

(pp.224-5) Zaeef invites the U.S and its allies to look critically at the lessons from Iraq as well as from the history of Afghanistan: 'America should take a look at Afghanistan's history: we have been invaded many times before. How many troops did their predecessors bring? And why did they fail? They should look at Iraq. A million lives were lost while 300,000 US soldiers were there, and the killing continues to this day. Americans should know that they are no longer thought of as a people of freedom and democracy. They have sown the seeds of hatred throughout the world. Under their new banner they have declared a war on terrorism and terrorists, but the very term 'terrorist' is of their own making. The *jihad* against them will never stop as long as America doesn't take steps to correct its mistakes'. (p.233) This is a sad verdict; a blunt message from Kabul where Zaeef now resides keeping a low-key profile and wondering about what the future hides.

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GLOBAL MUFTI: THE PHENOMENON OF YUSUF AL-QARADAWI.

By Jakob Skaovgaard-Peterson & Bettina Graf (Eds). London: C Hurst & Co (Publishing) Ltd, 2009. Pp. 262. ISBN: 9781850659396

The Qatar-based Egyptian Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī is among the most well-known Islamic scholars on the contemporary global scene. It might be something of an exaggeration to label him as a 'phenomenon' and as the 'global mufti'—which is what the very title of this book hails him as—but that he exercises an enormous influence in numerous Islamic scholarly and activist circles is undeniable.

This book is a collection of essays on diverse aspects of al-Qaradāwī's life, achievements and writings. In their introductory essay, the editors of the volume provide a broad overview of his life, against which they situate his scholarly and activist accomplishments. Born in a poor family in a village in Egypt in 1926, al-Qaradāwī studied at al-Azhar, the largest seat of traditional Islamic learning, after which he shifted to Qatar as emissary of his alma mater. It was there, we are told, that al-Qaradāwī established himself as a noted scholar and activist, travelling widely across the world and establishing a number of Islamic institutions. The editors provide a pen-portrait of a passionate, dedicated scholar-activist, seeking to revive the rapidly disappearing tradition of socially-engaged ulema, who al-Qaradāwī believes, should lead Muslims in the twenty-first century. They account for the wide reverence in which al-Qaradāwī is held in many Muslim circles by pointing to his charismatic personality, his innovative approach to, and use of, modern methods of communications

(such as television and the Internet), his eagerness to discuss and deal with issues of contemporary social and political concern, his championing of a contextually-relevant understanding of Islam that can engage with issues of the day, his distance from ruling regimes (in contrast to his many fellow ulema), and his advocacy of a vision of 'moderate' Islam or Islam of the 'middle-path'. Readers are offered a general survey of al-Qaradāwī's prolific writings as well as fatwas that illustrate how he has sought to depart from the obsession of many traditional ulema simply with issues of ritual and personal law to engage with complex and pressing social and political concerns. This point is further elaborated upon in the following chapter, by Bettina Graf, where she discusses the 'state of research' on al-Qaradāwī and examines writings about al-Qaradāwī by both Western as well as Arab scholars, including some hardliner self-styled Salafists, who regard al-Qaradāwī as too soft and liberal for their liking.

Despite his relative openness, al-Qaradāwī is, as Jakob Skovgaard-Peterson reminds us in his essay, a scholar trained in the traditional mould of al-Azhar before it was nationalized by the Nasser's secularizing regime. As such, he continues to insist that the ulema have the foremost role in leading the global Muslim *ummah*. al-Qaradāwī has been in the forefront of efforts to goad the ulema to be more socially and politically active and engaged than they presently are, as reflected in the number of institutions that he has established or heads that bring together ulema from various countries to debate and discuss issues of contemporary concern. At the same time, he remains critical of aspects of traditional *madrasah* training, such as what he underwent in his years at al-Azhar, including reluctance to engage in *ijtihad* or independent reflection, obsession with the minutiae of *fiqh* rules that were developed by the medieval ulema, absence of modern subjects and languages in the curriculum, and lack of sufficient exposure to contemporary developments. He also remains bitterly opposed to the tendency of numerous traditionalist ulema and their institutions—and here al-Azhar is no exception—to supinely accept the diktats of dictatorial regimes and their willingness to issue fatwas simply to please their political bosses.

At the same time as al-Qaradāwī, a traditionally-trained 'ālim, identifies himself with his fellow ulema, he has also been, as Husam Tammam explains in his article, a sympathizer of the Muslim Brotherhood or *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*. Tammam writes of al-Qaradāwī's long-standing association with the Brothers, beginning from his student days at al-Azhar, and with which he continues to enjoy a somewhat ambiguous relationship. He shares the Brothers' understanding of Islam as a 'complete system' but, at the same time, has been critical of their excesses—including, and particularly, the extremists among them such as Sayyid Qutb, who al-Qaradāwī has critiqued in several of

his writings, for their radical utopianism that does not prohibit violence as a means to bring about social transformation but which, far from producing any positive results, has only led to further spirals of violence and repression.

Repeating some of the same arguments made by the editors of this volume in their Introduction, Motaz Al-Khateeb's article looks at the factors that have made al-Qaradāwī what he terms an 'authoritative reference' for many Sunnī Muslims today. This is further explored in the essay by Alexandre Caeiro and Mahmoud al-Saify, where they describe al-Qaradāwī's activities in Europe, and the responses to these by European Muslims, the European media and European states. In this regard, they discuss the innovative efforts al-Qaradāwī has made in developing a *fiqh* for minorities and appropriate *fiqh* responses to the problems Muslims face as citizens of non-Muslim countries; the role of numerous Europe-based Islamic scholarly institutions with which al-Qaradāwī is associated in responding to the concerns of European Muslims; and the different ways in which different sectors of the European media and governments have reacted to him (predictably, some praising him as heralding the arrival of 'moderate' Islam, others branding him as a 'fundamentalist' or worse).

In part, al-Qaradāwī's fame rests on his willingness to use modern means of communications to spread his views. This is what Ehab Galal deals with in his essay which examines al-Qaradāwī's programmes that are broadcast on numerous Arab television channels, notably Al-Jazeera. He makes a detailed content analysis of these programmes and concludes that al-Qaradāwī's popularity has much to do with the ways in which he creatively engages with the media to deal with issues of pressing social and political importance in an accessible manner, and not just arcane *fiqh* rules about ritual and personal deportment that most traditionally-trained ulema specialize in.

Central to al-Qaradāwī's understanding of Islam, which distinguishes it from many Islamists, on the one hand, and traditionalist ulema, on the other, are his views on women, moderation and public welfare. Barbara Stowasser examines several of al-Qaradāwī's writings as well as fatwas on women, where she shows how he seeks to maintain a delicate balance between traditionalist views on gender-related issues, on the one hand, and the need for women to play a more socially-engaged role, on the other. Bettina Graf examines the concept of *wasatiyyah* in al-Qaradāwī's writings, which he uses to argue for what he regards as the Islamic 'middle-path' of moderation and balance: a middle-way between tradition and reform, between key Western values and total opposition to them, a path that eschews, even condemns, terrorism at the same time as it vociferously opposes imperialism. The concluding essay, by Armando Salvatore, purports to discuss al-Qaradāwī's approach to the concept of *maṣlaḥah* or

public welfare as a tool for developing more flexible and appropriate *fiqh* responses to contemporary conditions. However, Salvatore's arguments are dense, almost opaque, which makes his essay—at least to this reviewer—quite incomprehensible, in contrast to the other essays in this volume.

New Delhi

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BETWEEN TERROR AND DEMOCRACY – ALGERIA SINCE 1989. By James D. Le Sueur. Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing and London and New York: Zed Books, 2010. Pp. xxviii + 239. ISBN: 9781842777244.

Teaching history at Nebraska University the author specialized on Algeria. Proven by this comprehensive book, his previous study of *Uncivilized War: Intellectuals and Identity Politics during the Decolonization of Algeria* (2nd ed. 2005), and his translation of Mouloud Feraoun's disturbing *Journal 1955-1962*, he is outstandingly knowledgeable about Algeria's recent past, turning this book into a must for Maghreb studies.

That says a lot given the strong focus on the country by American authors, including John Entelis, Martin Evans, George Joffé, John Kiser, Robert Malley, John Phillips, William Quandt, Hugh Roberts, and Michael Willis. Entelis rightly acclaims his colleague's study as 'the most historically comprehensive, analytically insightful and intellectually honest account of Algeria's dramatic and tumultuous last two decades available'.

This tragic country, for long 'the world's most dangerous stage' (p.193), keeps hooking those who - by putting their feet into it - become "*pieds noirs*". I, too, lost my heart to Algeria when serving there as Vice Consul until independence (1962) and again as German ambassador from 1987-1990.

The author describes how post-colonial Algeria internationally assumed leadership as a champion of the Non-Aligned Movement before declining during years of corruption and stagnation, first as a Socialist one-party dictatorship - the FLN period - then run by a French speaking and atheist military junta.

In between, for less than three years (1988-1991), Algeria looked poised to become the world's first Islamic democracy, with Abassi Madani's *Front Islamique du Salut* (F.I.S.) in ascendance. As it turned out, after a "stolen election" (54% voting for F.I.S.) and a military takeover (applauded by France) the country tumbled into a decade of extreme violence committed both by military "*eradicalists*" and the Islamist guerrilla: 200,000 people killed in the century's dirtiest, extremely bloody civil war (similar only to Cambodia).