

YŪSUF AL-QARADĀWĪ AS AN AUTHORITATIVE REFERENCE (*MARJĪYYA*)¹

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Why Qaradāwī?

Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī stands as a symbol of a remarkable historical stage in Islamic thinking and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), as well as in the Islamic movement. Writing about him or studying his career and his ideas demands an understanding of how modern Islamic thinking is intertwined with Islamic jurisprudence in order to serve one goal: establishing the normative authority (*marjī'iyya*) of the Sharia. Achieving this goal prepared, in turn, the ground on which the Islamic movement later called “political Islam” was founded.

Moreover, studying Qaradāwī's *fiqh* is equivalent to understanding the outcome of the Islamic reformism (*al-islāḥiyya al-islāmiyya*), which began with Imām Muḥammad 'Abduh (1849–1905) in Egypt, and in which a generation of prominent scholars successively engaged—a generation at the end of which stands Qaradāwī.² It is to him—along with the Egyptian preacher and scholar Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī (1917–96)—that a great influence on the emergence of the so-called Islamic awakening in the 1970s can be attributed, which led to the re-Islamisation of public life by transforming the heritage of Islamic reformism into a popular heritage.

This transformation provoked Arab secularists and prompted them into intensive disputes with the Islamists. Qaradāwī and Ghazzālī

themselves led some of the public debates in Egypt, which resembled, in terms of the subject, the famous controversy over secularism between Muḥammad ‘Abduh and the secular Lebanese thinker Farah Anṭūn in 1903.³

Over the years and with the benefit of experience, Qaraḍāwī’s role increased considerably, up to the point that he now represents, to a large extent, contemporary Islamic thinking. He became a specialist in Islamic jurisprudence (*faqīh mujtahid*) who possesses more influence and authority than anyone else. Even one of his adversaries acknowledged that he represents a “spiritual father” in the context of the political movement of the Muslim Brothers and that his name has grown to be consecrated as that of the “Pope of the Islamic World”.⁴

In this chapter I attempt to study Qaraḍāwī not as a person but as someone who has witnessed the transformations of contemporary Islamic thought and the emergence of an authoritative reference (*marjī‘iyya*) as it is embodied in his person. This will be done by following the development of his career and by identifying the elements of which his status of *marjī‘iyya* is made up. Since Qaraḍāwī stands for a general situation representing the quintessence of what Islamic reformism has become over its various stages, it will be necessary to study the historical context into which he was born. But first, we would like to clarify the notion of *marjī‘iyya*, which originally derives from a Shia background.

Marjī‘iyya: the notion and its legitimacy in Sunni Islam

The notion of *marjī‘iyya* in a Shia context is subdivided into two types: on the one hand it designates the highest authority of a person called *marja‘ taqlid* (literally “source to follow”), which is prevalent among the Twelver Shia, and on the other it indicates a general authority called “*wilāyat al-faqīh*” on which the state of Iran is based and in which Ḥizbullāh in Lebanon also believes. According to this, every Shia Muslim has to follow the “Supreme Leader” in matters of general policies. As of 1989 the “Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic Iran” is Ali Khamenei.

The question of whether the term *marjī‘iyya* can be applied to a person is a challenging one in the Sunni world. Sunni Islamic thinking

is originally built on the authoritative reference of a system of thought (*marjīʿiyyat fīkr wa-manẓūma*) and not on the *marjīʿiyya* of persons. Even if some individuals come into a position of authority, it is always limited to those who belong to their group or party, like the *marjīʿiyya* of Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabahānī (the founder of Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr, 1953) for the members of Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr, or the *marjīʿiyya* of Ḥassan al-Bannā (the founder of the Muslim Brothers movement, 1928) for the Muslim Brothers, and so on. Qaraḍāwī's authority reaches beyond those partial or biased *marjīʿiyya*'s. It is established to such an extent that someone like Ḥassan Naṣrallāh (the secretary general of Ḥizbullāh) described Qaraḍāwī saying: "He represents something akin to our *marjīʿiyya*" (meaning the Shia *marjīʿiyya*).

Qaraḍāwī's influence affects the entire Islamic world. He is an established authority in the academic field as well as in the Islamic movement, and both on the elite and the popular level. When meeting political leaders, he is received by presidents and heads of states—a clear reflection of his acceptance. In addition, a majority of scientific institutions and charity organisations are keen to make use of the name of Qaraḍāwī, as it lends them credibility, legitimacy, and popularity.

While his interpretations and opinions in various fields have shaped the beliefs and convictions of a large number of believers and thereby left strong marks on the dominant religious legitimacy, Qaraḍāwī's position as an authoritative reference is not comparable to the Shi'a *marjīʿiyya*. On the contrary, his *marjīʿiyya* is not imposed by a clerical structure. Rather, it is an optional *marjīʿiyya* by virtue of several factors on the personal, scholarly, political, and media levels. The public referring to him have chosen him voluntarily, as there is nothing in Sunni Islamic belief that obliges them to choose Qaraḍāwī rather than someone else.

Still, one might compare the Shia *marjīʿiyya* in its general meaning with Qaraḍāwī's idea of creating a "global" *marjīʿiyya* for Muslims worldwide, represented in the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS, founded in 2004). This union is not concerned with issuing *fatwas* as much as it strives to form a unified position of *ulama* in issues of importance to the *umma* (Muslim community). Here, Qaraḍāwī is searching for ways to enhance the *marjīʿiyya* he enjoys by joining it to others concerned with public affairs.⁵

Qaraḍāwī—the beginning and development of his career

Qaraḍāwī was brought up in a humble Egyptian village in the 1930s. The village appeared to him predominantly conservative in intellectual, social, and civil aspects. From an early stage of his life, according to his memoirs, Qaraḍāwī was thought to be exceptional and many people around him promised him a sound future.⁶ He was sincere and hard-working, and concentrated on obtaining knowledge and practicing *da'wa*. Therefore, on several occasions, his suitability for leadership received attention.⁷ Qaraḍāwī himself says that his colleagues in his primary school at the religious institute used to seek his arbitration and considered him a *marjī* (point of reference) when they disagreed on a scientific issue.⁸ And later the students of the theological faculty (*uṣūl al-dīn*) chose him to be the head of the student union.⁹ This leadership position helped him to acquire skills such as the ability to speak to the people's collective mind, and to use speech to influence and attract people.

Another of his attributes is his inclination towards the unconventional, which appeared at an early stage and developed later because of several factors. What is striking in this respect is that Qaraḍāwī became acquainted with the work of the theologian, jurist and mystic (*sūfī*) Imām Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111) early in his life. The first book by him that Qaraḍāwī read was *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), a book on Sufism and about educating oneself. Qaraḍāwī read it continually for a long time;¹⁰ in fact, he even took it with him when he was arrested for the first time in 1949.¹¹ Qaraḍāwī considers Imām Ghazzālī his main shaykh. Under the traditional conditions Qaraḍāwī lived in, and because of his young age, it was not possible for him to desist from his milieu. In his primary school, Qaraḍāwī gave his first religious lesson about "the repentance of sins".¹² He delivered his first sermon in his fourth primary year about "thanking God".¹³ The influence of *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* is very obvious in his sermons, in both the subject and the content. His affinity for preaching continued during the secondary school stage. He began to teach *fiqh* in his village and made some amendments to the teaching style. For example, he moved away from the common methodology of repetition, simplified it, and did not adhere to just one school of

thought (*madhhab*), the school of his village (*shāfiʿī*), but consulted all the *madhāhib*, just like Sayyid Sābiq.¹⁴

From the beginning, Qaradāwī has had a clear critical attitude, which first became apparent with his criticism of Ghazzālī's book *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* and has accompanied him throughout his life in his viewpoints and opinions.¹⁵ Along with this critical attitude he has had a proclivity towards the contemporary. This started with his style in teaching *fiqh* at the secondary school. In particular, he was not comfortable with *fiqh* as discipline and the books written about it, or with the way it was taught in primary stages. For example, *fiqh al-mu'āmalāt* (*fiqh* of transactions) was in his view "not related to people's actual lives and realities (...)", and some rituals were taught in an uninteresting way, such as *zakāt*, *ḥajj* and also the science of *tawḥīd*, *'aqīda*, and *tafsīr*.¹⁶ In his opinion the methodology used "was old, from the ages of backwardness of the Islamic civilization, and based on certain assumptions and a certain philosophy that neither exist nor are influential in our rational life anymore (...), and was written in a language that does not suit this age and does not tackle its rational problems."¹⁷

From as early as the time of his education in the village and his studies at the Religious Institute and later the Faculty of Theology (*uṣūl al-dīn*), along with his affiliation to the Muslim Brothers, one finds him associated with people with obvious Sufi leanings. I believe that both Ghazzālī's book and his deep admiration for Ḥassan al-Bannā (1906–49), the founder of the Muslim Brothers, had a great influence in developing his spiritual side. Qaradāwī describes Bannā's discourses as "illuminating talks that carry a spiritual gift and penetrate the hearts, purify the souls, and seek to elevate the human beings from the world (...)"¹⁸ He further describes Bannā's relation with his followers as "a relation between the Sufi shaykh and his disciple (*murīd*) in a spiritual sense".¹⁹

Qaradāwī's spiritual tendency was almost obscured by his critical propensity, to the extent that his shaykh Muḥammad al-Bahī al-Khūlī (from the Muslim Brothers) was surprised by his books *al-'Ibāda fī 'l-islām* (*Ritual in Islam*) and *al-Īmān wa 'l-ḥayāt* (*Faith and Life*).²⁰ Khūlī told him: "How did you hide this deep spirituality in your old

discussions that led us to misunderstand you?”²¹ However, one of Qaraḍāwī’s criticisms of the education at al-Azhar was that “all al-Azhar lessons suffer from a lack of spirituality”.²²

Among those who influenced Qaraḍāwī’s Sufi leanings were Bannā’s brother-in-law Sa‘īd Ramaḍān, whom Qaraḍāwī described by saying: “He was of a pouring spirituality and of strong emotionality”,²³ and his shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (one of the al-Azhar shaykhs, who graduated in France), “a Sufi in his ideas, emotions, and works”.²⁴

Personal qualifications are not sufficient if one’s environment does not provide the assistance to develop and invest in them. This environment became available to Qaraḍāwī when he joined the Muslim Brothers. Qaraḍāwī, who used to get bored with the traditional patterns in his village, found with Ḥassan al-Bannā—in his own words—“a new and original discourse I had never seen before. I have understood and digested and almost memorized his words because of their clarity, concentration and eloquence.”²⁵ Bannā had such an impact on him that Qaraḍāwī had always been keen to listen to him. Moreover, after the first time he listened to Bannā during his first year in the religious institute, he considered himself a member of the Muslim Brothers. However, he only joined the Brothers in his fourth year.²⁶

In fact, Qaraḍāwī changed after he became tied to the Muslim Brothers. He modified his method from reading *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* and preaching about thanking God and repentance, and concentrated on renewing *fiqh* by advocating the idea of not following just one *madhhab*. Now, his prayers concentrated on the notion of “comprehensive Islam” (*al-islām al-shāmil*).

Qaraḍāwī himself admits this; when he reflects upon his time with the Muslim Brothers, he realises that he benefited a lot from his alliance to them, in both the areas of religion and knowledge. He writes:

Their call (*da‘wa*) widened my scope of understanding Islam in a comprehensive way according to God’s statutes (...) religion is not restricted to rituals only as I used to think (...), I was not advocating the obligation of collective action to support Islam (...) to accomplish the major Islamic goals of the *umma*, especially after the abolition of the Islamic caliphate (...). I have moved from the position of being just a *wā‘iẓ dīnī* (preacher) in the villages to becoming an Islamic *dā‘ī* (missionary preacher). My concern now is not only

the individual religiousness (...), since my alliance with the Muslim Brothers I have begun to look at the full picture, to turn from the small matters to the big issues (...) and from my own aspirations to the aspirations of the *umma* (...), one of the benefits I derived from them was getting out of the isolation imposed on al-Azhar graduates as a result of the dual system of religious and civic education.²⁷

Qaradāwī began to teach *fiqh* relating to people's lives and to use contemporary language. He supported the idea of a "comprehensive Islam" and refuted both the materialistic philosophies which combated religion in general and the secularism that resisted the idea of Islam as a comprehensive system. These ideas became the philosophy of a wide group of people led by a thinking elite including Shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī (d. 1996), Qaradāwī's mentor. According to the memoirs, Ghazzālī with some scholars from al-Azhar had established the "Publications Committee for Azharis (*Lajnat al-nashr li 'l-azhariyyīn*)", and raised the slogan "Religion in the service of the people", in reply to the Marxist slogan "Religion is the opium of the people".²⁸

Among the shaykhs within al-Azhar with whom Qaradāwī had close relations was the Muslim Brother and thinker Muḥammad al-Bahī. Qaradāwī worked with him when Bahī was the general director of the Institute of Islamic Culture of al-Azhar; at that time, Shaykh Maḥmūd Shaltūt was Shaykh al-Azhar (1958–63).²⁹ Bahī supported the idea of "comprehensive Islam" and was arguably one of the most prominent advocates of the "Islamic solution".³⁰

The Qaradāwī of the Muslim Brothers is no longer the village boy. Along with the traditional religious subjects he was taught in al-Azhar and the classical books like *al-'Aqd al-farīd*, as well as the Egyptian novelists Muṣṭafā al-Manfalūṭī, and Muṣṭafā al-Rāfi'ī, he used to educate himself by reading the Muslim Brothers' weekly and the daily newspaper *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, as well as the journal *al-Shihāb*, which was published with the aim of enlightening the Muslim Brothers and popularised the idea of the "comprehensive system".³¹ While still at university, he read the writings of the Indian scholar Abū 'l-Ḥassan al-Nadwī and recommended them to some friends. Qaradāwī acknowledges that he was keen to meet Abū 'l-Ḥassan al-Nadwī in Egypt.³² At the same time he regretted that he did not meet the Syrian reformist (*al-iṣlāḥī al-sūrī*) Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb (d. 1969),

one of the founders of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt and an important figure of “Islamic journalism”.³³ Qaraḍāwī’s teacher Muḥammad al-Bahī managed to introduce him to many of his friends, among whom were the most prominent scholars of Syria: Muṣṭafā al-Sibā’ī³⁴ Muṣṭafā al-Zarqā, Muḥammad al-Mubārak, and Ma’rūf al-Dawālībī. These persons participated in committees which worked on reforming al-Azhar in the late fifties. They suggested for example teaching al-Azhar students a subject called “*niẓām al-islām*” (the system of Islam), in which Islam would be introduced as a comprehensive system.³⁵

From the day Qaraḍāwī arrived in Qatar in 1961, he continued to cultivate his relations with two groups of people: scholars and politicians. From Qatar he visited the rest of the Gulf (including Saudi Arabia) and most of the people he actually met were introduced to him by friends from the Muslim Brothers.

Adding theoretical direction to Muslim Brothers action

Understanding the essential role the Muslim Brothers played in the creation of Qaraḍāwī’s *marjī’iyya*, should his *marjī’iyya* be attributed to the Muslim Brothers? I do not think so. It is true that the project of the Muslim Brothers managed to dramatically transform Qaraḍāwī’s path—as a son of the *kuttāb*—but the Muslim Brothers were not aware of the creation of Qaraḍāwī’s *marjī’iyya* (at least this is the impression one gains from Qaraḍāwī’s memoirs). They were thinking in the frame of the Muslim Brothers, and not with a view to all Muslims, and that might be the reason why Qaraḍāwī twice declined the post of their General Guide (*al-murshid al-‘āmm*). His justification of the second refusal in 2006 was that he wanted to be the general guide of Muslims and not only of the Muslim Brothers.

The notion of a “comprehensive system” with both its advocates and its content paved the way for what later became known as “*ṣaḥwa islāmiyya*” (Islamic awakening) in the 1970s, which goes beyond the Muslim Brother movement. The Islamic awakening was preceded by the idea of nationalism that dominated Arab societies in the period between the First and the Second World Wars, and was then followed by the idea of Pan-Arabism in the 1960s. The Islamists were strong

contributors to and actors for the national cause. At the same time, however, they entered a conflict over religious or normative authority (*marjī iyya*), which led to a clash with the activists supporting Pan-Arabism,³⁶ and the conflict expanded to include both: authority and power (*al-marjī iyya wa 'l-sulṭa*). This conflict was largely resolved in the 1970s in favour of the Islamic movement, at the expense of other political convictions and organisations, namely the secular movements that included all other movements apart from the Islamic ones.³⁷

Regardless of the explanations given for the Islamic awakening, Islam formed a large potential to mobilise, organise and visualise a different normativity, especially with the presence of an intellectual elite which transformed Islam into a “socio-political ideology” (*madh-habiyya siyāsiyya ijtīmā' iyya*). This was done by reinterpreting Islam so as to be able to respond to new demands in the framework of the development of the modern state and the absence of an Islamic power (*sulṭa islāmiyya*). Actually, all this was initiated by the Muslim Brothers with their notion of the “comprehensive system”.

The broadening of this new Islamic thinking did not pass without new conflicts. Among these conflicts was the one that emerged with the secularists who, for political reasons, alleged a contradiction between religion and secularism. Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, as mentioned at the beginning of this article, was one of the prominent figures who waded into that field. Supported by his shaykh Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī he entered a popular debate on secularism with the prominent secularist Fu'ād Zakariyā in the 1980s, a debate that featured prominently in the Egyptian press. Afterwards Qaradāwī wrote a whole book transforming this oral debate into a written one,³⁸ which had an impact that continues to this day. Qaradāwī can therefore be regarded as one of the most important agents of the Islamic awakening, perhaps even its most popular theorist.

On the level of the Islamic movement, and within the Muslim Brothers in particular, Qaradāwī, in his own words, filled a vacuum, which was due to “the dominance of the practical and *jihādī* side over the academic and intellectual one”.³⁹ This vacuum was also the reason behind the attempts to fertilise the thinking of the Muslim Brothers with that of Jamaat-e Islami in India.⁴⁰ Indeed, Qaradāwī's efforts are

clear in theorising the Islamic movement and lending its issues an authentic normativity by linking the contemporary with the heritage (*turāth*) according to his *wasatīyya* approach (see Gräf and Salvatore in this volume). This approach distinguishes him from a writer of the type of Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī, despite the latter's profound thoughts and clear reformist attitude (*ittijāh iṣlāhī*).

The vacuum Qaraḍāwī filled becomes even clearer when one reflects the impact of Sayyid Quṭb, the most prominent writer the Muslim Brothers had in their ranks.⁴¹ Briefly, Qaraḍāwī's project counters Quṭb's project. Actually, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī contributes to narrowing the gap made by Quṭb's thoughts, which did not conform to the previous ideas of the Islamic movement. Among these thoughts four crucial ideas should be mentioned here: first, "*al-ḥākimiyya al-siyāsiyya*" (the political sovereignty of God), a concept which Quṭb borrowed from the Pakistani writer al-Mawdūdī; second (based on the idea of *ḥākimiyya*), blaming Muslim societies for being in a condition of apostasy; third, Quṭb's promotion of a new understanding of *jihād*, which he considered a war against the entire world; and fourth, Quṭb's opinion that there was no value in the attempts of the contemporary *ulama* to develop and renew the Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), or even to revive its methods, such as *ijtihād* (judicial reasoning), as long as there is no truly Islamic society.

When Qaraḍāwī left Egypt in 1961, he was not yet a famous writer. He had only written one major book, *The Lawful and the Prohibited*. The aspect of "comprehensive Islam" with its political objective does not appear in this book yet. I believe that this—later so important—aspect only emerged after the hanging of Sayyid Quṭb (1966) and the disastrous war of June 1967. Qaraḍāwī's attitude towards the West is, in contrast to Quṭb's, not isolationist, and *jihād* for him is defensive rather than aggressive. Qaraḍāwī, unlike Quṭb, does not deny the Islamic character of contemporary Muslim societies but believes that they need to be rightly guided. Hence he wrote several books on guiding the Islamic awakening (*tarshīd al-ṣaḥwa al-islāmiyya*). Qaraḍāwī set out to discuss Quṭb's ideas and respond to him on several issues, beginning with the idea of *ijtihād* and ending with Quṭb's considerations that Islamic societies are un-Islamic.⁴² Indeed, Qaraḍāwī realised

that the Islamic movement suffered from a vacuum of ideas and began to fill it, first by his abundant production in the fields of Islamic knowledge, Islamic thinking and Islamic movement and secondly by realising the main weak point in Quṭb's work. In Qaradāwī's words, Quṭb "extremely admired the popular Indian scholar Abu al-A'la al-Mawdūdī and he almost copied all the controversial ideas in al-Mawdūdī's work".⁴³ Qaradāwī benefited from Quṭb and from the historical period he lived in. He harvested the fruits of the conflict with Arabic nationalism and he chose the right moment to write about the Islamic political system (*al-niẓām al-siyāsī al-islāmī*), describing it as a solution (*ḥall*). All this was after the hanging of Quṭb and the Arab nationalist disaster, as already mentioned above.⁴⁴

Given these facts one understands the role of Qaradāwī's *wasatīyya* discourse. His books became an important source for argument against religious radicalism that was propagated by extremist groups following the "isolationist" theories of al-Mawdūdī and Quṭb.

Marjī'iyya: formative elements

Talking about *marjī'iyya* in the Sunni Islamic world presents us with a predicament. *Marjī'iyya* in the Sunni world was historically built on an authority of ideas that was not linked to persons, as we have already explained. This *marjī'iyya* of ideas is embodied in Islamic *fiqh* (jurisprudence), which represents the core of Islamic Sharia. Historically, *fiqh* enjoyed a large and effective authority over society within Islamic state authority (despite the difference among the *madhāhib*): *fiqh* is linked with a system of thought (*manẓūma fikriyya*) and its composition can be attributed to the accumulated historical knowledge of large numbers of *ulama*.

Qaradāwī's *marjī'iyya* was established not only because he is part of the tradition of *ulama* but through several aspects: the centrality of the *fiqh* in Qaradāwī's writings, the acceptance of the Sharia as sole authoritative reference (*marjī'iyya*) in his struggle with secularists, his concept of *wasatīyya*, which he considers the spirit of Islam, and its role in contrast to Sayyid Quṭb's radicalism. In the following we will outline the formation of Qaradāwī's *marjī'iyya* through three elements:

first, the centrality of *fiqh* and Sharia; second, specific contexts in which he acted as *marji' iyya*; and third, discourses in which his *marji' iyya* was articulated.

The centrality of fiqh/Sharia. *Fiqh* was central to the development of science and the organisation of life in any Islamic society.⁴⁵ To summarise three important tasks of *fiqh*: first, it is to be applied in the courts and the judiciary. Second, it is the measurement of the believers' acts and the permanent reference in their daily life through the *mufti* or the clergy. Third, *fiqh* is the source of legitimacy for society and the state. It gives legitimacy for its public and private projects.⁴⁶ The jurists (fuqahā') practiced authority over the state and *fiqh* was the legitimate source for individuals, society and political power (*sulṭa*).⁴⁷

The majority of modern states in the Muslim world could not ignore the authority of the "Islamic Sharia" in their constitutions. However, in most cases Sharia was kept on a narrow and non-effective scale. This led to the spread of the term "Sharia" in connection with speaking about the "Islamic state" and the "Islamic awakening" in order to re-introduce an Islamic character to public life, and going back to *fiqh* to find appropriate solutions to the questions of the people and the era.

Sharia and the implementation of Sharia is also one of Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī's chief concerns. In his opinion the role of the state should be to apply Sharia. He has written several books on the issue, among which are *Sharī'at al-Islām. Ṣāliḥa li'l-taṭbīq fī kull al-zamān wa-makān* (*The Islamic Sharia is Valid for Implementation in all Times and Places*), and he also named his programme on the satellite TV channel al-Jazeera *al-Sharī'a wa'l-Hayāt* (*Sharia and Life*).

Writing on *fiqh* was not one of Qaradāwī's priorities, but his proclivity for *fiqh* began early with his book *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam* from 1960. According to Qaradāwī's memoirs the book was received with remarkable enthusiasm by the influential minds of *fiqh*, especially by the theorists of "comprehensive Islam" such as al-Dawālībī, Muḥammad al-Mubārak and al-Mawdūdī, and others. The book was translated into several world languages and even reached China. This indicates several things: the rise in popularity of Qaradāwī himself, and the spread of his choices in *fiqh*, which fulfilled the need of Mus-

lims in the non-Muslim world and showed a very important component of *marjī' iyya*, namely facilitation and relief (*taysir wa-takhfīf*). In other words, he enlarged the sphere of the lawful, which was narrowed by the restricted choices and jurisprudential provisions of the past. He achieved this by refusing to rely only on one *madhhab* and by concentrating on the companions' and the followers' views which tried to ease peoples' lives.

Qaraḍāwī's efforts in *fiqh* can be considered as a part of a general tendency among the jurists concerned with social aspects, who were seeking to overcome the obstacles that appeared to prevent contemporary Islam from responding to the necessities of modern civilisation. Thus they created new categories that could be used in permitting new provisions.⁴⁸ With that in mind, Qaraḍāwī and his predecessors concentrated their efforts on issues such as insurance companies and banks, as well as a field he named *fiqh al-aqalliyyāt* (*fiqh* of minorities) in the West and important political issues like elections, constitutions, democracy and many others.⁴⁹

I think that everything is to be attributed to the centrality of the *fiqh*. Similarly, the well-known anthropologist Talal Asad reconsidered the concept of *taqlīd* (tradition) and traditional societies or cultures. As a result he does not distinguish *taqlīd* and *ḥadātha* (modernity) as two contradicting stages in culture or society. He understands them as two different aspects of a historical situation, meaning that *taqlīd* is an aspect of life and not a stage of evolution. In this respect he says:

We can look into the contemporary Islamic revival as an attempt to retrieve the Islamic tradition that can be adapted and link it to modernity as if it were a case that could be experimented with and examined as a whole by the Islamic world today. Moreover, it is an attempt to form ways of resistance and struggle not only with the West but with the Islamic history as well.⁵⁰

Marjī' iyya in context. In this sense, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī and Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī are characteristic of a certain era and a specific stage of Islamic thinking. The two men played a crucial role in closing the rift between Islamic thought and Islamic jurisprudence, which began to grow in the late 19th century and continues until today. Islamic thought at that time suffered from a kind of separation between the movement of renewal (*ḥarakat al-tajdīd*) and the conservative movement (*ḥarakat*

al-muḥāfaẓa). The renewal movement was trying to show the responses of Islamic thought to new kinds of transactions, new social and political systems emerging, and to provide new solutions to issues for which no prepared solutions existed in the thought of the predecessors. The conservative movement found the Western and European foreign influences alarming. It saw in them a kind of thinking that sought to uproot Islamic origins and dictate life styles, ways of behaviour, and types of transactions contradicting the system of Islamic duties and prohibitions.

This map of thought at the beginning of the twentieth century is the context into which Qaraḍāwī was born. According to Ṭāriq al-Bishrī, Qaraḍāwī “stood with shaykh Ghazzālī upon the intersection of two oceans: the ocean of conservatism and the ocean of renewal. The renovator (*mujaddid*) became the one who defended the fundamentals and added to them, while the conservative became the one who begged for renewal to preserve their existence”.⁵¹ The debate between the conservative and the renewal actors evolved around Sharia—in its comprehensive meaning—and its core, Islamic *fiqh*. Qaraḍāwī’s concept of *wasatīyya* is based on syncretism and conciliatory solutions, combining conservatism and reformism after the conflict that emerged between them. So he was capable of creating a contemporary discourse using modern terms in shaping the Islamic heritage, and this in the context of a prevailing secularist conviction that religion is irrational and will lead to backwardness.⁵²

Despite the openness and communication with the West, however, Qaraḍāwī’s concept of *wasatīyya*, which coalesces both the heritage and some of the achievements of modernity, was kept inside an Islamic framework, to which he was able to respond.⁵³ This is exactly what some authors (such as Ridwān al-Sayyid) mean by “*naḥj al-taṣīl*” (method of authentication).⁵⁴ Without this approach the needed responses would not have been achieved, nor the religious *marjī’iyya* composed. Furthermore, this authentication discourse has emerged in a context of tension between Islam on the one side and the cultural and colonialist ambiguity of the West on the other side. In these circumstances, the idea of preserving threatened identity and fighting Westernisation emerged. In fact, in parallel to the conflict between

conservatives and renewalists another conflict arose between those who called for Islamisation and those who called for Westernisation. As a result, the identity discourse was built on a double resistance to Westernisation—which implied a factual and spiritual change—just as much as it was a transformation in thought to oppose the agnosticism of the West, where modernity is an alternative to religion, especially with the spread of rationality and the discarding of religion.⁵⁵

In addition to these contexts, the freedom of movement and activities made available to Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī in Qatar contributed to the formation of his authority. From Qatar he has travelled all over the world, and he has always been eager to establish intellectual contacts during his trips with various *ulama* and persons with political responsibilities. Despite the dual relationship with political and academic power, he has retained his independence. So the strength of his *marjī'iyya* comes from two facts: firstly, people were convinced of his ideas; secondly, he was able to maintain respect despite the apparent corruption of some *ulama* or their affiliation to the institutions of power.⁵⁶

The idea of independence also appears clearly in his stance on being Shaykh al-Azhar. When he was a student in the first secondary year, he had ambitions of becoming Shaykh al-Azhar. However, when he was asked whether he still had this desire at the age of 75, he replied:

A Shaykh al-Azhar is not capable of achieving the reform and the renewal he wants unless he is supported by the state, or at least unless the state frees his hands. How would someone like me achieve that? Anyone who had occupied such a post during the revolution time would have been subordinated to the politics of the state and would have had to work for its satisfaction, whether by saying the untruth or by not saying the truth, otherwise he would be in a conflict with it. That is why it is better for someone like me not to be in that position.⁵⁷

His friend from the early days Aḥmad al-‘Assāl commented on that, saying that Qaradāwī wanted to be Shaykh al-Azhar, but then he became the Shaykh of the entire *umma*; he is chosen through the love and consensus of the *umma* and not by any governor who can dismiss him from the post of Shaykh al-Azhar.⁵⁸

Marjī'iyya in discourse. Concerning his own discourse, Qaraḍawī managed to make valiant contributions in classical *fiqh* and to add a contemporary character to it. This was a way of retrieving *fiqh*'s role in public life after this role was removed by the nation state. Qaraḍawī's book *The Lawful and the Prohibited* was a significant contribution. With it he managed to enlarge the circle of the lawful and to make *fiqh* less of a burden to contemporary Muslim life. This was the reason for the popularity of his book in both the East and the West and why many Muslims seem to rely on his *fatwas*.

Regarding political *fiqh*, which is part of traditional *fiqh*, Qaraḍawī managed to develop it distinctly through his research on issues such as *dhimma* (protected people), *aqalliyyāt* (minorities), *dawla islāmiyya* (the Islamic state), *hurriyāt* (liberties), including economics, Islamic banks, and fighting poverty and other issues that served the idea of "comprehensiveness of Islam" (*shumūliyyat al-islām*). If Qaraḍawī is not the creator of the idea of *shumūliyya*, at the very least he is the one who was capable of transforming it into a popular awareness by making Islam understandable as a way of life (*niẓām ḥayāt*) for a large number of Muslims.

To achieve this goal, he had the courage to break into areas where others kept silent or did not have the courage to put their views forward. His views and attitudes reflect vital responses to the challenges of the time and a good knowledge of the reality relevant to *fiqh*. In this context he started to talk about what he called the *fiqh* of facilitation (*fiqh al-taysīr*), together with other types of *fiqh* like *fiqh al-awlawiyyāt* (*fiqh* of priorities), *fiqh al-aqalliyyāt* (minority *fiqh*), and *fiqh al-maqāṣid* (objectives of the Sharia), which, accompanied by other statements on state, democracy and freedom, became part of the contemporary Islamic discourse as a whole.

He has established—together with Ghazzālī as far as political thought is concerned—a wide current which he is able to mobilise, and which can be described as the dominant current or mainstream (*al-tayyār al-ra'īsī*). This he achieved through his wide-ranging activities in different academic disciplines, conferences, symposia, and many organisations he presides over or participates in.

In addition, Qaraḍawī has an extraordinary breadth of knowledge and production.⁵⁹ He has contributed to several academic disciplines

such as *fiqh* and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, Islamic economy, Qur'an and Sunna, 'aqida, Islamic *da'wa* and education, as well as public debates about the Islamic movement, Islamic awakening and Islamic thought. It is important to mention that some of the subjects he wrote about had not been dealt with by anyone else before. An example is his book on *zakāt*; Muḥammad al-Ghazzālī said about this, "There is no book in Islam which was written about that issue like this one", and al-Mawdūdī, according to Qaradāwī, said, "It is the book of the century—i.e. the 14th Islamic century".⁶⁰

At the end of this section about the *marjī'iyya* elements, it is fundamental to re-emphasise that the formation of Qaradāwī's *marjī'iyya* was not just a result of personal ideas, visions and aspirations. Rather, as we have shown, it was due to a specific historical context and the forming of his path by personal and structural factors. Furthermore, social positions he had occupied pushed him towards the idea of *marjī'iyya* and contributed to its shaping.

Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī: his role and its limitations

The function of the *ulama* is to preserve the belief of the *umma* unified and coherent.⁶¹ Before the emergence of the modern state, public opinion was formed by the class of *ulama* through the status and reputation that these scholars enjoyed among their peers and among the public, who received their opinions, *fatwas*, and believed in their validity.⁶² Their efforts were aimed at preserving the identity and shape of the Islamic society as represented in its religious and public associations, and reforming public life in terms of both its culture and its thinking.⁶³

This theoretical and practical historical task of the *ulama* allowed Qaradāwī to assume his role through his academic and preaching career. He was eager to participate socially and to be present at all religious, national, and social occasions, and this, according to himself, is what was made possible for him in his country of residence, Qatar.⁶⁴

Qaradāwī has never departed from historical awareness of the role of the scholar (*'ālim*) in both personal life and society. When *fiqh* faded from public life and the role of the *'ālim* in society diminished because

of several factors,⁶⁵ we see Qaradāwī merging the *marji' iyya* of the jurist (faqih) and the role of the thinker (*mufakkir*) who is occupied with the issues of the *umma*. Therefore, we find him present in important public issues, representing his position and mobilising people.

This complex role of combining *fiqh* and *fikr* (thought) has been a hallmark of the heritage of Islamic reformism.⁶⁶ It is represented by men such as Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905) and Khayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī (d. 1890). The latter used to say that one of the main obstacles to progress was that religious scholars would know Sharia but would not know anything about secular affairs, while on the contrary, politicians would know the world but would not know religion. Hence, Khayr al-Tūnisī summarised his reformist view regarding *ulama's* role as follows: "The ulama deserve to be involved in the politics of their homeland and to consider the discrepancies in its internal and external issues as well as to support politicians in making arrangements according to the Sharia, bearing in mind the benefits and causing the least harm".⁶⁷

The role Qaradāwī plays is linked to those thoughts and visions. Nevertheless we cannot consider Qaradāwī an "intellectual" in the modern meaning of the word.⁶⁸ Rather, he tries to bring back the historical role of the scholar (*'ālim*) by protecting the identity and forming public life, both culturally and intellectually. In addition, he continuously teaches that in religious matters every individual in society should follow the guidelines that religion calls for and urges them to follow. Indeed, his traditional attitude (connected to Salafi reformism) is behind the prominent role he occupies.⁶⁹

His wide popularity is the result of several factors. Before the media, it was created through his substantial writing, his continuous travelling, and his relationship with the Muslim Brothers and Islamic movements in general. With the use of the media, his popularity was boosted considerably as he was eager to use new technologies as a means of disseminating his discourse and supporting his *marji' iyya*. In this context, the satellite channel al-Jazeera, IslamOnline.net and his personal website Qaradawi.net have played a very important role.⁷⁰ These were untraditional platforms employed alongside the traditional ones like

the Friday prayer, books, publications, public lessons in mosques, conferences, and so on.

Conclusion

Shaykh Qaraḍāwī's achievements have shifted the idea of *marjī'iyya* from a system of thought to a person with all the orientations he represents and the historical context outlined in this article.

I think the passing of Qaraḍāwī, who is over eighty now, will present some hard challenges. I do not see a personality who is qualified enough to occupy the manifold roles Qaraḍāwī undertook in society. Even having someone who might be his deputy in all the institutions he established will be very complicated. He did not create personal students, rather, he created a school of thought. This might return the idea of *marjī'iyya* to the *marjī'iyya* as a system of thought.

The legacy of the reformist thought in the form created by Qaraḍāwī and by those influenced by him still needs truly critical revisions. These revisions will not be a prisoner of the historical context in which this thought developed, and will not stop at its present outcomes. Among the notions that need criticism and renewal (*tajdīd*) are those of the Islamic state, Islamic *wasatīyya* and minority *fiqh*.⁷¹

In addition, there are developments in different disciplines which transcend Qaraḍāwī, for example in the field of *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* and that of criticism of the texts of the Sunna or the new studies on the holy Qur'an. Yet, these studies are kept on a purely academic level and are not addressed to a broader public level in which the "new preachers" (*al-du'āt al-judud*) are active and where we do not know where they will lead the people who will be influenced by them.

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NOTES

1. The editors are deeply grateful to Lutz Rogler for his help in translating, editing, and proofreading this article.
2. Cf. Basheer Nafi, 2006. We will come back later to the issue of the relationship between Qaraḍāwī and the thoughts of the reformists.
3. The 1980s witnessed again a revival of secularism and a sharp confrontation between secularists and Islamists, see: Fahmī Jad'ān, 2007, pp. 124, 150 and Shākīr al-Nāblusī, 2001, pp. 2/186.
4. Here we refer to 'Abd al-Razzāq 'Īd, 2005, p. 9. 'Abd al-Razzāq 'Īd proposes an ideological reading antagonistic to religion and uses Qaraḍāwī as an example. He disparages the idea of dialogue between Nationalists and Islamists, p. 103.
5. For the foundation of IUMS (before IAMS), see Gräf, 2005; al-Khateeb, 2006 and Skovgaard-Petersen in this volume.

6. Qaraḍāwī, 2002, p. 29, 162.
- 7 Ibid., pp. 214, 218
8. Ibid., p. 219.
- 9 Ibid., p. 452
10. Ibid., pp. 28–9, 162, 173.
11. Ibid., p. 31.
12. Ibid., p. 174.
- 13 Ibid., p. 178.
14. Qaraḍāwī considered Sābiq one of his shaykhs, see Qaraḍawī, 2002, p. 415. Qaraḍāwī, when he began to teach *fiqh* in his village, followed the methodology of Sābiq's work *Fiqh al sunna*, which deviated from adherence to one of the four prevalent legal schools (*madhāhib*): "I remember that *Fiqh al-sunna* received large criticism from the traditionalists, to the extent that our professors used to warn us of it." Qaraḍāwī, 2002, p. 237
15. See for example his interpretation of the prophet's birthday in his village, Qaraḍāwī, 2002, p. 33, and his view on the possibility that demons can possess humans, Qaraḍāwī, 2002, p. 47. He says about himself: "Discussing is part of myself", Qaraḍāwī, 2002, p. 284.
16. Qaraḍāwī, 2002, p. 185.
17. Ibid., pp. 222–3
18. Ibid., p. 293.
19. Ibid., p. 347.
20. Published in the 1950s, cf. Qaraḍāwī, 2002, p. 284
21. Qaraḍāwī, 2002, p. 284.
22. Ibid., pp. 234–5.
23. Ibid., p. 302.
24. Ibid., p. 412.
- 25 Ibid., p. 160.
26. Ibid., p. 178.
27. Ibid., pp. 314–16.
28. Ibid., p. 421.
29. Ibid., p. 413.
30. Bahī advocates his ideas in three prominent books: *al-Jānib al-illāhi min al-taḥkīr al-islāmī*, *al-Fikr al-islāmī al-ḥadīth wa-ṣilatūhu bi 'l-ist' mār al-gharbī*, *al-Fikr al-islāmī wa 'l' mujtama' al-mu'āṣir*.
31. The *al-Shihāb* magazine was an important tool in constructing the culture of the Muslim Brothers, expanding the idea of the "comprehensive system" and building a network. One of its sections is called "Islamic register". This section referred to a group of *ulama* and thinkers and always attached a picture and a brief introduction of each. Among those names were the Muslim Brothers' second General Guide Ḥassan al-Huḍaybī, the Egyptian jurisprudent Muḥammad Abū Zahra, Muṣṭafā al-Sibā'ī, the Syrian jurisprudent Muṣṭafā al-Zarqā, the Egyptian novelist 'Abbās al-'Aqqād, the Egyptian jurist Abd al-Qādir 'Awda, the famous Syrian political and legal jurist al-Dawālībī, the Syrian thinker Muḥammad al-Mubārak, and others. All those persons made influential contributions in both jurisprudence and Islamic thought.
32. Qaraḍāwī, 2002, p. 436.
33. Qaraḍāwī, 2002, p. 297.
34. Dr Muṣṭafā al-Sibā'ī (the founder of the Muslim Brothers in Syria) dedicated to him his book "The Socialism of Islam" in the 1950s, Qaraḍāwī, 2002, p. 439.
35. Qaraḍāwī, 2004, p. 306.

36. One of Qaradāwī's contributions was a song he wrote (*Muslimūn Muslimūn*) in reply to pan-Arabist excessiveness, and was widely known in the Arab countries, cf. Qaradāwī, 2004, pp. 375–7.
37. Compare Ghalyun, 2004, pp. 216ff.
38. He entitled it *al-Islām wa 'l-'almāniyya waḡhan li-waḡhin. radd 'ilmī 'alā D. Fu'ād Zakariyā wa-jamā'at al-'almāniyyin*, Cairo, 1987.
39. Qaradāwī, 2002, pp. 319ff.
40. Ibid., pp. 319ff. and Haydar, 1996, pp. 23–4.
41. I devoted a chapter to Sayyid Quṭb and violent groups in my book, see al-Khateeb 2007, p. 79–93.
42. For example in his book *al-Ijtihād fī 'l-sharī'a al-islāmiyya* and in the third volume of his memoirs.
43. Qaradāwī, 2006, pp. 65ff.
44. Compare Ghalyun, 2004, pp. 281ff.
45. See Goldziher, n.d., p. 65.
46. See Botiveaux, 1997, pp. 31ff. He drew on Gilbert Delanoue; both relate this meaning of *fiqh* to the 19th century, but I believe that these tasks could be found for centuries throughout the history of Islamic *fiqh*.
47. See Schacht, 1998, see also Qaradāwī, 2004, pp. 95–106.
48. Compare Goldziher, n.d., pp. 257ff.
49. The Lebanese thinker Riḍwān al-Sayyid spoke about this as a prevalent approach within “Islamic Revivalism” (*al-iḥyā'iyya al-islāmiyya*), and named it “*naḥj al-ta'ṣīl*” (method of authentication). It means not to permit anything—even when it does not contradict the known—unless it can be attributed to a text or inferred from one of the two authentic sources (the Qur'an and Sunna). This approach—according to al-Sayyid—is adopted in the case of important issues connected to the world and the time and is not used in more detailed issues of *fiqh*, see Riḍwān al-Sayyid, 1997, p. 43, see also pp. 169–80.
50. Talal Asad, *al-Sulṭa al-ḥaditha wa-i ādat tashkīl al-taqālīd al-dīniyya*, an interview with Ṣabā Maḥmūd, translated by Muṣṭafā al-Ḥarāzīn, *al-Ijtihād*, no. 47–8, 2000, p. 255.
51. Ṭāriq al-Bishrī, 2001, pp. 77–88.
52. “In general, the researchers of the third world and in particular those of the Arab world were content with the fact that religion and religious thinking is one of those illogical phenomena which are related to either worn and irrational values or have extreme affiliations to either a group or a past history. That's why they unconsciously refused the legitimacy, or even the possibility of rationally researching in religion”, see Ghalyun, 2004, p. 231. The same could be said about the radical secularists such as Ṣādiq Jalāl al-'Aẓm, 'Abd al-Razzāq 'Īd and others.
53. For example, see the introduction of the first edition of the book *The Lawful and the Prohibited*, in which Qaradāwī insists on the internal factors for renewal and facilitation, against the assumption that these

- were only in response to the Western reality. See also Ṭāriq al-Bishrī, 2001, p. 91.
54. al-Sayyid, 1997, p. 43, pp. 169–80.
 55. Leclerc, 2004, p. 436.
 56. Bowen/Gibb, 1997, p. 97.
 57. Qaradāwī, 2002, p. 211.
 58. Ibid.
 59. This was one of the reasons behind his choice to join the faculty of *uṣūl al-dīn*, which teaches traditional and rational sciences (*‘ulūm al-naql wa ‘l-‘aql*). See Qaradāwī, 2002, p. 406.
 60. Qaradāwī, 2006, pp. 231–2.
 61. Brown/Gibb, 1997, p. 97.
 62. See Abū Bakr Baqādir, 2000, pp. 35ff.
 63. Baqādir, 2000, pp. 42ff.
 64. Qaradāwī, 2004, p. 361.
 65. I have hinted at some of it in my article about the IUMS, al-Khateeb, 2006, p. 101.
 66. See Commins, 1999, pp. 155, 178. Compare also with al-Sayyid, 1997, p. 179.
 67. al-Tūnisī, 1986, p. 153.
 68. The term *muthaqqaf* (intellectual) does not appear before the 20th century. The role of the intellectual follows in the footsteps of that of the 19th century philosopher, which means that intellectuals are closely associated with the European modern age and largely advocate secular ideologies, which led to conflict between intellectuals and religious authorities, see Gérard Leclerc, 2004, and others.
 69. Dale F. Eickelman notes that the special training of religious science students, with collective study and long association, allows them to create a complex picture of themselves and the social and cultural responsibilities they have to fulfil in order to play prominent roles in public life, and that is the role which gives them their lofty social status in society. Quoted in Abū Bakr Baqādir, 2000, p. 46.
 70. For Qaradāwī on television, see Galal in this volume; for Qaradawi.net, see Gräf, 2007 and for IslamOnline.net, see Gräf, 2008.
 71. I published a critical study on the notion of *al-wasatīyya*, see al-Khateeb, 2007b.

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Columbia University Press
New York

Columbia University Press
Publishers Since 1893
New York Chichester, West Sussex

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Global mufti : the phenomenon of yusuf al-qaraddawi / [edited by]
Bettina Gräf and Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 978-0-231-70070-2 (alk. paper)

1. Qaradawi, Yusuf. 2. Scholars, Muslim—Biography. 3. Islam—History—20th century.
4. Islam—History—21st century. 5. Islamic preaching. I. Gräf, Bettina. II. Skovgaard-
Petersen, Jakob. III. Title.

BP80.Q357G46 2009

297.8'1092—dc22

[B]

2009003312

Columbia University Press books are printed on permanent and durable acid-free paper.
This book is printed on paper with recycled content.
Printed in India

c 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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