

Chapter nine analyses the intellectual careers of Hisham Sharabi and Halim Barakat who voluntarily live in exile in the West. They are “preoccupied with bridging the gap between the East and the West” (p. 182). Sharing a common vision, both Sharabi and Barakat maintain that the people of the East and West should “transcend binary thought and reductionist cultural categorization as a means towards achieving better human understanding, tolerance, and healthy transformation” (p. 194). For them, developing a “historical understanding of relations between the East and the West would serve as a window from which “to look ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, and to arrive at a better understanding of the Self and Other” (p. 184).

The editor of the book is in need of a conclusion to match his comprehensive and informative introduction. This significant omission deprives the editor of the opportunity to neatly tie up loose ends and reinforce the main points made in the chapters. It also denied the book a fitting and decent climax. This shortcoming aside, the editor of the volume deserves special appreciation for bringing out this commendable work to a wider audience. In sum, making a meticulous analysis and examination of the social role of intellectuals of a rather diverse range in the Middle East, *Intellectuals and Civil Society in the Middle East* is an impressive and essential new contribution to the literature on Middle Eastern societies and politics.

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**The Arab awakening: Islam and the new Middle East.** By Tariq Ramadan. London: Penguin Books, 2012, pp. viii+273. ISBN 978-1-846-14650-3.

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Tariq Ramadan's *The Arab Awakening: Islam and the New Middle East* is an important contribution to the understanding of the Arab Uprisings, sometimes referred to as the Arab Spring, that rocked the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), which began in Tunisia in

December, 2010. Ramadan's study not only explains the uprisings but also provides a deep understanding of the realities on ground. The book under review stands out for a number of reasons. First, the author points out the non-violent character of the demonstrations that broke out at the very beginning of the mass movement in MENA to demand an end to dictatorship, corruption and social injustice. In order to guarantee a true emancipation of the people of MENA, Ramadan is cautiously optimistic about democracy taking roots in the countries of the region. Second, the volume emphasizes the geopolitical importance of each country of MENA to the US, the EU, China, Russia, and emerging powers like Turkey and India. According to the author, the Arab Uprising is a turning point for the Arabs and Muslims to contribute to the world by transforming themselves into agents and makers of history. In order for these peoples to become "active subjects" of history, Ramadan evaluates the challenges that need to be re-evaluated and urges Muslims to actively contribute to the contemporary debates. He emphasizes the unhealthy and counterproductive division between the Islamists and the secularists.

The main purpose of Ramadan's book is to situate Islam as a religious and ideological referent point in the politics of MENA. Like other regions of the world, MENA has also witnessed the re-emergence of religion in social and political debates. Hence, according to the author, it is vital to re-think the role of religion in the democratization process in the Arab world. Therefore, by necessity one needs to delve into a discussion about Islamism/political Islam in the MENA. In this book, Ramadan makes the point that Islamism in MENA is about to undergo a profound shift. The author advocates the building of civil state in the MENA in which Islam will be a point of religious and cultural reference. He points out that Islam is not a closed system and it should not be presented as such. Islam advocates the fundamental principle of social justice that rests on two prerequisites: equal rights and equal opportunities.

Ramadan further demonstrates that genuine democratization in the MENA will depend on mobilization of civil society in the region. In the region, there is a need for broad-based social movements to mobilize civil society as well as public and private institutions. It is where Islam assumes an immediate, imperative and constructive meaning in Muslim-majority societies. He explains the concepts of *Shari'ah* and *Jihād*.

According to him, the implementation of *Shari'ah* is not to enforce prohibitions and impose a strict, and timeless penal code. *Shari'ah* is not a rigid, and sanctified legal structure; rather, it corresponds with spiritual, social, political and economic dynamics that reaches towards higher goals associated humankind. The author views *Jihād* as an effort to resist racism, corruption and dictatorship.

The author favours a multipolar world in which the new economic forces provide an opportunity for the people of MENA to have an alternative to neo-liberal economic order which currently faces a serious crisis. The presence of new political and economic forces makes economic renewal inevitable. MENA's relationship with the West must change in the future. Ramadan takes into account the successes of AKP government in Turkey. He argues that AKP is not an end by itself rather a means towards new direction. The Palestinians' right of statehood is not brushed aside in the book. Ramadan argues that the success of the democratization process and the revival of the MENA depend on guaranteeing justice to the Palestinians.

This book offers a new direction for the people of MENA. Ramadan's critical stance on Islamists and Secularists, and his analysis of the roles of the West and other potential players in MENA signal for rethinking about a new paradigm. *The Arab Awakening* provides its readers with a broad understanding of the complex and diverse events on ground in MENA. The author lays down guidelines but they are too general and not very well-defined. He touches on the crisis and problems facing the region comprehensively but he only provides a piece of the solutions. The book is most likely to open up a more dynamic and rigorous debate on Islam and secularism.