

Bassam Tibi, *Political Islam, World Politics and Europe: Democratic Peace and Euro-Islam versus Global Jihad*. London: Routledge, 2008. Pp.311, ISBN 10: 0-415-43781-4 (pbk).

This is one of these big books that tend to leave an impression long after they have been read and digested. It's big because it tries to cover a huge topic; the rise of contemporary Islam and how an Islamic conceptual apparatus can be understood in different contexts; historically, culturally and from a theological perspective. However it goes beyond that to provide a vision of the way in which Islam and European democracy can interact and grow together in an essentially positive way. In short it offers a conflict resolution pattern for Islam and liberal democracy in the 21st century. And it's clearly written from the perspective of a scholar who likes to see peaceful change over conflict at the root of his analysis.

The premise is that there is a developing conflict between Islamist movements and the European liberal democracies in which they find themselves. While it's not unusual for Western Europe to accommodate different, religious, political or social movements the nature of the Islamist movements seems in direct contradiction or is anti-thetical to the existence of liberal democracy which preached tolerance and openness.

The conflict is not civilizational though as Samuel Huntington argued, rather it must be viewed in the local context. In fact it's clear that we cannot view these entities as monolithic or homogenous. Just as Islam is made up of many different perspectives and views so is the development of liberal democracy an ongoing project. Thus while particular attention is given to the global, the emphasis must be directed at the local and Tibi suggests the development of a version of Euro-Islam, which seeks to accommodate different beliefs and values within a democratic European culture.

The book takes us on a journey in three succinct parts. Firstly, Tibi looks at the conflict within Islamic civilization between the "jihadism" and democracy. Then in part two he concentrates on how political Islam has entered world politics, a reference to global jihadism in both Sunni and Shi'ite varieties and finally he addresses where Europe fits in to this as a consequence. Will we see a Muslim Europe or something else, a brand he calls Euro-Islam. The options are laid on the table and it is clear that Tibi prefers the Euro-Islam version of the future.

One of the things that Tibi does very well is provide us with an understanding of political Islam (Islamism) as a version of totalitarianism which is represented by a movement in international networks. For him this movement is "the paramount example of the entry of religion into post-bipolar worlds" (p.232). This in turn will provide a means of overthrowing the Westphalian world order. I'm not sure that I can agree with this. For one thing, Islam is simply too diffuse and heterogeneous in itself as to exist as a coherent movement. Secondly, there are of course many other competing movements and views; human rights, the environment, other religious movements among others. While Islam is important, it will simply have to co-exist with many of these groups. And in some ways the assertion is that Islam will have to find its place within the context of states rather than above them. Another aspect of the book is to dispel the common myths and misconceptions about understanding Islam in the modern world. Thus although there are fundamental differences in the worldviews of liberal democracy

and Islamism, there are also many common grounds for concern. Globalization to some extent has created a widespread feeling that that identity has been diluted and that core values have been replaced with a sense of alienating consumerism and materialism. This is the modern world but it's also one in which we must co-exist. Tibi's solution to adopt a cross-cultural philosophy to "underpin cultural change and the acceptance of universal values" would go a long way to achieving this goal.

The scholarship in the book is excellent. There are 27 pages of notes for instance and 14 pages of bibliography. The detailed analysis of the problem is superb. This book should be required for everyone trying to understand the relationship between political Islam, global politics and the relationship this has to Western Europe. Its advocacy of peaceful integrative solutions to conflict is to be commended in the light of intolerance. The interesting thing about the text is that it clearly goes beyond scholarly activity to provide a framework for managing and accommodation relations between different civilizational impulses. It is in work like this that we find how social science and the humanities can have a real impact.

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