanisation of Islam proposes answers to the questions raised above. Here, I refer again to the project "Islam and the Changing Identity of Europe," initiated at UC Berkeley's Center for Middle East Studies and by the other for European Studies. In the book published it is acknowledged that Islam is permeating Eu-



rope and changing Europe's identity. Both of its authors are Americans with Euro-Islamic pedigrees: the Egyptian Nezar AlSayyad as a Middle-Eastern scholar, and the Spaniard Manuel Castells as an expert in European Studies.

In their search for solutions to the conflict that were free from Eurocentric arrogance, the two scholars invited me years ago to integrate my concept of Euro-Islam as a bridge between civilisations into their project. The result was the book "Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam?" The title clearly expresses the options available: either Europe Europeanises Islam, or Islam Islamises Europe. Two universalisms collide. Europeans cannot respond to this competition of models with silence, or with censorship in the form of political correctness. Things are developing in this direction whether we like it or not, and they will continue to do so regardless of whether they are hushed up or kept silent by other means.

This debate is about objective processes, and has little to do with confrontation, let alone hostility towards Islam. Well aware of this danger, I contributed to the book "Preventing the Clash of Civilizations" by the former German President Roman Herzog, who takes issue with Samuel Huntington. Europeans can rise to the existing challenge with a policy of Europeanisation. As opposed to the universalist ideology of Westernisation, the concept of Europeanisation is limited solely to bringing European values and standards to bear on Europe itself, within the territory of Europe. As opposed to what Islamists or orthodox Muslims maintain, Europe certainly does not belong to Dar al-Islam, and has its own non-Islamic identity to be respected by Muslim immigrants.

We are left with the following imperative: those who seek to come to Europe must also strive to become part of its community, adopting the democratic consensus expressed in its value system. They must want to become European and to participate in the European identity, rather than seeking to alter it. In a word: Europeanisation, not Islamisation. If this idea becomes a political concept of the EU, together with the political will to push it through, the Islamic enclaves of the parallel societies in city districts where the Turkish or other clearly non-European flags are brandished will no longer be tolerated. The alternative to this cultural segregation is inclusive Europeanisation, not exclusion. This also goes for Islamic Turkey, which aspires to join the EU.

The reasoning about the potential of a Europeanisation of Islam in the European Diaspora took a further development at Cornell Uni-

versity. As stated above, Peter Katzenstein chaired the project "Transnational Religion and Accession," dealing not just with Islam, but also with Eastern Orthodox Christianity. A key assumption of the project is that "accession" - the inclusion in the political culture of the EU - presupposes a "Europeanisation" in the limited sense described above, that is for the territory of the EU. According to secular standards, Europeanisation is separated from religion and ethnicity and linked solely to the values of democracy, individual human rights and civil society. That this concept is not Eurocentric is amply illustrated by the possible synthesis of Islam and Europe in Euro-Islam, an idea I have been advocating for over 15 years summarized in the Cornell formula cited above and published most recently in the book edited by Peter Katzenstein and Timothy Byrnes "Religion in an Expanding Europe". Are the findings of the Cornell project, which argues for Europeanisation as a criteria not only for accepting the Turks of the Diaspora as European citizens, but also Turkey in the EU, acceptable for the Turks? The Turkish magazine Turkish Policy Quarterly did not see in this idea any European arrogance published 2004 my essay "Euro-Islam. The quest of Turkey and Muslims to become Europeans". This text met with general approval, although neither the governing Islamists, nor the German Islamic Council under Milli Görüs approve of it, because they are against Europeanisation, a fact corroborated by the enlightened Turks I have spoken with on my repeated visits to Ankara.

In closing I would like to refer to a concept developed by the last major Islamic philosopher Ibn Khaldun, who died 600 years ago. He coined the term *asabiyya* (*esprit de corps*, or collective civilizational identity), to measure the strengths and weaknesses of a civilisation. How strong is European *asabiyya*? Only when Europeanisation succeeds as a democratic response to the Islamic challenge can one speak of a strong European *asabiyya* in Ibn Khaldun's sense. The crucial thing is to integrate Europe as a civilisational entity in a pluralistic world. This entity must have its own *asabiyya* and a clear idea of its make-up, while remaining open to others and incorporating them through Europeanisation. Europe is more than an economic or business community, and it is well worth preserving it as a "beautiful idea." This can be achieved with Islamic participation, provided the vision of Euro-Islam becomes a political concept approved in the European diaspora of Islam. The task of preserving Europe with Islamic participation is viewed as a peace project for the 21st century.