

Reflections on European Multiculturalism, Islam and Peaceful Coexistence: Tariq Ramadan and Fethullah Gülen

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Abstract

The Islamic scholars Fethullah Gülen and Tariq Ramadan are two major personalities whose ideas and views are admired and valued by the Muslim community, especially its younger generations, in Europe. These two thinkers are calling for a better understanding of civilizational and religious pluralism, a moderate way of practising Islam, and the coexistence of different ethnic and religious affiliations. Their ideas promote universal human rights, tolerance and forgiveness among European peoples in contexts marked by mistrust, intolerance and fear. The assassination of Theo van Gogh, the Pope's lecture in Regensburg, the 'cartoons affairs', revealed the heightening of tensions and how much European multicultural societies are in need peaceful voices to reduce the misunderstandings that create fearful communities on the brink of open hostilities. Both these scholars affirm the role of democracy, and speak out against terrorism, racism, Islamophobia and prejudice, and in favour of cultural pluralism. This paper analyses the circulation of their ideas among the younger generation, their education and dialogue initiatives, and the cassettes of lectures that have opened up a space where ideas about human civic responsibility, democracy, citizenship, pluralism, dialogue and tolerance can take root.

1. Introduction

In recent years questions take on particular importance between Muslims and western societies that these issues not only lead Muslims to reformulate things but also the interaction between Islam and Europe in spaces, discursive parallel arenas as describes Frazer,^[399] and The nature of Muslim's presence in Europe is changing and we cannot identify Europeans Muslim temporary guest worker. Göle notes that the interpenetration and interaction make close West and East, Islam and Europe and give the new challenges.^[400] As a result of this new phenomena, Islam cannot only still link to Arabs, Turks, Pakistanis, it becomes as a European phenomena. Muslims are now permanent part of Western civilization, however the history of relations between Europe and Islam is dated till 7th century, begun with conquest of Spain by Omayyad's and from east the Turkish pressure, but this presence is obviously limited and did not touch the whole Europe. The phenomena of growing Muslim presence in Europe is a new phenomena, is looked with new visibility like as Muslim headscarf, Muslim schools, market, the everyday life practices. In major European capital cities, the

Muslim population's presence and visibility is clearly seen. The demographical aspect, the increase of later, the existence of different ethnics Muslims among European societies are dealing with coexistence, plurality, integration, terrorism, democracy, the ability of habits and manners in public life and nowadays Islam and Muslim actors through their visibility and demands shape European mind and history. They take part the symbolic role in definition of European identity by creating new debates and challenges that Europe faces today as the relation between state and religion, the place of sacred in the common public sphere, the collective European identity. The Muslim factor is not only considered a geographical and demographical terms, the new dimension in a multicultural Europe offer a range of opportunities containing new challenges for new Europe. Europe's engagement with enlightenment is not achieved; this communal project is continued as a response inherited with intellectual, practical of Islamic-Muslim occurrence. Nevertheless, the new issues relating the place of religion, especially Islam in Europe, the western societies seem to pursue a closer Union. The debate issue Turkish membership candidate mention us this question; the political and religious tolerance, European identity, the relation between sacred and profane.

Multiple face of Islam, even ethnic diversity, cleavages due sociopolitical and generational differences, is at the core of the institution of Islam en Europe. Europe's Muslims is divided in several groups and don't form a monolithic group.^[401] New young Muslim generation choose to identify themselves with their country in which they live and raise, prefer to speak in French, English or Dutch. The emergence of Islamic identities with national local loyalty is reinforced and enhanced by schooling, working.

Bayat remarks the shift from the discourse of politicization of Islam to personal pietism, ethics after 11 September terrorists attacks.^[402] In this new period of accentuation on pietism and on ethic, the new Islamic faces in challenging with ancient discourses. Gülen's and Ramadan's views, their typology and portrait as new pioneer of Islam in secular context remain us the shifting of pioneers of Islamic thinkers and thinking. The emergence of new personalities is quiet different in terms of the evaluation of the West, nationalization, *ijtihad*, coexistence between non Muslims while the first generation like Mawdudi, Al-Banna emphasizes on anti imperialism and against westernization, the second group of Islamic intellectuals speak about the coexistence between East and West, the pluralism, the democracy and human rights.

2. Making of Muslim Youth and the New Islamic Intellectuals: Speaking for Western Muslims

After a traditional Islamic education in eastern medreses and mosque school, he continued his formation at secular school. This was followed the official preacher in Religious affairs. Gülen makes speak about him since the nineties when he was appeared in public secular sphere during the interfaith dinner organized by the journalist and writer foundation affiliated Gülen movement.^[403]

¹These dinners contribute gathering people from various religious, political and ideological identities. Since 1998, he lives a voluntary exile in the United States after laics pressure. His close relations with political leaders, his charisma, and his sermons eloquent make him surfer on the media. As a matter of fact, his sphere of activity should have increased over the past years. He shows a capacity to adopt his discourses and speeches in variable secular context, having a talent to fascinate his supporters, spreading among the young university students and businessman. Fascinating people

by his tears during his sermons, his ability to contact and circulate his message reveals new Islamic intellectual character shaped Islamic discourse and emotional aspect that form his spiritual dimension. Raised in conservative pious family, received religious education and secular teaching, acquiring these two spheres, offer him the possibility to speak about different themes. After secular project and forced laicization and modernization by the new rulers of Turkish Republic which deligitimate and decline the ulama's powers replaced by the new bureaucrats elites whose formation is culturally and socially differentiate. On this point, Özdalga notes:

"(Gülen) adopts a solid, conventional Hanafi/Sunni understanding of the religious traditions. So it does not seem to be the content of the religious interpretation as such, but the very existence of a new relatively strong group, filled with religious fervor and claiming a place in the public arena that annoys the establishment in Turkey radical margins who see this as a threat to their ideology."^[404]

His profile is closer to the *alim-arif* typology. Gaborieau indicates "oulema-soufi" type that is seen in the same character.^[405] A heuristic glance at Gülen's works and speeches enable us to define him as *arif-alim* who gather two poles which are called *zahiri* (exoteric) and *batini* (esoteric). Gülen plays the double role and figure: *arif* and *alim*, spiritual and rational, the sacred and the profane. This two figures intermingle in an extricable way as noting Watt that many soufis were retired from this world, at the same time a great astonishing number of Sufis were lawyer, Muslim scholars, scientist like Al-Qusahyri, on of the great personage soufi at his time, was a shafite lawyer.^[406]

Gülen's sermons are marked by a strong emotion, sacred tears which accompany pain and psychic state that encourages the cry of people who are present in his sermon. Through this emotional aspect relating with esoteric style of interpretation of Qur'an, in various subjects, Gülen refers a spiritual knowledge (*marifa*), is pointed out. He emphasizes this sufistic way of interpretation, while Ramadan's discourse is outlined by an academic critical position and scholar's approach, Gülen develops a language shaped sufistic idioms, narrations.

Ramadan was born in Geneva, a Swiss Muslim. His grandfather Hasan al-Banna was the founder of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and his father was also is a figure in that community and exiled to Switzerland. He studied philosophy, French literature, social sciences and Islamic studies. He is an advisor in many governments and teaching in many universities as a visiting professeur. His works emphasize on Islamic studies, theology and European Muslims and he endeavors the reinterpretation of Islam on many issues.

Ramadan's use of fluent English and French is very influent on young Muslims. Ramadan wants to penetrate in European public sphere via political critics, his Islamic talent and capacity. He uses a political language which is not contradictory to the principles of democracy and the rule of law. This critical and reactionary language and discourse is different from the Gülen's discourse which is not protest. While Gülen's discourse outlines the moral values to the fulfillment of Muslim's morality through the formation of ethical principles and he opposes to violence, thus the main aim is to develop the inner life of all Muslims, in Ramadan's writings we see the critical approach which is result of his scholar background.

The controversial multifaced discourse of Gülen and Ramadan is hard to analyze and classify, so people call them 'double faced', 'making *takiyya*', 'having a hidden agenda', 'hypocrite'.^[407] One claims that they threaten the universal democratic values, human rights by hiding their real identity and strategy concerning islamization of people. To followers, they are man of dialogue and Islamic reformer who want to reformulate Islamic issues dealing with new questions in secular world. Both of them refused that they are called islamist. Their reflects about putting a distance vis-à-vis islamists and political Islam are lacking in their approach.

The Europe and Occident is major theme seems in his writings. He believed that the crusades, European colonialism had influenced Muslim community and Westernization have a deep impact on Muslim societies.

This appearance of a new charismatic leader testifies in modern society where secular orientation is dominant in cultural, political and scientific fields. They push their faith oriented views in hosted societies and Muslim's daily life. Among the secular elites and intellectuals, the modern Islamic figures are raised and a new style of Muslim intellectual emerged. These new could be identified authentically Islamic and " a continuation of the radical *tajdid* tradition in Islam. In practice, they built on the accomplishments of the early Islamic modernists and the new-style Muslim associations. but at the same time, went far beyond the traditionalism of the remaining conservative ulama establishment."^[408]

Thus Fethullah Gülen and Ramadan assume this role of old traditional ulema left by the secular politics and they represent an orthodox modern Islam. In turkey, at the end of Ottoman Empire, this new Islamic corps appears and starts from *Tanzimat* period marked by young ottomans who are identified as bureaucrats-ulemas.^[409]

3. Ijtihad and Islamic Renaissance

Ijtihad is an important element of renewal in Islamic history and tradition through which the ulema play a crucial role to determine the needs in modern time.^[410] They speak about Islamic renaissance in Muslim world that the Muslim generation need to develop consisting the rediscovery of human values and morals, knowledge, fine arts, religious thought in a new manner. Gülen says:

"We are in search of an awakening of reason, as well as of heart, spirit and mind. Yet, if it possible to assume a harvest fruits of efforts and works resulting from this."^[411]

Thus, Islamic renaissance in modern world give intellectual rebirth. Beside his positive approach to the reformulation and a new way to understand Islamic interpretation, he outlines some of the hindrances and the reasons why *ijtihad* have been forgotten and was lost: "political oppression, inner struggles, the misuse of the institution of *ijtihad*, an extreme trust in the present legal system, the denial of reform, the blindness caused by the dominant monotonous present system of the time." He says also that the door of *ijtihad* has never been closed. After saying some reasons why the door of *ijtihad* was considered closed, Gülen expects a great revival of religion and religiosity in Islamic world.

The similar motivation is claimed and formulated in Ramadan's writings. He described an open mind and tolerant Islam promotes enlightenment of Muslim world. Referring the European Muslim is understood as a way of Modern Islam. He notes a reflexive approach to interpret and reconstruct Islamic knowledge. "a new, positive and constructive posture which relies on a fine comprehension of Islam's priorities, a clear vision of what is absolute definitively fixed and what is subject to change and adopting "[412]

We took the example of *ijtihad* and the question of *dar al-harb* and *dar al-islam* that are reformulated by Gülen and Ramadan to understand how they apply Islamic knowledge on modern not only theological, also social and cultural issues. In western societies, this traditional binary formulation does not respond Muslims demands.

On this issue, Gülen uses term of *dar al-hizmet* which is an "intention to serve Islam by presenting good example, then one or she has to obey the *lex loci*, to respect others' rights and to be just, and has to disregard discussions of *dar al-harb* and *dar al-Islam*."^[413]

Before giving his reflection on *ijtihad* on this issue, Ramadan identifies the essential elements of Muslim personality and identity.^[414] His treatment and analyze on Muslim personality serve us why he supports a renewal on this binary opposite conception. The first element is faith and spirituality which is manifested in several cases by practice that is the second element. Practices perform Muslim's faith like praying, fasting. Thirdly, the protection of human being based on respect and toleration that provide the recognition of humankind. Freedom is also indicated as an important element. The fifth element is based on participation on social affairs which means, for Ramadan, to act in favor of his society and environment. The analysis of this five elements of muslim blooming identity goes alongside with rights and responsibility. The European arena appears a land and a space within which Muslims can profess their faith; participate in social affairs, in which Muslim take care the social and political responsibility. Ramadan emphasizes on *Fiqh* and Islamic tradition to find a way to preserve the Muslim's spirituality and identity.

He does not refer to the notion of dar (abode) and this old binary geographical representation. In Ramadan's formulation, Western societies have a crucial role and a specific space which leads Muslims to express their faith and Islamic message. Muslims enforce to create in this new space "to avoid reactive and overcautious attitudes and to develop a feeling of self-confidence, based on a deep sense of responsibility."^[415]

The treatise of complexity of sciences in contemporary context remains main hindrance, Ramadan argues that *ijtihad* is the most important instrument to reinterpretation et reconstruction of Islam. ^[416]

^Ramadan urges the necessity of *ijtihad* in specific situation, giving example Muslim Europeans, dealing with the participation of women in public life, the distinguish of geographical boundaries as *dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb*, foods, mosques, cemeteries, hospitals, schools, headscarf which have occupied detailed points of European Muslim's life.

The debate on definition Muslim land and non-muslim land based an old conception and thought which, in Ramadan's views, is not sufficient to draw out the dilemma of binary vision of world.

Applying this binary model is a methodological mistake that increase the complexity of problem.^[417]

¹ Thus, Ramadan discusses old conceptions in new context examining their ability and utility in new political, economical and social issues.

Identified three observations, the westernization as a model and closed lies between Muslim and European countries, Muslim generation who live in western societies and the time of diversity and complexity which prevent a simplistic vision, force to find the required way and solution to act with accordance Muslim's belief and with environment. The internalization of matter pushes to Muslim leaders and scholars to debate not only Islamic issues, but to intend coexistence among variable thoughts.

Contrary some *ulama* who accept that the old distinguish of *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb* is still relevant and exist, like *Hizb at-Tahrir* movement or *Tabligh* movement in Europe who defend applying of this classification following literally, Gülen and Ramadan are in favor of reformulation, at least they are calling redebate on this concepts.

After discussed the traditional appellations, Ramadan suggest the concept of *shada* (testimony) which seems him more applicable in a global period, which permits Muslims to participate and involve in their society.

"This *shahada* is not only a matter of speech. A Muslim is the one who believes and acts consequently and consistently. "*Those who attain to Faith and do good works*", as we read in the Qur'an, stresses the fact that the *shahada* has an inevitable impact on the actions of the Muslim whatever society he/she lives in. To observe the *shahada* signifies being involved in the society in all fields where need requires it: unemployment, marginalization, delinquency, etc. This also means being engaged in those processes which could lead to a positive reform of both the institutions and the legal, economic, social and political system in order to bring about more justice and a real popular participation at grassroots level."^[418]

In this sense, referring to term *shada*, Ramadan is overlapping the ancient forms of binary opposition to demonstrate a further overture for Muslims.

Analyzing and classifying on conditions and qualities required to become a *mujtahid* and to make an *ijtihad*, Ramadan's position is rather opaque then Gülen's, nevertheless Gülen does not claim that the gate of *ijtihad* is have been closed.

4. European Islam and Citizenship

Muslims who have grown up in Western Europe, themselves think about the implication of their faith and daily practice which continue to form theirs lives and it is evident that Muslims face with issues, thus they research new approach for their questions to exit increasingly deeply about their dilemma: between European and Muslim.^[419] It is not only an identity and

So called faith based movement, Gülen movement seeks to escape the minority status and isolation of Muslim in Western societies. In last years, Gülen's followers who inspired his ideas, establish non

denominational educational and dialogue activities all around world. Creating private schools, foundations and organizing intercultural activities are serving to make connection between Muslims and non Muslim. Gülen encourages his followers and sympathizers to achieve the exemplarity of God Muslim, being devoted and ascetic in their daily life. The essential element of integration used by the movement is education. Although these schools do not give religious courses, the essential orientation is based on the teaching of ethics^[420]. Gülen stresses on education inspired an "ethical vision rooted in Islam but not limited in its expression to sympathizers of the *umma* (community)."^[421] The Gülen's inspired schools' education style aims to respond the question of how to generate an ethical human with common values. Teaching is considered a holy duty^[422] to achieve the finality to demonstrate the right way of ethical dimension of life with daily conduct as many scholars indicate the methods applied in schools.^[423] Many scholars, like Balci and Michel, note that the coexistence of pupils comes from different religious, ethnic origins.^[424] The choice of secular education rather than religious Qur'anic school mainly is adopted in Gülen's inspired schools to find common spaces with host society which provide an enormous impact to diminish Muslim's profiles in western context. Ramadan says that his first aim is reconciliation between two sides, firstly Muslims can profess their faith and loyal to the secular principles and he wants to show the compatibility of Islam and Muslim ethics in secular western societies.^[425] Thus, Muslims become an actor in public space where people bring common to debate and formulate a common good. Muslim identity operates in publicly through their demands with construction of spaces, visibility.

5. Civility That Matters

Muslim actors participate in western social imaginary giving new debates. The presence of Islam is shaping secular modern life and practices through the visibility of body, discourse. Penetrating in public sphere, they create inconvenient asymmetric relations^[426] and they are seeking to perform their manners and habits in Europeanization process. Muslims in Western Europe is confronted; firstly; they immersed deeply in a secularized societies. Paralell of the loose of structuring capacity of the religion, Islam take his part in this secularized situation and paradoxically religious feelings are recombined and manifested in terms of enthusiasm, emotion.^[427] Secondly, the visibility of Muslim community in public sphere create the challenge which faced Muslims of western societies, or in Europe, the dominant religious and cultural figure is Christianity, even with his plurality in different forms.

In this sense, Gülen movement certainly contribute Muslim's assertion with their own distinctiveness, it is not an assimilations and symmetric project of modernization. Inspired by the Sufistic terminology, the followers elaborate a language to strengthen their good conduct. One is an ascetic body, consciously or unconsciously, that affects one's acts such as eating, drinking, going to bed and getting up, talking and keeping silent, remaining in solitude or with people. Fashioned and displayed, the ascetic adab rules govern everyday life of the believers. The pleasure in this world is considered ephemeral and the followers do not pursue the hedonism because they believe that they are sent to this world to enhance his devotion and seek God's contentment. He has the idea that he will not stay for a long time here in this world for the reason that the essential duty is in the terrestrial

world, therefore, it is necessary to move away from cheerfulness, joy, and temporary happiness to live the eternal life. The hedonism kills the idealism of the sympathizers. Against the hedonism, the sympathizers follow the value of altruism which Gülen regards as the criteria of life according to the ideal man which requires the effort of follower as developing the detachment from the pleasure and seductive needs, except that the intellectual and aesthetic dimension is allowed and accepted.⁴²⁸ Ramadan remarks profession of faith in secular modern world that makes matter.

"The public space has become non-religious, if not sometimes anti-religious, and growing numbers of Believers find it difficult to face this situation. the power of attraction of the public sphere, with its "sacred values" founded on individualism, money and entertainment is so powerful and efficient that it seems illusory to imagine that any kind of resistance might be possible."^[429]

Gülen's and Ramadan views as a third way, via dialog, affect the problem between sacred and religious that is considered a secularization on Muslims practices and faith.

6. A Possible Peaceful Coexistence

The picture of Islam presented via events, the political situation, and manipulation raise the prejudices and meta-discourse about Islam, binary against western societies and Muslims.^[430] To involve and prevent from this manipulation, Muslim should admit in loyal field to protect their rights and have a consistent dialogue with their neighbours, so Muslims can to modify the negative image of Islam. Gülen's inspired dialogue and educational activities serve the recognition of Muslims in host society.^[431]

Gülen encourages interfaith dialogue among different representants of religions. In his early publication of *The Necessity of Interfaith Dialogue*, he demonstrates his interest and commitment to interfaith dialogue. In Turkey and via dialogue foundations, he establishes a major force in dialogue. His writings and encouragement, concern set out the principles for his followers to participate in dialogue and social action. He is e mentor, nevertheless lacking a scholar approach to the study of comparative religions, his argument produce a practical aspect to a response for the difficulties of his engagement, provides the critics of nationalist and conservators.^[432]

In terms of human responsibility which is seen to transcending theological and civilizational differences and a realization of studying on common good, his endeavour remarks the notion of civility logic.^[433] He presumes that the people whatever his faith, race and nation, have much in common and forgot the ancient misunderstanding and conflicts. He invites to debate and find solution against poverty, environment questions, and undeniable human rights. This civic logic contains to involve in society, diminish the borders with others.

Ramadan also urges that it is becoming urgent that Muslims rediscover the power of unity not only between Muslims and it is not sufficient but he remarks the urgent of engagement in dialogue and collaboration with others. But at least, he emphasizes the intra community dialogue.^[434]

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