



SHAYKH YUSUF AL-QARADAWI: PORTRAIT OF A LEADING ISLAMIC CLERIC

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Yusuf al-Qaradawi is one of the best known and more important contemporary Muslim clerics. He is widely read and heeded throughout the Muslim world. This article discusses al-Qaradawi's thought, his influence, his style of leadership and where he stands on the spectrum of Islamist political thought and activity.

Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi is the cofounder and president of the International Association of Muslim Scholars and the European Council for Fatwa and Research. He has his own Arabic-language website and supervises the popular site Islam Online (bilingual English/Arabic). He is extraordinarily prolific, and has written over 100 books on Islam and Islamism.

Among his peers, the shaykh's reputation is held in high regard: The illustrious Mustafa al-Zarqa declared that owning a copy of his *al-Halal wal-Haram fil-Islam* was "the duty of every Muslim family." The renowned Abu al-Ala al-Mawdudi described his *Fiqh al-Zaqa* as "the book of this century in Islamic jurisprudence."¹ Yet he owes his global fame to his regular appearances on the religious program *al-Shari'a wal-Hayat*, broadcast by al-Jazeera.²

His website boasts:

All contemporary Muslims have read one of his books, messages, articles or fatwas, or listened to one of his lectures, sermons, lessons, discussions or answers, either in a mosque, at university, in a club, on the radio, on television or on cassette.³

AL-QARADAWI AS A RELIGIOUS LEADER

In *Religious Leadership: Personality, History and Sacred Authority*, Richard Hutch offers a paradigm for analyzing that

phenomenon. He emphasizes the importance of psychological factors and identifies inner life, society, or culture as the locus of the sacred in a religious leader's personality.⁴ Based on these parameters, he classifies religious leaders into three types: the self-encountering leader, who locates the source of the sacred within him/herself (a typical case being Joan of Arc);⁵ the group-containing leader, who sees his authority as derived from followers, such as Martin Luther King, Jr.;⁶ and the tradition-managing leader, who derives authority from positions occupied within the institutional life of a religious tradition.⁷ Shaykh al-Qaradawi is a textbook example of a tradition-managing leader.

Hutch regards the leader's early biography as being of crucial value to understanding subsequent evolution. The next section of this article presents a summary of al-Qaradawi's childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood, adapted from his autobiography.⁸

AL-QARADAWI'S BIOGRAPHY

Yusuf Mustafa al-Qaradawi was born in 1926 in Sift Turab, a small village on the Nile Delta whose only remarkable feature is that it is the resting place of one of Muhammad's minor Companions.⁹ Al-Qaradawi's father died when he was only two, and he was brought up by his mother in the household of his uncle Ahmad, a poor tenant farmer who considered him a son.¹⁰ Al-Qaradawi was not deprived of affection during his childhood, and in his memoirs he writes that whereas

most people only have one home, he had two: his uncle's and his maternal grandfather's,¹¹ a relatively well-off fruit and cereal merchant who could afford meat twice a week.¹² Yusuf's was a traditional, religious family: His uncle Ahmad went to pray in the mosque five times a day, "even for the dawn prayer," and another of his uncles had memorized the Koran.¹³ He started attending the *kuttab* (Koranic school) even before he began state school, and in both he was a diligent, hard-working student.¹⁴ He finished memorizing the Koran when he was only nine, thereby earning the title shaykh and the first of a long list of prizes: a modest amount of money.¹⁵

Upon completing primary school, Yusuf yearned to continue his education at al-Azhar's secondary school. Yet because the long years of study there would not guarantee gainful employment, his uncle tried to convince him to learn a trade or open a shop. It was the intervention of a shaykh from a neighboring village--an event al-Qaradawi describes as providential--that persuaded Ahmad to "leave the future in the hands of Him who controls it" and allow his nephew to follow the path he had chosen.¹⁶

The adolescent moved to Tanta to study at the town's Azhari secondary school. He was often at the top of the class, which brought him small monetary awards to supplement his income.¹⁷ While in Tanta, he had the opportunity to listen to Hasan al-Banna, founder and first leader of the Muslim Brothers, and became one of his followers.¹⁸ He also started writing verse, much of which peppers his memoirs. His first work, published at his own expense, was a theatrical piece in verse about his namesake, Joseph.¹⁹

At 14, al-Qaradawi already officiated as imam at his village's mosque on occasions such as Ramadan. His contact with the Muslim Brothers encouraged him to preach in other villages on the Nile Delta "to guide [the people] toward reaffirming [their] faith, rectifying [false] religious concepts, and developing the values and behaviors demanded by religion."²⁰ When he was only 20, he started giving lessons in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) in his village. According

to the shaykh, these lessons were characterized by the three features that would mark his future life as a preacher and scholar: relevance, leniency, and independence from any Islamic legal school.²¹

The villagers of Sift Turab followed the strict Shafi'i school, and the ideas introduced by Yusuf were well received despite criticism from the older shaykhs. In particular, his teaching that touching a woman does not invalidate the ablutions--a common source of dispute that arose when a wife accidentally touched her husband while serving him dinner, forcing him to perform ablutions again before the evening prayer--proved popular with the women who, when their husbands got angry, would exhort them: "Calm down! Pray according to Shaykh Yusuf's school."²²

In his autobiography, al-Qaradawi devotes much attention to three major issues in the political life of Egypt during the first half of the twentieth century: the opposition to British colonialism, Zionist ambitions in Palestine, and the rivalry between the Wafd party and the Muslim Brothers.²³ He often draws attention to his own role: While at the Azhari secondary school, he was elected student leader, and his was an exceptional leadership in that it was "both loved by the students and respected by the shaykhs," and was able "to promote the national, Arab, and Islamic causes... without getting involved in the customary acts of violence."²⁴

Islamist students not only organized demonstrations to mark the anniversary of events such as the Balfour Declaration; some of them went on to fight in the first war against Israel (1948) as part of a Muslim Brotherhood contingent. Qaradawi believes that this campaign was the main reason for the Brothers' persecution by the Egyptian authorities. According to his version of the story, the Western powers put pressure on Prime Minister Mahmud al-Nuqrashi, who banned the group and jailed many members.²⁵ Al-Qaradawi also recounts their "major role" during the struggle against British power in the Suez Canal Zone in the early 1950s.²⁶

Al-Qaradawi presents an extremely idealized image of Hasan al-Banna, who is

described as both an inspiring leader and as an astute observer.²⁷ He is exonerated of all the “errors” committed by the group, such as the assassinations of Judge Ahmad al-Khazandar and al-Nuqrashi. These are blamed on the Muslim Brothers’ armed branch, the “Special Organization” that had become “an organization within the organization” and a problem al-Banna had intended--but did not have the time--to deal with.²⁸ The sweep of arrests that followed the homicide of al-Nuqrashi reached Yusuf, who spent several months in prison and learned there of al-Banna’s murder by the security services on February 12, 1949.

At this point, he reflects:

While the Egyptian nation was overwhelmed with grief, people in the West--especially in Europe and the United States--celebrated what they deemed a happy occasion.... They knew more than anybody the worth of the man and his preaching and the enormity of the danger he represented for them.²⁹

Al-Qaradawi has fond memories of his first spell in prison. The Muslim Brothers turned the Tur detention camp, where they were being held, into “a mosque for prayer, a university for learning, a society for cooperation, a forum for culture, a club for sports, a meeting place for communion, a parliament for consultation and understanding.”³⁰ When he was released--in the first batch, which shows that he was still a rather junior member--he took the final exams at the Azhari secondary school and, despite the period of absence from his studies, he obtained the second best grades in the whole of Egypt.³¹ His good results granted him a financial reward and the opportunity to enter the Fu’ad I University (the future Cairo University), where he could in due course become assistant professor of Arabic. Nevertheless, al-Qaradawi decided to stay at al-Azhar because, he writes, he felt “a responsibility to work for its reform” and enrolled in its faculty of theology.³²

During his university years, al-Qaradawi found a job as a preacher at a mosque in the town of Mahalla al-Kubra, not far from his village, to finance the cost of living in Cairo. His Friday sermons proved so popular that the owners of the mosque were forced to build a multistory annex to accommodate the crowds. One of his friends took notes of the sermons, which were later published under the title *Nafahat al-Jum’a (Scents of Friday)*.³³ Yusuf also continued his work with the Muslim Brothers, legal once again and led by retired judge Hasan al-Hudaybi.³⁴

In addition, the shaykh was among the founding members of his faculty’s student union, which he eventually led.³⁵ After the 1952 revolution, in which he claimed the Muslim Brothers played a central role as the popular base for the Free Officers, he was sent to Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Gaza Strip--together with another member, who is barely mentioned in his memoirs--to establish contacts for the Brothers.³⁶ This mission, his first trip abroad, shows his rising star within the organization.

The first part of al-Qaradawi’s memoirs ends in 1953 with an epic account of his final exams--in which, true to form, he got the best grades--and a critical review of the curriculum,³⁷ similar to the one he gave about the secondary school syllabus.³⁸ His graduation from university can be considered the end of his formative years.

The rest can be summed up in a few lines adapted from the shaykh’s personal website:³⁹ He was imprisoned twice more (from 1954 to 1956, and in 1962) for his membership in the Muslim Brotherhood, and in 1959 he was forbidden to preach. He worked briefly at the Ministry of Religious Endowments and at the cultural department of al-Azhar, and in 1962 this institution sent him to Qatar to run its center there. In Doha, he established the Department of Islamic Studies and the Faculty of Islamic Law and Islamic Studies at the Teacher Training College. In 1973 he earned his doctorate from al-Azhar, with a thesis on “The Role of Legal Alms [*Zakat*] in the Resolution of the Social Problems.” Since then, he has written numerous books,

participated in establishing Islamic banking, and become a celebrity through his appearances on al-Jazeera.

Al-Qaradawi's autobiography shows the ambition that took him out of his small village and catapulted him to international stardom. He justifies his desire to excel by explaining that "God Almighty loves fine things and detests inferior ones, and the noble prophet said: 'If you ask God for heaven, ask for the highest Paradise.'"⁴⁰ When he was at the Azhari secondary school in Tanta, one of the teachers asked the students what they wanted to be when they grew up, and Yusuf blurted out: "shaykh of al-Azhar." The teacher, who had made fun of the modest aspirations of the other students, declared with all seriousness: "Do not rule that out, children. Many a big hope has realized, and many a remote dream has come true."⁴¹

In fact, the tone of the shaykh's memoirs betrays arrogance, starting with his statement that his initial reluctance to write them was overcome by arguments that "they would be of great benefit to the readers, in particular the promising new generations of the Muslim community."⁴² He characterizes his closest friend during his youth, Muhammad al-Dimirdash, as somebody who started following him around because "he was attracted to those of genuine talent."⁴³ He relates several disagreements with lecturers who ended up apologizing and expressing their admiration toward him.⁴⁴ Recounting a debate during his foreign tour as a representative of the Muslim Brothers, he boasts that his words "silenced" his opponents.⁴⁵ He even criticizes the Brothers for not encouraging him to learn English despite his "extraordinary gift for languages."⁴⁶

AL-QARADAWI AS A TRADITION-MANAGING LEADER

Quoting Max Weber, Hutch explains that the tradition-managing leader "leads by dint of the authority of the office s/he occupies within the institutional life of a given religious tradition."⁴⁷ Al-Qaradawi spent his

adolescence and early adulthood within two of the most important institutions of the Muslim world: The first, al-Azhar, represents tradition in the most literal sense: For over a thousand years it has been the most prestigious center of Islamic learning in the Sunni world, forming the elite circle of clerics who interpret religious texts and issue *fatwas* (legal opinions) to guide believers.

The second institution was the Muslim Brotherhood, founded by Hasan al-Banna in 1928--barely four years after the end of the caliphate that had symbolized the unity of the Islamic community, and partly as a response to that traumatic event. A deeply religious man with a mystical bent, al-Banna saw in Islam the only way to bring about the regeneration of Muslim society and confront enemies both internal (superstition, secularism⁴⁸) and external (colonialism, Zionism).

Al-Qaradawi resents being categorized as a traditionalist and insists that he has always been a reformer.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, he carefully cultivates the image of a shaykh and always appears in public wearing the *quftan* (dark robe) and *kawala* (red cap wrapped in a white turban) that make up the Azhari "uniform." He is keen to preserve the ulama's control of religious affairs: During the crisis over the Danish caricatures, he attacked the popular Muslim preacher--but not scholar--Amr Khalid for taking part in a conference in Denmark to promote interfaith dialogue, deeming it "a departure from the ulama's consensus."⁵⁰ Indeed, al-Qaradawi stresses that "reform of [the Muslim] religion must be carried out from within, using its legal instruments, according to the way of its people and its ulama."⁵¹

Elsewhere, the shaykh argues that the adaptation of Islam to the modern world should be based on the legacy of the past, an immense wealth of jurisprudence that illuminates the way so contemporary jurists can build a legal framework that draws on its logic, spirit, basis, directives, and interpretations to treat the problems of this age, while taking into account the change of time, place, and human condition.⁵²

Al-Qaradawi was one of the hundreds of thousands of young men inspired by al-Banna's vision. In contrast with later Islamists, al-Banna had a generally good relationship with al-Azhar,⁵³ and therefore his Azhari followers were not torn between two loyalties. The shaykh was a member of the Brotherhood for several decades, and although he claims to have left it, he acknowledges his debt towards it for the part it played in his intellectual development.⁵⁴

Furthermore, al-Qaradawi does not shy away from meddling in the group's internal affairs, as shown by his public support for Hizb al-Wasat, formed by a handful of young Muslim Brothers in 1996 without the consent of the group's conservative leadership.⁵⁵ In addition, he is seen as one of the Brotherhood's main ideologues, and in 2002 he was offered the position of its "general guide", which he turned down.⁵⁶

Al-Qaradawi also sought to influence the members of the multiple radical groups that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. He admonished them for having their own interpretations of the Muslim sacred texts,⁵⁷ and has repeatedly criticized their abuse of excommunication (*takfir*)--declaring other Muslims, or even a society as a whole, apostates, thus sanctioning violence against them.⁵⁸ On the other hand, he sympathetically refers to them as "youths" in need of guidance.⁵⁹ In a work first published in 1982, the shaykh attributed the appearance of radicalism to society's failure to govern itself according to God's will:

We must be brave and recognize that our behavior has contributed to pushing those youths to what we dub "extremism." We claim that we follow Islam but fail to put Islam into practice. We read the Koran but do not implement its rulings. We pretend to love the prophet but do not follow his example. We write in our constitutions that the state's religion is Islam but do not give it the place it merits in government, legislation and orientation....We should start by

reforming ourselves and our society according to God's commands before we demand from our young people serenity, good sense, calm, and restraint.⁶⁰

The shaykh also warned that "forces opposed to the triumph of Islam" are "feeding the flames" of radicalism in order to achieve a series of objectives: alienating the population from the Islamists by portraying them as intransigent fanatics; diverting the youth towards secondary issues so that they forget the bigger picture; instigating clashes between different Islamist forces; using extremism as an excuse to strike at the entire Islamist movement; and driving Islamists to desperation, because their efforts only lead to internal divisions and state repression.⁶¹ However, if in the past the target of al-Qaradawi's diatribes was mainly the Muslim rulers, the increasing Western influence in the Muslim world is now his target for blame. In a more recent work he has written:

There are, among Muslims, a few individuals or groups who use violence indiscriminately. Still, they do not represent all Muslims but are small groups whose importance has been inflated by the Western media--and most of them were pushed to extremism by the West's injustices, aggression, and iniquity against Muslims, and its continuous support of Israel.⁶²

The question of the Islamists' position vis-à-vis the West will be addressed later, after the completed analysis of al-Qaradawi's personality as a religious leader.

AL-QARADAWI AS AN "OPPORTUNIST" LEADER

Hutch classifies tradition-managing leaders into three types: The Consolidator, who provides the religion with firm foundations; the Perfectionist, who develops its doctrine; and finally, the Opportunist, who adapts the

religion to new conditions in order to ensure its survival.⁶³ In this framework, al-Qaradawi is an “opportunist” tradition-managing leader. Cheryl Benard has referred to him as a “reformist traditionalist,”⁶⁴ a label al-Qaradawi dismisses as a contradiction in terms⁶⁵ but that effectively points to the tension between his insistence at relying on 15 centuries of Islamic scholarship and his contention that new circumstances require new measures. In effect, al-Qaradawi claims to be an heir to the reformist tradition within Islam, which he traces back from Ibn Taymiyya to Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, and Hasan al-Banna.⁶⁶

In the early era of Islam, eminent scholars such as Abu Hanifa, al-Shafi’i, and al-Ash’ari used their personal judgment and the sources of Islamic jurisprudence (the Koran and Sunna) to set the rules by which Muslims should abide. This process was called *ijtihad*, or “personal effort.” However, around the tenth century, ulama became intent on preserving orthodoxy and merely imitated (*taqlid*) and transmitted (*naql*) the legacy of the past, thereby “closing the door of *ijtihad*.” This fixed creed lent stability to a religious community that had lost its political unity and helped ulama withstand the pressures of rulers wishing to “bend” the rules.⁶⁷ However, it inevitably led to intellectual stagnation and decadence.

The controversial Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897)--who, notwithstanding his epithet, was probably Iranian and therefore Shi’a--is credited with “forcing open” the door of *ijtihad*. Although he was not the first to advocate it, his reputation as a scholar and his tireless political activism won him a wide audience. He rejected both the unquestioning adoption of Western ideas and the blind imitation of the orthodox schools of jurisprudence and made a case for a return to the path of the “righteous ancestors” (*al-salaf al-salih*) and their fresh approach to Islam. That is why the school of thought initiated by al-Afghani and developed by his followers--notably Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida--was dubbed Salafism.⁶⁸

In recent times, the term Salafism has come to designate a radical Islamist current closer to Wahhabi literalism than to the thinking of the nineteenth-century Islamist pioneers, but al-Qaradawi is eager to reclaim it, arguing--not very convincingly--that there is no contradiction whatsoever between abiding by tradition and being a reformer.⁶⁹

Following the lead of the Salafists, al-Qaradawi criticizes two types of ulama: those who, awed by the West, try to adapt Muslim doctrine to the Western model; and those who follow blindly a certain legal school and accept its obsolete precepts on subjects ranging from music or chess to the education of women.⁷⁰ However, that does not mean that tradition should not continue to be central to contemporary Islam. He explains:

The priority of the contemporary mufti should be to take the people out of the narrow prison of the [four orthodox] legal schools into the wide open space of the Shari’a, which includes both extant and extinct schools, the sayings of the many imams who did not follow a specific legal school--of whom there are many--and, first and foremost, the sayings of the ulama amongst the Prophet’s Companions [*Sahaba*].⁷¹

This seems rather conservative when compared to the ideas of al-Afghani, who did not believe that the interpretation of the texts should be constricted by the work of previous generations of ulama--or, indeed, that the religious scholars should have a monopoly over it. He wrote:

Whoever has a good command of Arabic is of sensible mind and acquainted with the lives of the *salaf* and the principle of unanimity [*ijmaa*], and is able to determine whether a ruling should be interpreted literally or allegorically should be able to look into the Koran and the authentic hadiths and derive rulings from them, by analogy [*qiyas*].... Yes, those outstanding imams of the Muslim

community did an excellent work of interpretation--may God reward them for it--but it should not be assumed that they grasped all the secrets of the Koran.⁷²

In any case, reform is a prevalent subject in al-Qaradawi's writings, and he has stated that "renewal for us is not only a demanding necessity, it is a religious obligation."⁷³ He often quotes a hadith that proclaims: "At the start of each century, Almighty God will send to this community [umma] someone to renew its religion."⁷⁴ Prominent renewers of the past include al-Shafi'i (died 820), who tried to reach a compromise between the defenders of tradition (*ahl al-hadith*) and the supporters of reasoning (*ahl al-ra'i*); al-Ash'ari (died circa 935), a repentant Mutazilite who founded one of the early schools of *kalam* (Islamic theology); al-Ghazali (died 1111), who renounced philosophy but introduced its methods into Sunni orthodoxy, together with Sufi mysticism; Ibn Taymiyya (died 1328), who anticipated nineteenth-century reformers in deploring the imitation of the legal schools; and Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), disciple and collaborator of al-Afghani, and an eminent scholar in his own right.

It is quite possible that al-Qaradawi would like to be considered the renewer of the twenty-first century. He remembers that when he was at university he disagreed with one of his lecturers who contended that nobody could attain the level of greatness of Muhammad's Companions. Al-Qaradawi argued that some later Muslims--such as Salah al-Din and Ibn Taymiyya--had been even greater, "which opens a window of hope for the ulama and preachers that strive in our time."⁷⁵ One of his classmates mentioned al-Banna, but al-Qaradawi may have been thinking of himself, especially as he had recounted that a shaykh told him that he saw a certain resemblance between him and the founder of the Muslim Brothers and, when he rejected the comparison, the older man warned him:

Do not underestimate yourself! It is true that Hasan al-Banna had abilities

that you do not have, but you have abilities that he did not have, and you have the talent to play a role. Do not withdraw from that role! Do not disregard that talent!⁷⁶

In addition, al-Qaradawi's personal website reproduces the enthusiastic letter of one of his devotees, who addresses him as "commander [*amir*] of the preachers of our time" and "renewer of our time."⁷⁷ Unsurprisingly, the shaykh greatly values his own work: He has been criticized for using the *minbar* (the pulpit of the mosque) to complain that Qatari television was destroying old recordings of his programs⁷⁸ and, in his autobiography, he often bemoans the loss of his early poetic productions.⁷⁹

Yet in spite of his self-importance, al-Qaradawi is only one of the many scholars working in the field of Islamic reform. In addition, the avoidance of rigidly following a particular school was institutionalized in the early twentieth century, when the legal systems of the Muslim world were overhauled by the selection and combination of rulings deemed more suitable to the demands of contemporary life, regardless of the legal school from which they hailed.⁸⁰

So what has made al-Qaradawi stand out? How has he become an internationally celebrated figure? The answer lies in his leadership skills, which gave him the vision to identify an inspiring theme and the charisma to turn that theme into a movement.

WASATIYYA

In the 1960s and 1970s, when al-Qaradawi was still a fledgling author, the main challenge faced by the Islamists was Arab nationalism, embodied by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. After cofounding the non-aligned movement at Bandung, nationalizing the Suez Canal and surviving a 1956 Anglo-French-Israeli attack, he enjoyed enormous popular appeal throughout the Arab world and beyond. Nasser referred to his system in Egypt as Arab socialism.

As a response, al-Qaradawi published in 1971 the first of four books on *Hatmiyyat al-Hall al-Islami (The Inevitability of the Islamist Solution)* to propose a “third way” between capitalism and socialism. Arab socialism suffered a crushing military defeat in 1967, and proved unable to provide jobs for millions of new graduates or to maintain the standard of living of the swelling mass of government employees. The resulting disillusionment was to the benefit of the Islamists, but al-Qaradawi had to find a new theme to put across his ideology. He found it in *wasatiyya*.

In the Koran it is said that God announced: “We have made of you an umma [community] justly balanced [*wasat*]” (Koran 2:143). This concept was developed into a doctrine by al-Shafi’i, al-Ash’ari, and al-Gazhali—who worked, respectively, in the fields of Islamic law, dogma, and philosophy.⁸¹ Later, Ibn Taymiyya wrote *Sharh al-Aqida al-Wasatiyya* to describe the principles of orthodox Islam. In the 1960s, the Egyptian (Nasserist) Ministry of Religious Endowments published *Wasatiyyat al-Islam*, which aimed at “showing the ‘moderation’ of Islam, i.e., the fairness of its rulings, principles and examples, and its representing the right position between the extremes.”⁸² Therefore, when al-Qaradawi adopted the term *wasatiyya* to characterize the Islamist trend he espouses, he knew he was drawing on a concept very much rooted in Muslim minds.

Contrary to the assertions of skeptics such as prominent Syrian reformer Muhammad Shahrur,⁸³ *wasatiyya* is not a post-September 11 fad: Four years before the attacks on Washington and New York, *al-Shari’a wal-Hayyat* had already devoted a program to “*wasatiyyat al-Islam*”.⁸⁴ Since then, the term has almost become a cliché: It was one of the main topics of the Islamic Conference’s summit held in Mecca in December 2005 discussing the challenges confronting the Muslim world in the twenty-first century, and the word itself appears four times in the summit’s final communiqué.⁸⁵ Even radicals have tried to appropriate it for themselves: The Wahhabi preacher Muhsin al-Awaji, notorious for his admiration of Usama bin Ladin and his

criticism of what he sees as “liberal influences” in Saudi Arabia, is the founder of Muntada al-Wasatiyya (Club of Moderation) and manages the website <http://www.wasatyah.com>.⁸⁶ However, al-Qaradawi is recognized as the “spiritual father of the *wasatiyya* trend.”⁸⁷

The shaykh offers several definitions of the term *wasatiyya*. He often presents it as the middle way between two undesirable extremes:

Wasatiyya is the [right] balance between mind and revelation, between matter and spirit, between rights and duties, between individualism and collectivism, between inspiration and obligation, between the text [i.e. the Koran and the Sunna] and personal interpretation [ijtihad], between the ideal and reality, between the permanent and the transient, between relying on the past and looking forward to the future.⁸⁸

Similarly, he has written:

Wasatiyya lies between spirituality and materialism, between idealism and realism, between rationalism and sentimentalism, between individualism and collectivism, between permanence and evolution.⁸⁹

Other times, he focuses on the place of *wasatiyya* within the Islamist movement. As has already been mentioned, al-Qaradawi resents being labeled a “traditionalist.” In his opinion, the neglect of some researchers in identifying *wasatiyya* as a distinct trend despite its broad popular base is a deliberate attempt to minimize its importance.⁹⁰ For good measure, he proposes his own classification of the different Islamist trends, which includes four groups: those prone to excommunicating their opponents (*tayyar al-takfir*); those characterized by immobilism and severity (*tayyar al-jumud wal-tashaddud*); those who resort to violence (*tayyar al-unf*); and, finally, the moderates (*tayyar al-*

wasatiyya), who “combine traditionalism and renewal, and balance constancy and changes: the changes of the age and the constancy of the canonical law.”⁹¹ The terms used to designate every trend speak for themselves.

Al-Qaradawi maintains that tolerance is at the core of Islam, thus rejecting the stance of the Islamist extremists who wish to impose not only their religion but also their own version of it:

[T]he [Muslim] faith states two fundamental truths.... First, that the differences between human beings, in religion or in any other thing, are the will of God, and God knows best [...]. Secondly, that only God can punish them for their deviations, on Judgment Day.⁹²

The shaykh contends that Islam stands for freedom of religion and thought.⁹³ He gently chastises those “youths” who appoint themselves “legislators, prosecutors and policemen” and rush into accusations of apostasy. He suggests that, in any event, apostates should not incur the death penalty but “only” social ostracism.⁹⁴ He has also criticized the censorship zeal of al-Azhar for pragmatic reasons: “If books are banned, people will look for them.”⁹⁵

Nonetheless, al-Qaradawi has also attacked those authors who, “under the pretext of ‘creativity,’” defy social and religious taboos⁹⁶. During the controversy over the cartoons published in *Jyllands-Posten*, he insisted that the boycott of Denmark should continue until the Danish parliament issued a law against insulting all prophets.⁹⁷ Moreover, when asked about the case of Egyptian thinker Faraj Fawda, assassinated by radical Islamists in 1992 after al-Azhar accused him of blasphemy, al-Qaradawi implicitly condoned the crime by denouncing “those who, not content with apostatizing, want to propagate apostasy in society.”⁹⁸

On the contentious topic of jihad, al-Qaradawi says that it should only be used to protect the call to Islam and to defend the weak.⁹⁹ Furthermore, it should follow strict

rules, such as respecting the lives of women and children.¹⁰⁰ In fact, like all the Islamists, the shaykh has a rather idealized vision of Islamic history: He claims that the aim of the conquering Muslim armies was “to eliminate the material obstacles in the way of Islam, so that its message arrived to the peoples and they could choose for themselves.”¹⁰¹

Regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, and contrary to radical Islamists, al-Qaradawi claims that the dispute with the Jews is not religious but political, and that the anti-Jewish verses in the Koran must be interpreted in their historical context, that is, regarding the tensions between Muslims and Jews in Medina.¹⁰² In spite of this, he urges Muslims to unite for the liberation of Palestine¹⁰³ and has repeatedly declared that there should be no qualms about targeting Israeli civilians since, he claims, Israel is a militarized society in which every man and every woman is either a soldier or a reservist.¹⁰⁴

In any case, reform in Islam is constricted by texts considered sacred, and al-Qaradawi has denounced arguments that some Koranic injunctions are no longer relevant as “insolent attempts against God to try to strip the Koran of its quality of eternalness.”¹⁰⁵ He offers as an example the Koranic command that females inherit half as much as male members of the family, which leads us to the status of women in Islam; Al-Qaradawi’s attitude on this subject is rather ambiguous. On the one hand, he rejects that Islam sanctions their seclusion and forced marriage, practices which he identifies as a factor in their estrangement from religion.¹⁰⁶ He encourages female education and is proud to mention that three of his daughters hold doctorates in science from British universities.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, he promotes full political rights for women: During the 2002 municipal elections in Bahrain he issued a fatwa allowing women, “especially those past child-bearing age,” to run as candidates.¹⁰⁸

On the other hand, the shaykh asserts that “just as we should not oppress [women]--like rigorists do in the name of religion--we should not go too far and give them free rein to do as they please in the name of freedom.”¹⁰⁹ He

believes that a woman's priority should be her family and tries to valorize the work of stay-at-home mothers by drawing attention to its economic value.¹¹⁰ He favors the "light" version of female circumcision—because in this, as in everything else, "the middle way is the best"--despite admitting that the hadiths that recommend it may not be authentic.¹¹¹

Moreover, al-Qaradawi justifies the discrimination prescribed by the Koran in matters such as inheritance or male dominance within the family by arguing that men are more rational than women and have to face financial obligations (such as providing the dowry and supporting the family).¹¹² As compensation, wives should be shown consideration and kindness--following Muhammad's example--and should not be expected to contribute to the expenses of the household, even if they are richer than their husbands.¹¹³ Finally, the shaykh endorses polygamy as a moral way to compensate for the "excess" of women¹¹⁴ and adds that in reality, "multiple unions exist everywhere, but some adopt another woman as a lover, and others adopt her as a wife."¹¹⁵

Other reformers have gone much further than al-Qaradawi. Muhammad Abduh, whom the shaykh identifies as one of his main influences,¹¹⁶ reinterpreted the Koranic verse that sanctions polygamy¹¹⁷ as meaning that Islam implicitly forbids it.¹¹⁸ Abduh added:

It is not acceptable for a man to marry more than one woman, except in cases of absolute necessity, such as the first wife being affected by an illness that prevents her from performing her marital duties. And even in such a case, I do not advocate marrying another woman, because it is not the wife's fault, and gallantry dictates that the man endures her illness, just as it is seen as her duty to endure what may befall him.

There is another case that justifies taking a second wife--while keeping the first if she so desires or divorcing her if that is her wish--and that is

sterility, because many men cannot stand the discontinuation of the family lineage. In cases other than these, I consider polygamy a mere legal "trick" [*hila*] to satisfy a base appetite.¹¹⁹

As regards female genital mutilation, Jamal al-Banna, the youngest brother of the founder of the Muslim Brothers, published a book entitled *Female Circumcision: It Is Not Based on the Sunna, and It Is... a Crime*.¹²⁰

However, al-Qaradawi has often been criticized by Islamist radicals who regard him as a dangerous innovator, even a heretic, who "has embarked upon changing the religion of Allah and misguiding the umma with his straying verdicts."¹²¹ His classic *al-Halal wal-Haram fil-Islam (The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam)* has been mockingly dubbed "Al-Halal wal-Halal fil-Islam" ("The Lawful and the Lawful in Islam") because of what some consider his excessive leniency. At the same time, he has been denied entry into the United States, and in his visits to Britain he has been the target of fierce media campaigns that focus on his controversial stances on Israel, violence, homosexuals, and female genital mutilation.¹²²

VIEW OF THE WEST

Islamists say that the West is hostile to Islam because the latter represents an obstacle to its cultural hegemony and a potential threat to its military supremacy. Al-Qaradawi is no exception: He insists on the inherent Islamophobia of the Western psyche rather than on specific material interests,¹²³ However, he also attributes Western hostility to ignorance of the truth of Islam and argues that a better understanding would lead to a more positive outlook, even to conversion.¹²⁴ That is why he is an advocate of dialogue, saying: "The Koran commands us to concentrate on shared features... striving for concord, because we all believe in monotheism and divine messages."¹²⁵

This mixture is manifest in his list of demands:

All we ask from the West is:

1. To get rid of the old grudges, because we are all children of the present, not remains of the past;
2. To get rid of the new ambitions and the desire to control our countries and our resources, because the age of colonialism is over;
3. To adopt a really universalist and humanist perspective and discard the superiority complex of the Romans, who saw all the others as barbarians;
4. To discard its apprehensions towards us, because we are not beasts or ogres--particularly bearing in mind that, for centuries, we have been the victims of Western injustice;
5. To leave us to organize our life according to our creed if that is the wish of our peoples, without meddling in our affairs and imposing its philosophy by force or by deception, because we are free in our homes;
6. There is no need for the West to see us as an enemy against which to predispose its people after the fall of the Soviet Union, or to call us "the green peril" after the disappearance of the "red peril" and the rapprochement with the "yellow peril." Islam is only a danger to indecency and atheism, injustice and tyranny, depravity and corruption.¹²⁶

The last sentence alludes to the common perception of the West as morally corrupt. Al-Qaradawi has gone so far as to say that the West is the civilization of the anti-Christ who, according to the hadiths, is one-eyed, just as the West is "a one-eyed civilization that looks at the individual, life, and the world with one eye: the materialist, sensorial eye, ignoring the unworldly and the spiritual."¹²⁷

In less heated moments, though, he urges all believers to unite "against the enemies of faith, the preachers of atheism and

licentiousness, the supporters of materialism, the advocates of nudism, sexual promiscuity, abortion, homosexuality, and same-sex marriage."¹²⁸ He often offers as an example the alliance of al-Azhar, the Muslim World League, the Vatican, and the Islamic Republic of Iran during the UN conferences on population (Cairo, 1994) and women (Beijing, 1995).¹²⁹

Al-Qaradawi is a fierce critic of globalization, which he characterizes as:

The imposition of the political, economic, cultural, and social hegemony of the United States over the world.... It does not mean a relationship of fraternity, such as that favored by Islam, nor a relationship of equality, such as that favored by the free and the noble all over the world. It means the relationship between the master and the slave, the giant and the dwarf, the arrogant and the meek.¹³⁰

Al-Qaradawi is a rather cautious "renewer," but that probably accounts for his wide appeal in the Arab world: In times of uncertainty, people cling to their beliefs, and the shaykh has been able to tap into that need to be reassured. Whether he has provided them with the tools to embrace modernity is another matter.

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NOTES

¹ “Al-Sira al-Tafsiliyya lil-Qaradawi,” al-Qaradawi Net, November 24, 2004, http://www.qaradawi.net/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=1221&version=1&template_id=190&parent_id=189 (last accessed January 6, 2008).

² Even before his appearance on al-Jazeera, al-Qaradawi had been identified as one of the key figures of Islamism, capable of drawing crowds reaching over a quarter million. See Raymond W. Baker, “Invidious Comparisons: Realism, Postmodern Globalism, and Centrist Islamic Movements in Egypt,” in: John L. Esposito (ed.), *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism or Reform?* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1997), p. 125.

³ “Al-Sira al-Tafsiliyya lil-Qaradawi.”

⁴ Richard A. Hutch, *Religious Leadership: Personality, History and Sacred Authority* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1991), pp. 15-16.

⁵ Ibid, pp. 83-145.

⁶ Ibid, pp. 147-219.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 221-84.

⁸ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Mudhakkaraat*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/11/article1.SHTML> (last accessed November 30, 2007).

⁹ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, “Surat Qaryati fi ahd Sibai,” *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/11/article2.SHTML> (last accessed January 4, 2008). Muhammad’s Companions (*Sahaba*) are the Muslims who knew him personally. The one buried at Sift Turab is Abdallah ibn al-Harith, who, after participating in the conquest of Egypt (639-641), settled in the country.

¹⁰ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, “Ma Bayna al-Madrasa wal-Ma’had,” *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/11/article14.SHTML> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

¹¹ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, “Sura an Usrati,” *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality>

[/2001/11/article13.SHTML](#) (last accessed January 4, 2008).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, “Ila-al-Kuttab Thumma al-Madrasa al-Ilzamiyya,” *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/11/article15.SHTML> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Al-Qaradawi, “Ma Bayna al-Madrasa wal-Ma’had.”

¹⁷ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, “Ila-al-Ma’had al-Dini fi Tanta,” *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/11/article16.SHTML> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

¹⁸ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, “Durus Fiqhiyya fi al-Qarya: Al-Taysir Mabda’i Mundhu al-Bawakir,” *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/12/article5.SHTML> [last accessed January 4, 2008].

¹⁹ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, “Ila-al-Marhala al-Thanaawiyya,” *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/12/article2.SHTML> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

²⁰ Al-Qaradawi, “Durus Fiqhiyya fi al-Qarya.”

²¹ Sunni Muslims belong to one of four legal schools of jurisprudence (*fiqh*): the Maliki, the Hanafi, the Shafi’i, and the Hanbali; most Shi’a belong to the Ja’fari school. The differences between the Sunni schools are rather minor, and they recognize each other as orthodox. Al-Qaradawi remembers that when he first enrolled at the Azhari secondary school, he intended to choose the Shafi’i school, but the ulama who helped him fill in the application form was a Hanafi and persuaded him to follow the same school. See Al-Qaradawi, “Ma Bayna al-Madrasa wal-Ma’had.”

²² Al-Qaradawi, “Durus Fiqhiyya fi al-Qarya.”

²³ The rivalry between the two parties was partly the result of their different understanding of politics: “At its founding in 1928, the Muslim Brothers’ Society was one prominent part of a handful of ideological

mass-based parties led by political mavericks seeking to challenge the dominant style of politics of notables. A decade into its existence, the society had built its identity as an internally disciplined, financially resourceful, pro-Palestinian anticolonial movement appealing to educated lower-middle- and middle-class effendis who were alienated by the exclusionary political and economic system of interwar Egypt." See Mona El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 37 (2005), p. 376.

²⁴ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "Shuyukh Kuntu Atamanna an Yudarrisuna: Abd al-Basit wa-Fawzi," *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/12/article3.SHTML> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

²⁵ Ibid. The term *mihna* refers to the persecution suffered by the ninth-century ulama who resisted Abbasid attempts to impose the Mutazilite school of thought. The Muslim Brothers tend to attribute their persecution to external enemies: Like those of 1948, the *mihna* of 1954 would have been ordered by the West and Israel, and those of 1965, by Moscow. See Saad Eddin Ibrahim, *Egypt, Islam and Democracy* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2002), p. 50; Mahmud Jami, *Wa-Araftu al-Ikhwan* (Cairo: Dar al-Tawzi wal-Nashr al-Islamiyya, 2004), pp. 57, 94, 174.

²⁶ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "Ma'arik al-Qanat," *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/12/article14.SHTML> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

²⁷ Al-Qaradawi, "Durus Fiqhiyya fi al-Qarya;" "Filistin: Sina'at al-Mawt." Al-Qaradawi is no exception; members and sympathizers of the Muslim Brothers' Society regard its founder with great reverence. Their critics accuse them of almost-heretical hero worship: See Ali al-Dali, *Judhur al-Irhab: Al-Qissa al-Haqiqiyya lil-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*. (Cairo[?]: Author, 1993), p. 60.

²⁸ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "Fi Rakb al-Ikhwan," *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/12/article8.SHTML> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

²⁹ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "Hall al-Ikhwan fi 8 Disimbar 1948," *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/12/article9.SHTML> (last accessed January 4, 2008). These alleged celebrations--recounted by Sayyid Qutb, who was in the United States on a research mission at the time--have become part of the Muslim Brothers' mythology. See John Calvert, "'The World Is an Undutiful Boy!': Sayyid Qutb's American Experience," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2000), p. 94; Jami, *Wa-Araftu al-Ikhwan*, p. 169.

³⁰ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "Dhikrayat al-Mu'taqal," *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/12/article10.SHTML> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

³¹ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "Min al-Tur ila Haykstat: Rihla Qasiya la Tunsu," *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/12/article11.SHTML> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

³² Al-Qaradawi, "Kulliyat Usul al-Din wa-Thawrat Yuliu," *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/12/article12.SHTML> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

³³ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "Ma Ba'd Hall al-Ikhwan," *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/12/article13.SHTML> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Al-Qaradawi, "Ma'arik al-Qanat."

³⁶ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "Awwal Rihla ila Bilad al-Sham," *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/12/article15.SHTML> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

³⁷ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "Bayna al-Mihan wal-Minah," *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality>

[/2002/01/article1.SHTML](#) (last accessed January 4, 2008).

³⁸ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "Waqfa Ma' Manahij al-Marhala al-Thanawiyya," *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/12/article4.SHTML> (last accessed January 4, 2008). Many felt that the curriculum of al-Azhar was in dire need of an overhaul, but when this came, it was not to the liking of the ulama: In 1961, Nasser put the institution under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Religious Endowments and the appointment of its highest authority, the shaykh of al-Azhar, in the hands of the government. New faculties were added to include non-religious disciplines such as medicine, engineering, and law. With a certain degree of exaggeration, Gilles Kepel has written that the Nasserist reforms "aimed at transforming the venerable Islamic university into a sort of annex of Moscow's Patrice Lumumba University." See his *Fitna: Guerre au coeur de l'islam* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), p. 209.

³⁹ "Al-Sira al-Tafsiliyya lil-Qaradawi" and "Nubdha an al-Qaradawi," al-Qaradawi Net, November 24, 2004, http://www.qaradawi.net/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=1213&version=1&template_id=217&parent_id=189 (last accessed December 30, 2007).

⁴⁰ Al-Qaradawi, "Bayna al-Mihan wal-Minah."

⁴¹ Al-Qaradawi, "Shuyukh Kuntu Atamanna an Yudarrisuna."

⁴² Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "Limadha Aktub Sirati?" *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/11/article1.SHTML> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

⁴³ Al-Qaradawi, "Ila al-Marhala al-Thanawiyya."

⁴⁴ Al-Qaradawi, "Kuliyat Usul al-Din wa-Thawrat Yuliu;" "Bayna al-Mihan wal-Minah."

⁴⁵ Al-Qaradawi, "Awwal Rihlah ila Bilad al-Sham."

⁴⁶ Al-Qaradawi, "Fi Rakb al-Ikhwan."

⁴⁷ Hutch, *Religious Leadership*, p. 224.

⁴⁸ It should not be forgotten that during much of the twentieth century the intellectual elite of the Arab world was mostly secular and Western-looking. Some even dared to shake the foundations of the Muslim worldview: Ali Abd al-Raziq, himself an Azhari, published in 1925 *Al-Islam wa-Usul al-Hukm (Islam and the Foundations of Government)*, in which he maintained that there is no basis for the caliphate in either the Koran or the Sunna (the collection of the prophetic hadiths) and argued for the separation of state and religion. The book caused an uproar and led to the defrocking of its author. The following year saw the publication of *Fi al-Shi'r al-Jahili (On Pre-Islamic Poetry)*, in which Taha Husayn questioned the origin of the poetry that had been considered pre-Islamic, thereby casting doubt on the traditional version of early Islamic history. Husayn was accused of heresy and put on trial, but he was acquitted.

⁴⁹ "Al-Islam al-Dimuqratiyya al-Madani," *al-Shari'a wal-Hayyat*, al-Jazeera, December 14, 2004, <http://www.aljazeera.net/Channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=108218> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

⁵⁰ "Hurriyyat al-Ta'bir wal-Thawabit al-Diniyya," *Al-Shari'a wal-Hayyat*, al-Jazeera, March 9, 2006, <http://www.aljazeera.net/channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=327477> (last accessed January 4, 2008). See also Ana Belén Soage, "The Row over the Danish Caricatures Seen from the Arab World," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (2006), p. 367.

⁵¹ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Thaqafatuna Bayna al-Infatih wal-Inghilaq* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2000), p. 54.

⁵² Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Ummatuna Bayna Qarnayn* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2000), p. 225.

⁵³ For example, see Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "Hayati ma'al-Ikhwan," *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/personality/2001/12/article7.SHTML> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

⁵⁴ For example, on the program *al-Shari'a wal-Hayyat*, "Al-Wasatiyya fil-Islam," al-

Jazeera, October 26, 1997, <http://www.aljazeera.net/channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=91751> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

⁵⁵ El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers," p. 385.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 383.

⁵⁷ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya Bayna al-Juhud wal-Tatarruf* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2001), p. 72.

⁵⁸ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Zahirat al-Ghulwu fil-Takfir* (Cairo: Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, 1978).

See also his comments on *al-Shari'a wal-Hayyat*, "Mafhum al-Usuliyya," al-Jazeera, October 19, 1997,

<http://www.aljazeera.net/channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=91754>; "Ghazwat Badr al-Kubra fi al-sira al-Nabawiyya," al-Jazeera,

December 10, 2000,

<http://www.aljazeera.net/Channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=89413>; and "Al-Islam wa-

Isti'malat al-Internet," al-Jazeera, November 20, 2004,

<http://www.aljazeera.net/channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=102557> (all last accessed

January 4 2008).

⁵⁹ Al-Qaradawi, *al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya Bayna al-Huhud wal-Tatarruf*, p. 72. See also

"Muhawalat Taghyir al-Manahij al-Islamiyya," *al-Shari'a wal-Hayyat*, al-Jazeera, January 13, 2002,

<http://www.aljazeera.net/channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=90282>; and "Al-Muslimun wal-Unf al-Siyasi 2," al-Jazeera, May 30, 2004,

<http://www.aljazeera.net/channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=92986> (both last accessed

January 4, 2008).

⁶⁰ Al-Qaradawi, *al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya Bayna al-Juhud wal-Tatarruf*, p. 20.

⁶¹ Ibid, pp. 8-9.

⁶² Al-Qaradawi, *Ummatuna Bayna Qarnayn*, p. 245; see also "Muhawalat Taghyir al-Manahij al-Islamiyya."

⁶³ Hutch, *Religious Leadership*, p. 271.

⁶⁴ Cheryl Benard, *Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources, and Strategies* (RAND Corporation, 2003),

http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/

[2005/MR1716.pdf](http://www.aljazeera.net/channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=91751) (last accessed January 4, 2008), p. 30.

⁶⁵ "Al-Islam al-Dimuqrati al-Madani."

⁶⁶ For example "Al-Wasatiyya fil-Islam;" "al-Islam al-Dimuqrati al-Madani."

⁶⁷ Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 135.

⁶⁸ For more on the work of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reformers, see Ana Belén Soage, "Rashid Rida's Legacy," *The Muslim World*, Vol. 98/1 (January 2008).

⁶⁹ "Al-Wasatiyya fil-Islam;" "al-Islam al-Dimuqrati al-Madani."

⁷⁰ For example, see Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Halal wal-Haram bil-Islam* (Casablanca: Dar al-Ma'rifa, 1975), pp. 10-11.

⁷¹ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fi Fiqh al-Aqaliyyat al-Muslima: Hayat al-Muslimin Wasat al-Mujtama'at al-Ukhra* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2001), p. 57.

⁷² Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, "Insidad bab al-Ijtihad," in Hadi Khusru Shahi, *al-Athar al-Kamila* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Shuruq al-Dawliyya, 2002), pp. 150-51.

⁷³ "Reform According to Islam," al-Jazeera Net, May 20, 2004,

<http://english.aljazeera.net/English/archive/archive?ArchiveId=3779> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

⁷⁴ For example, see al-Qaradawi, *Thaqafatuna Bayna al-Infatih wal-Inghilaq*, p. 53; "al-Mubashirat fi Intisar al-Islam," *al-Shari'a al-Hayyat*, al-Jazeera, January 24, 1999,

<http://www.aljazeera.net/channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=89738>; "al-Shari'a Bayna al-Thabit wal-Mutaghayyir," al-Jazeera, January 2, 2005,

<http://www.aljazeera.net/channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=110410> (both last accessed January, 4 2008).

⁷⁵ Al-Qaradawi, "Bayna al-Mihan wal-Minah."

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ahmad Abu-Bakr Al-Muslih, "Risala ila Amir al-Du'at fi Asrna," *al-Sharq*,

http://www.qaradawi.net/site/topics/printArticle.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=3810&version=1

[emplate_id=119&parent_id=13](#) (last accessed January 4, 2008).

⁷⁸ Turki al-Dakhil, "Shari'at al-Qaradawi!" *Jaridat al-Ittihad*, June 18, 2005, <http://www.alarabiya.net/Articles/2005/06/18/14094.htm> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

⁷⁹ For example, see al-Qaradawi, "Durus Fiqhiyya fi al-Qarya" and "Fi Rakb al-Ikhwan."

⁸⁰ For an account of that process, see Noel J. Coulson's classic *A History of Islamic Law* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 182-201.

⁸¹ See Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *al-Imam al-Shafi'i wa-Ta'sis al-Idiulujyya al-Wasatiyya* (Cairo[?]: Sina lil-Nashr, 1992), p. 5.

⁸² Muhammad al-Madani, *Wasatiyyat al-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Qahira lil-Taba'a, 1961), p. 7.

⁸³ In Muhammad Shahrur, "Afkari sa-Tantashir wa-Tufriz Ahzaban Siyasiyya Tasna al-Islah al-Dini," *Sahifat al-Ghadd*, undated, <http://www.alghad.jo/?news=16676> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

⁸⁴ Transcript available at *al-Shari'a wal-Hayyat*, "al-Wasatiyya fil-Islam."

⁸⁵ "Al-Bayan al-Khitami al-Sadir an al-Dawrat al-Thalitha li-Mu'tamar al-Qimma al-Islami al-Istithna'i," *Mu'tamar al-Qimma al-Islami*, December 8, 2005, <http://www.islamicsummit.org.sa/9-5.aspx> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

⁸⁶ Saudi prince Khalid al-Faysal has denounced that "the pioneers of the *wasatiya* movement in Saudi Arabia [...] are the very ones who disseminated the thought of Sayyid Qutb and [Abu al-A'la] al-Mawdudi, and they are among the students of Muhammad Qutb [Sayyid's brother]"; cited in Aluma Dankowitz, "Saudi Prince Khaled al-Faisal Against the Islamist Ideology," *MEMRI*, March 16, 2005, <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archive&Area=ia&ID=IA21205> (last accessed January 4, 2008). What the prince neglects to mention is that for decades the Kingdom welcomed radical Islamists--including Muhammad Qutb--with open arms in order to present an ideological alternative to

Nasserism; see Kepel, *Fitna*, especially chapter 4.

⁸⁷ Patrick Haenni, "Divisions chez les Frères musulmans. La nouvelle pensée islamique des déçus de l'expérience militante," *La République des idées*, April 2005, http://www.repid.com/article.php?id_article=341 (last accessed January 4, 2008).

⁸⁸ Al-Qaradawi, *Thaqafatuna Bayna al-Infatih wal-Inghilaq*, p. 30.

⁸⁹ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Kayfa Nata'amil ma'al-Qur'an al-Azim* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2005), p. 110.

⁹⁰ For instance, during the program "Al-Islam al-Dimuqrati al-Madani," when he attacked Benard's report, *Civil Democratic Islam*.

⁹¹ "Al-Wasatiyya fil-Islam," *al-Shari'a wal-Hayyat*, al-Jazeera, October 26, 1997, <http://www.aljazeera.net/channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=91751> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

⁹² Al-Qaradawi, *Thaqafatuna Bayna al-Infatih wal-Inghilaq*, pp. 25-26. See also *Fi Fiqh al-Aqaliyyat al-Muslima*, pp. 70-71; and *Tarikhuna al-Muftara Alayhi* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2006), p. 182.

⁹³ For instance, "Al-Hurriyya al-Diniyya wal-Fikriyya," *al-Shari'a wal-Hayyat*, al-Jazeera, February 1, 2005, <http://www.aljazeera.net/channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=113763> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Al-Qaradawi, *Thaqafatuna Bayna al-Infatih wal-Inghilaq*, pp. 60-61.

⁹⁷ "Al-Qaradawi: Naqbal I'tidharan Mashruta bi-Sudur Qanun Yuharrim al-Isa' lil-Anbiya," al-Qaradawi Net, February 16, 2006, http://www.qaradawi.net/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=4168&version=1&template_id=116&parent_id=114 (last accessed January 4, 2008); see also Soage, "The Row over the Danish Caricatures Seen from the Arab World."

⁹⁸ "Al-Muslimun wal-Unf al-Siyasi 2," *al-Shari'a wal-Hayyat*, al-Jazeera, May 30, 2004, <http://www.aljazeera.net/channel/archive/archi>

[ve?ArchiveId=92986](#) [last accessed January 4, 2008].

⁹⁹ Al-Qaradawi, *Kayfa Nata'amil Ma'al-Qur'an al-Azim*, p. 121. See also "Al-Taghyir Bayna al-Unf wal-Unf," *al-Shari'a wal-Hayyat*, al-Jazeera, June 7, 2005, <http://www.aljazeera.net/channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=125687> (last accessed January 4, 2008); "al-Hurriyya al-Diniyya wal-Fikriyya,"

¹⁰⁰ "Al-Muslimun wal-Unf al-Siyasi 1," *al-Shari'a wal-Hayyat*, al-Jazeera, May 23, 2004, <http://www.aljazeera.net/channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=92972> (last accessed January 4, 2008); "al-Taghyir Bayna al-Unf wal-Unf."

¹⁰¹ Al-Qaradawi, *Fi Fiqh al-Aqaliyyat al-Muslima*, p. 34; *Tarikhuna al-Muftara Alayhi*, pp. 198-99. That argument was first put forward by Sayyid Qutb. See his *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (Damascus [?]: Dar Dimashq, 1964 [?]), pp. 87, 105, 111; *Al-Adala al-Iytima'iyya fi al-Islam* (Beirut, Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq), p. 99; *Fizilal al-Qur'an* (Beirut, Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1982), pp. 295, 1432, 1440ff.

¹⁰² "Ilaqat al-Muslimin bil-Yahud," *al-Shari'a wal-Hayyat*, al-Jazeera, January 19, 2005, <http://www.aljazeera.net/channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=112577> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

¹⁰³ Al-Qaradawi, *Ummatuna Bayna Qarnayn*, p. 216; see also "al-Taghyir Bayna al-Unf wal-Unf."

¹⁰⁴ This idea is often reiterated on *al-Shari'a wal-Hayyat*. See, for example, "Awamil al-Muruna wal-Si'a fil-Shari'a al-Islamiyya," al-Jazeera, January 14, 2001, <http://www.aljazeera.net/Channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=89458>; "Wajib al-Muslimin Tujah al-Intifada," al-Jazeera, April 8, 2001, <http://www.aljazeera.net/Channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=89585>; "al-Irhab wa-Hamlat al-Karahiyya Didd al-Arab wal-Muslimin," al-Jazeera, June 19, 2001, <http://www.aljazeera.net/Channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=89901>; "Kayfa Tastajib al-Umma li-Tahaddiyat al-Harb al-Jadida," al-Jazeera, October 14, 2001, www.aljazeera.net/Channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=89978; "al-Intifada al-Filistiniyya

wal-Amaliyyat al-Fida'iyya," al-Jazeera, December 9, 2001, <http://www.aljazeera.net/Channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=90148>; "al-Irhab wal-Unf," al-Jazeera, October 27, 2002,

<http://www.aljazeera.net/channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=91187> (all accessed January 4, 2008); "al-Muslimun wal-Unf al-Siyasi 2."

¹⁰⁵ Al-Qaradawi, *Kayfa Nata'amil ma'al-Qur'an al-Azim*, p. 64.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Qaradawi, *Ummatuna Bayna Qarnayn*, p. 118; *Thaqafatuna Bayna al-Infatih wal-Inghilaq*, p. 78.

¹⁰⁷ Anthony Shadid, "Maverick Cleric is a Hit on Arab TV," *Washington Post*, February 14, 2003, <http://www.religionnewsblog.com/2356/maverick-cleric-is-a-hit-on-arab-tv> (last accessed June 30, 2006).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid; see also al-Qaradawi, *Ummatuna Bayna Qarnayn*, p. 175.

¹⁰⁹ Al-Qaradawi, *Ummatuna Bayna Qarnayn*, p. 176.

¹¹⁰ Al-Qaradawi, "Takamuliyyat al-Umuma wal-Ubuwwa," December 1, 2005, *Islam Online*, <http://www.islamonline.net/arabic/adam/2005/12/article01.shtml> (last accessed January 2, 2008).

¹¹¹ Yusuf al-Qaradawi, "Khitan al-Banat," al-Qaradawi Net, July 5, 2001, http://www.qaradawi.net/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=341&version=1&template_id=8&parent_id=12 (last accessed January 4, 2008).

¹¹² Al-Qaradawi, *Kayfa Nata'amil ma'al-Qur'an al-Azim*, pp. 64-65; "al-Musawat Bayna al-Rajul wal-Mar'a wa-Tatbiqatha," *al-Shari'a wal-Hayyat*, al-Jazeera, April 26, 2005, <http://www.aljazeera.net/Channel/archive/archive?ArchiveId=119953> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

¹¹³ "Mafhum al-Usra fi al-Islam," *al-Shari'a wal-Hayyat*, al-Jazeera, January 13, 2005, <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/A3D54F64-AE87-4D02-B43E-CD19E39149B1.htm> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

¹¹⁴ Al-Qaradawi mentions an oft-quoted statistic according to which in the United States there are eight million more women than men. However, according to the CIA's *World Factbook*, the male/female ratio in the United States is 1.05:1 for the population under 15; 0.996:1 between 15 and 65 years of age; and 0.72:1 over 65 years of age. See <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html#People> (last accessed January 4, 2008). The inference is clear: If Muslim men really wish to compensate for the "excess" of women, their second wives should be over 65! Al-Qaradawi himself has recently taken a second wife--a teenager; see Usama Fawzi, "Zawaj al-Qaradawi min al-Tifla Asma," *Arab Times*, <http://www.arabtimes.com/osama2/doc42.html> (last accessed January 4, 2008).

¹¹⁵ Al-Qaradawi, *Kayfa Nata'amil ma'al-Qur'an al-Azim*, p. 65.

¹¹⁶ For example, "Al-Islam al-Dimuqrati al-Madani."

¹¹⁷ "If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hands possess, that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice" (Koran 4:3).

¹¹⁸ Muhammad Abduh, *Al-A'mal al-Kamila: Al Kitabat al-Ijtima'iyya*, edited by Muhammad Imara (Beirut: Al-Mu'assasa al-Arabiyya lil-Dirasat wal-Nashr, 1972), p. 87-88.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 87. That reasoning was used by Bourguiba to ban polygamy in Tunisia in 1956.

¹²⁰ Jamal al-Banna, *al-Khitan: Laysa Sunna wa-la Makrama wa-Lakin Jarima*. (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-Islami, 2005). The Egyptian government has forbidden the practice following the death of several young girls.

¹²¹ "Reading in Qaradawism," Allahuakbar Net, http://www.allahuakbar.net/jamaat-e-islami/Qaradawism/reading_in_Qaradawism.htm; see also GF Haddad, "Yusuf al-Qaradawi," *Living Islam*, August 2007,

http://www.livingislam.org/k/yq_e.html (both last accessed January 5, 2008).

¹²² When al-Qaradawi visited London in July 2004, *The Sun* tabloid greeted him with the headlines: "The Evil has Landed!" and "Britain's Welcome for Devil." A "coalition of many of London's diverse communities" was set up against him--and, by extension, against London mayor Ken Livingstone, who received him. The group even has its own website

(<http://www.londoncommunitycoalition.org>), which offers a dossier of out-of-context quotations of the shaykh's words; see "Mayor Livingstone and Sheikh al-Qaradawi: A Response by a Coalition of Many of London's Diverse Communities," <http://www.londoncommunitycoalition.org/LC.C.PDF> (last accessed January 5, 2008).

¹²³ For instance, al-Qaradawi, *Al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya Bayna al-Juhud wal-Tatarruf*, pp. 93-94; *Ummatuna Bayna Qarnayn*, pp. 256-57.

¹²⁴ "Al-Qaradawi: 'Lam Ad'u lil-Unf wa-Nushaddid ala al-Ghadd al-Aqil,'" al-Qaradawi Net, February 11, 2006, http://www.qaradawi.net/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=4161&version=1&template_id=104&parent_id=15 (last accessed January 4, 2008).

¹²⁵ Al-Qaradawi, *Ummatuna Bayna Qarnayn*, p. 244; see also *Al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya Bayna al-Juhud wal-Tatarruf* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2001), p. 68.

¹²⁶ Al-Qaradawi, *Ummatuna Bayna Qarnayn*, pp. 244-45.

¹²⁷ "Al-Muslimun wal-Unf al-Siyasi 1;" see also *Hawla Qadaya al-Islam wal-Asr* (Cairo: Makabat al-Wahba), pp. 184-86.

¹²⁸ Al-Qaradawi, *Fi Fiqh al-Aqaliyyat al-Muslima*, p. 69.

¹²⁹ Ibid.; see also al-Qaradawi, *Ummatuna Bayna Qarnayn*, p. 233.

¹³⁰ Al-Qaradawi, *Ummatuna Bayna Qarnayn*, p. 232.