

THE BROTHER'S SPRING

**The evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood: towards a new
populist Islam?**



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Arabist and Journalist

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SUMMARY

TERMINOLOGY	5
I. INTRODUCTION	8
II. NEW ISLAMIC POPULISM: VIDEOCRACY AND ELITE	12
III. SOFTWARE FACTOR: CULTURE AS A BOND	16
IV THE "HISTORY" FACTOR: BETWEEN POLITICS & A RELIGIOUS MISSION	28
V . THE "HISTORY" FACTOR: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RHIZOMATIC ORGANIZATIONS	34
VI. THE GEOGRAPHICAL FACTOR: GLOBALISATION OF THE MOVEMENT AND EUROPA	44
VII CONCLUSIONS	48
APPENDIX	
Essential Chronology for the Muslim Brotherhood Movement	54
Bibliography	56

TERMINOLOGY

To make the reading of names and Arab expressions easier and simpler for the unspecialized readers the Arab names and terms have generally been transcribed in their common version. Only in some cases have we used technical transliteration according to the manual Laura Veccia Vaglieri, *Grammatica Teorico-Pratica della Lingua Araba*, 2 vol., Roma, Istituto per l'Oriente, 1959. In order to make the text more comprehensible here follows a list of the Arabic technical terms used and the less common abbreviations which appear in the research together with a short explanation.

AQMI,	Al Qa'dah nel Maghreb
AIVD,	Dutch Intelligence Agency
'Alim (pl. 'Ulama')	Knowledgable, wise, expert on religious matters
Ansar	Defenders, referred to the Medini who defended Muhammd after the Higraph
Aqalliyah (pl. Aqalliyat)	Minority
Dar al-Islam	Territory under Islamic Sovereignty
Dar al-Harb	Territory lacking the protection of the Islamic Law, to be converted
Da'wah (da'y pl. Du'at)	Call, ways through which God and the prophets convert men, the Jihadist propagada
Deobandi,	The Indian-Pakistan movement of the reformed 'Ulama, with a lot of members. Initially they opposed the partition of India
Fard 'Ayn	Individual legal obligations to which each single Muslim is subject if others do not fulfil them.
Fard Kifayah	Legal obligations which can be carried out by the Muslim community as a whole.
Fiqh	Rights
FIS	Algerian Islamic Salvation Front
Fitnah	Testing, temptation, chaos created by inter-Muslim conflict
Gama'ah Islamiyyah	Egyptian Islamic Grouping
Ghulat	Extremism
GIA	Armed Islamic Group of Algeria
GICM	Moroccan Islamic Fighting Group
Giahiliyyah	The age of ignorance, a worldly period without God
Gihad (o Jihad)	the struggle, the Holy War, the Crusades, the battle
Hakimiyyah	The period in which men are subject to the law of God.
Halal	Permission (e.g. Halal food)

Harakah	Movement
Higrah	Emigration from Mekka to Medina. The model of each migration and the abandonment of those Muslims desiring purification.
Khawarig	The segregated, a heretic group of the past, against Shiti and Sunni and the Islam origins, supporting a pure Islam accusing others of heresy. They murdered the Caliph 'Ali a Kufa in 661. Many of them have now merged with the Ibadits
Khutbah	The Friday sermon in the congregational rites in the Mosque.
Igtihad	The individual interpretation of the Koran and the Sunna
Igma'	The consent of the community, one of the pillars of rights.
Ikhwan al-Muslimun	The Muslim Brotherhood
Imam (pl A'immah)	He who guides the Prayer
Irhab (agg. Irhaby)	Terrorism
Islah	The reform
ISNA,	Islamic Society of North America
Khilafah	Caliphate
Kufr (Kafir pl. Kuffar)	Misbeliever
LEA	Law Enforcement Agencies, Police bodies
MAK	Makhtabat al Khidmat, established by 'Azzam and Bin Ladini s the first office of al-Qa'idah
Moorish Temple	North American Reformed Islamic Group
Mutatarrif	radical, extremist
Mujtahid (o Mugtahid)	He who interpretes (the Koran or the Sunna)
Muqawamah	Resistance, sometimes synonym of national based terrorist movements (e.g. Hamas)
Murdataddun	The Apostats
Mutaharrif	Those who corrupt the Koran
Mutashaddid	The strict, synonym of fundamentalists
M15 e M16	English Intelligence Services
Nation of Islam	religious organization founded in 1930 in It set out with the goal of resurrecting the spiritual, mental, social, and economic condition of the African American men and women of America.
NYPD	New York Police Department

Al-Qa'idah (o al-Qaeda)	The network 'base' founded by Osama bin Ladin and 'Abdallah 'Azzam, later substituted by Ayman az.Zawahiri
Qiyas	Legal principle of confrontation
Rukkam	Rubble, in the qutbista language the rubble of the western culture hinders the rediscovery of the true Islam
Salafis	A name deriving from Salaf سالفين 'religious ancestors', from which is derived the reformist movement which has taken on the actions of al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh
Shahid (pl. Shuhada')	Martyr, he who donates his life to God
Shari'ah (o Sharia)	the religious law
Shaykh (pl. Shuyukh)	Expert on religious matters, an important person, venerable
Shi'ah (o shia)	the Sciti group, followers of 'Ali
Sunnah	The tradition of the Prophet, made up of a collection of ahadityh
Tabligh	Indian reformist movement founded by Mawlana Muhammad Ilyas in Delhi in 1927. It appeals to minorityMuslims.
Taqlid	tradition
Tagdid	renewal
Takfir	define a Muslim as faithless.
Tanthimat	organisation, referred above all to the regional structure of terrorist movements.
Tali'a	Vanguard, a word from the Qutbists and the Jihadists to describe those who anticipate the revolutionary process of the re-birth of Islam.
'Azm	separation, isolation. Micro-language deriving from the Takfir wa-l-higrah group.

Further information on these and other terms are to be found in John Esposito's *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, Oxford University Press, 2003

The evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood: towards a new populist Islam?

by Sergio Bianchi

I. Introduction

1. The Muslim Brothers are the most important phenomenon in the modern world of Islam, above all in the Arab region. It is a phenomenon that has grown exponentially in the last decades and that is now getting ready to meet its full potential by taking advantage of the spaces that have opened up in light of the so-called Arab Spring. Between 2011 and 2012 the Muslim Brothers have won elections in Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco and represent the most organised opposition to the Arab regimes, from Syria to Libya they have assumed a growing importance during this phase of fighting Al Qaeda-style terrorism and by confronting themselves with this they have learnt how to be innovative with their own political tactics and organisational and ideological model, still keeping in line with their own historic evolution, always oscillating between joining the system and the anti-systemic revolution.

Having, in some way, taken part in the fight against terrorism and against radicalisation, (whose members identify with the traditional MB antagonists the Salafists) they have provided the MB with an aura of legitimacy that they have craved for decades. This has allowed them to create new international alliances, that are at the root of many current foreign policy events, and from which they have been able to accommodate the changes in their countries of origin with the consequential election results. Finally, this element has also helped to consolidate the positions of the reformers within the Brotherhood, who since the 1980s have been creating a new narrative and ideological narrative, sustained by new leadership from ideologists/activists alongside and alternative to traditional religious leaders.

Perhaps the most tangible example of this new *trend* of the MBs is that of the Finsbury Park mosque in London. In the years when Abu Hamza al-Masri ran the Finsbury Park mosque it was a training ground for suicide bombers and a recruiting centre for the terrorist strategies that went side by side with Al Qaeda. After its closure and the arrest of Abu Hamza in 2004, the UK government, who had no idea how to control the *supporters* of the terrorist imam, decided to lean on the MAB (Muslim Association of Britain) to "retake

possession" of the mosque and generate a new socio-religious context. Since February 2005, thanks to the collaboration between the UK authorities and MAB, Finsbury Park is a model mosque, a centre for the community's activities that attract thousands of people, many of whom are directly concerned with troublemakers who were linked to the old management. The MAB is one of the operative segments of the complex galaxy of MB in the UK and it has been able to play an extremely important role across the entire country.

The English example brings to mind several questions. Above all one asks if it could be reproduced on a large scale, if the Muslim Brothers were to represent a trustworthy ally to fight radical jihadism and terrorism and extremist Salafist forces that are gaining ground, acting as a proxy in many Eastern countries and also in Western Muslim communities? Moreover, this example presents another more difficult question: if the MB who are playing and most likely will continue to play more and more roles in the governments of future middle eastern systems, can they be *partners* to European governments? Ahmad bin Yousuf, one of Hamas's originators, posed the question from their prospective: "*intellectuals and political analysts, without distinction, agree about the fact that the Islamic movements could take over. The west is a "cultural imperative" for the east and vice versa. We could better serve this undeniable reality if we develop some guidelines within it based on friendly competition rather than deadly confrontation*"¹.

Competition, cooperation or conflict are options that require specific careful analysis to be able to be defined.

This study can't offer a precise response to those questions because of the margins of ambiguity that are still present in the MB movements and above all because of a different concept of democracy that the MB have to that that is consolidated in the West as this study will show. This study just wishes to reflect on the opportunities and the risks in creating a closer relationship with the MB movement because of the political evolutions in the area and the fight against radicalisation, as well as to identify any possible negative repercussions on foreign policy for European countries and Italy in particular.

2. The fact that the MB have clearly chosen democracy, and reject the violence both in the West as well as in most Arab countries (but with a few major exceptions) and have cooperated in the fight against Al Qaeda has clearly made them a much easier subject to deal with for many political decision makers and European and American institutions who, particularly since 2001, have been searching for "moderate" Muslims. This research is made more

¹ Bin Yousuf A., *Islamist and the West: From Confrontation to Cooperation*, in: Abu Rabi' I. M., *The Contemporary Arab Reader on Political Islam*, London, 2010, pg. 169

difficult by the fact that no real debate about what one means by moderate Islam is taking place in the West.

This journey towards a closer relationship should start from the fact that the MB have a substantially anti-western agenda and in many cases they have shown themselves to support the cultural soup that can lead towards radicalisation or even terrorism. This is particularly the case in several Islamic countries such as Palestine, Chechnya or Kashmir where the MB, whilst still differentiating their tactics, openly support the motives of regional armed Islamic movements that carry out acts of terrorism against their own governments and civilian population. But even in European countries some surveys show that there are serious doubts that they are harbouring *double standards*. Finally, regarding the close-knit internal politics, a further confusing factor arises from the fact that it is still not very clear up to what point the many aspects of multi-cultural ideologies that are strongly related to identity and which the MB have strongly advocated in the West, are not themselves a road towards radicalisation, in so far as they can be a vehicle for sectarian and ethnic isolation and an instrument to construct enclaves that are impenetrable to western values and therefore to real integration.

3. Up until the point that the threat of Al Qaeda was at its peak the problem of choosing to train moderate islamists didn't exist. Without a doubt after the attacks on the Twin Towers, the station in Madrid and the metro in London and above all with the emergence of new forms of "home-grown terrorism", the MB were perceived in some way as a lesser evil, "becoming a security valve for moderate Islam". many institutions had an urgent need for Muslim *partners* who renounced violence and were ready to dialogue with the west.

From this came collaborations with the governments such as in the UK and the UOIF opening in France. But the "lesser evil" tactic can not substitute a *partnership* strategy and serious dialogue, that is in fact indispensable today with a complex and well structured organisation that is getting ready to play a primary role in the arab-islamic world and also in the far east and even in central Asia.

The new managerial Islamic class is gaining more strength in the organisation. Often they are of European origin and have European citizenship, and they will play an ever more assertive role in the Arab revolutions and in the future state institutions in the middle eastern scenario. A managerial class that has a substantially new profile with respect to those who were previously guiding the movement: it is more political, more oriented towards procedure and less a prisoner of theological discussions. A pragmatic profile that comes from a long exchange with the pragmatism of European politics.

Today the MB are demonstrating in the so-called "Jasmine revolts" the value of these exact political dimensions learned in our countries, working on

the so-called "positive radical flank effect" to convince world *partners* of their future trustworthiness. It is a returning motion, one of the epiphenomies of immigration, of which perhaps one doesn't consider the impact and the importance. After all, if one looks closely, it is still a signal of strength of Europe, that these diverse returning journeys of immigration still play a role in cultural and political dialogue and even "informal diplomacy" in the Mediterranean.

4. For the MB this double dimension is not easy to manage. It is not easy to combine, on the one hand, the minimum *standards* of political acceptability, which are in some way now part of this "inherited European baggage", and, secondly, the slogans voiced by Middle Eastern societies very different from our own as made evident by the elections in countries like Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Egypt and Libya. Just think of the recent references made regarding the caliphate "*which is coming ever closer*" by the leader of the Brotherhood, made to the newspaper ash-Sharq al-Awsat at the beginning of 2012 in the middle of the election campaign in Egypt. This is also because on this other front, where the game of consensus and the fight for local politics is going on, the MB must talk to a society that is deeply conservative and in some cases backwards, that they themselves sometimes have a hard time recognising and in which the Islamic, tribal and ethnic substrate doesn't match well with many of the principles to which they need to adhere in their dialogue with the West. To "talk" to these nationalist societies, from which the ruling classes of the MB emigrated to the Gulf and Europe and thus distanced themselves, these need mediation of the groups and of the local ruling classes that have remained in the country during the diaspora, suffering repression, prison, torture and paying a high price with their own blood in their fight against dictatorships. Joining these two levels will not be a process that is either easy or automatic. It could create cracks as has happened for example in the Hamas movement, torn between the foreign "Syrian" *leadership* of Khaled Mash'al and the internal *leadership* of Haniyyeh, or in the clashes between the leadership of Hamas in Palestine and the foreign fringes in Jordan. This aspect could become much more evident in the current revolutionary phase in Countries such as Libya (or Syria) where the contribution of *leadership* in exile could be very important, just as much as the contrasts between the various ethnic, religious and local tribal groups. Moreover exile has always been one of the guiding factors of diffusion of the Brotherhood, as the Lebanese case shows us or the history of the movement in Libya and Jordan.

Yet, in this transitional phase, in the Arab spring (at least until now) once the MB have been able to tap their ideal reservoir to try to propose a balanced approach in the spirit of wasatiyyah, the logic of the middle way that they have chosen as the emblem of their gradualism to manage change. We are talking

about a moderateness that is also an indicator of the quality of their political and spiritual *elite*.

The current labour is the almost ripe fruit of a long internal transformation that from the fight against nationalist and socialist tyrannies up to the counter position against the terrorism of al Qaeda, and then the overturning of the dictatorial Arab regimes has brought them to a position of playing the determining role in many Muslim countries. For the first time in contemporary Islamic history, a non-government political movement is playing a global geopolitical game on the arab-islamic scenario from Africa to Central Asia, from Morocco to the Xinjiang, facing up to the governments in the area; from Turkey to Iran and Saudi Arabia right up to the USA and Europe.

With the advancing of the MB in this geopolitical space - an area in which countries like Turkey have the possibility to play a determining role - new international alliances are appearing on the horizon². In this analysis we will try to understand the many dynamics that could influence these processes and what the possible outcomes might be.

II. New Islamic Populism: videocracy and *elite*

5. The failure of dictatorial Arab regimes, the decline of socialist and nationalist secular regimes and the crisis of Al Qaeda as a terrorist and military phenomenon have made apparent, in an ever more evident way, new phenomenon in Islamic politics from roots that are both ancient and modern.

To use a sociologist's expression we can say that we are facing a large scale replacement of political *elites* in an enormous geo-strategic area. Armed with new narratives, these *elite* are preparing to give life to new forms of organised government, that will shortly transform North Africa and the Near and Middle East.

This is a completely new phenomenon, that we can compare in some ways with what happened in the 1950s with the advent of the Ba'athist and Nasserite movements. At the time those transformations, always in the name of the people and democracy, cost numerous wars across the whole region and the loss of European hegemony in the Near and Middle East, before the crystallising of the status quo that has lasted up to now.

Today the most important of these transformations is the ascent of neo-populist Islam, being an ideology based on the exaltation of the people,

² Iranian reformist texts by Sadeq Zibakalam, in The Daily Sharq (www.dailysharq.com) 3 Dicembre 2011 e in Iranian Diplomacy website (www.irdiplomacy.ir) 18 Settembre 2011.

understood as ummah and seen as the container of an ancient power of political and religious legitimacy from which the vanguard of the revolutionaries can draw.

The relationship between the vision of the ummah and the vanguard is also at the base of the new concept of democracy, which the MB have been working on for decades, thoroughly reforming many aspects of traditional Islamic jurisprudence, as well as many elements that make up the ideology of their founding fathers from al-Banna to Sayyed Qutb, from Muhammad al-Ghazzali to Sa'id Ramadan.

6. This dynamic that is typical of populist phenomenon is reinforced by various factors that are specific to the countries that are transforming and makes them particularly insidious: the first stems from the fact that democratic mechanisms and effective representational mechanisms in these countries are not yet well defined because of the persistence of tribal, familial or military dictatorship that has been occupying the seats of power for more than 50 years. Above all there are no mechanisms of balancing power in place once the new political *leaders* have arrived in the cabinet offices, as well as the fact that there is no effective judicial sector and the separation of powers is often in an embryonic phase, without considering then the sense of institutional loyalty within the security sector or the administrative classes. Secondly, the nature and structure of Arab States today may lead to new oligarchic tendencies, as they are modelled on the organizational structures that have the specific function of ensuring tribal *elite*, family, military or religious incumbents. So, this Arab spring could be just another turn on the revolving door of power for new groups.

The difference will be made by the ideological dimension, since the new cadre of political Islam carries a global vision of society and, compared to expectations, will not settle for managing the existing one. If we want to make a comparison with our own history, we face a process of nationalization of Arab and Islamic masses similar to that of Europe in the thirties, that is however taking place in the absence of strong government and with a very fluid social process because it is related to almost non-existent civil society, suffocated by tribal logic, by traditional family structuring and a very low sense of individual responsibility. This process of the "rise of the new ruling classes" to use an expression from Moscow, is taking place while a second transformation of a technological nature is taking place related to new satellite platforms. Millions of Arabs in the coming years will pass from a traditional and essentially territorial culture, based heavily on Islam and the expression of a patriarchal tribal society without political freedom, to the world of "the democracy of Al-Jazeera", where information is global and many slogans and familiar faces are introduced and enforced in politics through the power of satellite television

media, in large part an expression of the hegemonic ambitions and the "soft power" of the Gulf countries, which attempt to capture the revolution in this way and leave no room to be crushed by it. In this sense, Libya has been a great laboratory of videocracy, where mobile phones have fuelled the circuit of satellite information, which in turn has been operating with its own agenda, as a new tool for the foreign policies of countries interested in removing Gaddafi from power, a dictator *sui generis* even by middle eastern *standards* who has never been loved by the theocratic monarchies of the Gulf.

Those who make use of and learn to manage these new instruments of Arab populism will certainly obtain a competitive advantage to win the battle of the new transition. The video commentators and preachers will become the new political and cultural references of Arab societies, without going through complicated selection mechanisms within the ruling classes and their parties. Satellite images viewed simultaneously by all Arab countries are able to inflame the hearts and minds of millions of men, who feel increasingly that they belong to something unique, a global ummah, which appears to be a turning point history, almost the fulfilment of ancient promises.

7. The MB are the best equipped force, ideologically and organizationally, to manage this transition, which has been able to connect with satellite television, exploiting the many opportunities of the moment, and that has the necessary global dimension to "talk" both to the West and to the most conservative element of Islamic society. The reflection on the relationship between videocracy and democracy has long been part of the critical comparison which for example, Rashid al-Ghannushi began on the underlying reasons of Western imperialism. Since the Western nations that had colonized the Arab world in modern times are all democratic, thus, asks Ghannushi, how is it that democracy could be our solution? The answer to this question would be given by the imperfection of Western democracy, where a minority of political, economic and media interests give rise to a *lobby* that manipulates the people. True democracy, Islam, based on *خلافة*, ie the Islamic nature of the person in their presumed authenticity, would be the real recipe, able to implement a new form of true democracy. What characterizes the new reformism of the MB, which emerges from the eighties onwards, is modelled on the ideology of populism, since it is based on the mystique of the Muslim people, "the ignored force," as al-Banna, their founder called it. This form of romantic populism revolves around the attempt to imitate the original community from the time of Mohammed and adapt it to the era of al-Jazeera, and has developed a new concept of Islamic democracy based on the "new man". The action of the MB is addressed to the alleged attempt to draw on deep and "archaic" sources of political legitimacy, but in a modern ideological framework, proclaiming the moral superiority of Islam over the West, even

where it is programmatically proposing to cooperate. The MB ideology remains totalitarian, affecting every sphere of life, promising a happy solution for both the individual and society, an ideology that in its most recent forms, revisionist and pro-democratic emerging from the eighties onwards, has combined the traditional anti-imperialism of lay movements and secularism with the new Islamic revivalism, the fruit of the ideological elaboration of new generations. This is a movement that, thanks to this constant revisionist ability, since the fifties has been able to take on Western technology, sterilizing it from the moral aspects of the West considered the source of all evil and from the backwardness of the Arab-Islamic world. Hence the extreme attention by the MB to all aspects of modernity, from satellite television to the Internet. This is their *software*, consisting of modern buzzwords: democracy, constitutionalism, human rights. A *software* which works together with the *hardware*, given by an organizational system that is very fluid, diverse and adaptable through which the MB attempt to gain consensus and alliances in an inclusive logic that has no other example in the political history of modern Islam.

But this picture has another side, which, up to now, the Brotherhood intellectuals have debated less. This new vision of "Islamic democracy", the fruit of their *ijtihad* modernism, tends to create fractures between the spiritual and political movement, as if politics were a secondary branch of their religious and spiritual action. Above all, it tends to leave in the shadow the theme of building a modern state and nation, for the benefit of civil society and the Muslim *ummah*, that is, the Arab transnationalism, which has already generated many conflicts during the socialist revolutions. This creates contradictions and deep ruptures, as we will see. And this is also the weakest point of the MB, since in fact this *software* doesn't make them adequately *accountable* for today's politics or to respond to the complexity of the power of a modern state, since they lack, on the practical side, a *road map* for the organization of a state and its relationship with the Nation and the great themes of citizenship. This is exactly the problem of populist movements, which often fail due to a lack of political *accountability*, when they have to move from videocracy to practice, from opposition to government.

The management of power, where and when they get there, is where so far the MB have failed and, presumably, will continue to fail if they do not know how to make more reformist steps, however, there are encouraging signs towards this.

In this context, the importance and uniqueness of the MB is derived from several factors. Below we list three of them, which will help us to understand the perspective and the role they will play in the new Middle East, which is both their strength and their inherent weakness. By analyzing these three factors we deal with some of the myths of Western politics and cooperation, that should be

revised in the light of the innovative power and political perspectives that the MB are introducing onto the scene of the Near and Middle East.

III. Software Factor: culture as a bond

8. The first element to highlight is the cultural dimension of MB. The movement, in general terms, is ideologically rooted in the so-called Muslim reformism phenomenon that had during the Arab revival its biggest cultural expression which took place between the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th. The MB are therefore part of that vast reformist universe (تجديدي , اصلاحی أو) that since the XVI century has begun to oppose the so-called traditionalists, o Islam as a museum, as al-Ghannushi has written. This matrix should be remembered by all those, including many members of the *intelligence community* that often over simplistically heap together the MB with salafist groups or with other movements such as the wahhabiti and the deobandi. The differences aren't always clear even amongst Muslim intellectuals. Generally a schematic approach prevails, based on differences in goals and programs, as well as operating procedures. For example, Fathi Yakan, (who was until his death in 2009 a leading ideologue of the Lebanese movement) sees current reformism as divided between the tablighi, which are groups of prayer meetings and itinerant mission, representatives of Hizb at-Tahrir, who contemplate political action only after the political establishment of the Caliphate, and the Muslim Brotherhood, which he defines as "*an intellectual movement [...] an educational and spiritual movement [...] and a movement of Jihad, due to their campaigning for the preparation of Jihad by all means. This is because the truth must have the strength to protect itself so that the missionary work (دعوة) can face challenges and overcome problems.*"³

In fact, even though there are undeniable historical and tactical alliances and even some shared cultural references in their narratives, Salafists and the MB, respectively traditionalists and modernists, have two cultural stories, matrices and guidelines that are completely different and even divergent in many respects. The MB are fundamentally a revolutionary movement modelled on the German conservative model, while the Salafi movements are based on primarily conservative models, often quietist, as in the case of the Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia, which has always supported the second power schemes well

³ Fathi Yarkan, *The Islamic Movement: Problems and Perspectives*, in Abu Rabi' I. M., *The Contemporary Arab Reader on Political Islam*, London, 2010, pg. 17

known to the traditional ulema' cast. Moreover, the MB, as we shall see below, in contrast to other contemporary reform movements, are often characterized by an attraction to the action and a constant attempt to turn into tangible practices, including policy, their religious ideas. Al-Ghannushi rightly reminds us how *"Islam existed before the current Islamic movement, but was intended as a preparation for the after life, not as a system to shape society."*⁴ Today this is the primary goal of MB reformism. And this is also the reason why political alliances even contingent ones between the parties that are the expression of the two cultural worlds, for example the Justice and Freedom Party in Egypt, led by the MB, and the coalition of An-Nur, based on Salafism, are very difficult. This contingent political tendency can be observed in Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Syria, but particularly in the Persian Gulf. An important corollary of this ideological polarization are the geo-political alignments, which revolve around Turkey and Iran, for the reform area, and the Gulf monarchies for the traditional area. These polarizations are intended to transform the political history and area of operation for the parties in the coming years.

Understanding of the cultural matrix is also very important in terms of merit. Through this tagdidi formation, in fact, the MB develop to the maximum the various forms of *igtihad*, namely a traditional technique of Islamic law which, in their modernist version, allows a high degree of flexibility and adaptability in the interpretation of both Sharia and the Quran and Sunnah. Kamal Habib, a leading theoretician of the Palestinian movement JIP (Palestinian Islamic Jihad) even expresses positions that are likely to exceed those of MB in terms of freedom of interpretation: *"This can be understood only by releasing the methodologies used to crucial issues of faith and consensus (in the sense of legal *Igma nda*), on the one hand, the issues related to real life and to *igtihad*, on the other hand, so as not to bring matters of faith into matters of everyday life, which fall under the umbrella of *igtihad* [...] A proper understanding of Sharia and jurisprudence by the Islamic movement is the key to understanding a complex theory that deals with the difficult questions of our current reality. This is possible through systematic discrimination within Sharia between matters of faith and immutable values on the one hand, and changing realities of the issues that concern *igtihad* on the other. Islam does not know the end of the story, but he believes in the infinite dialectic between man and reality."*⁵

⁴ Rashid al-Ghannushi, *Islamic Movement: Self-Criticism and Reconsideration*, in Abu Rabi' I. M., *The Contemporary Arab Reader on Political Islam*, London, 2010, pg. 130

⁵ Kamal Habib, *The Islamic Movement's Approach to Understanding Shari'ah*, in Abu Rabi' I. M., *The Contemporary Arab Reader on Political Islam*, London, 2010, pg. 178

In more orthodox terms, we can say that the introduction or the emphasis on legal concepts such as those of public interest and mission related to ‘Dar al Da’wah, or the reinterpretation of concepts such as the oneness of God and vice-regency of humanity, which, though they are traditional elements of Islamic legal thinking, here take on a new weight and significance, and have substantially altered the political-theological reflections of the MB compared to both the religious Islamic institutional *establishment* and the salafists . This intangible element allows FM to make the transition towards a political system without affecting its basic principles, creating a separation between the dimension of the democratic struggle and politics on the one hand, and the more intimate and religious aspects on the other.

These elements function as a propeller for the diverse galaxy of contemporary Islamic reformism, certainly not only for the Muslim Brotherhood, though the Brotherhood's level of resilience is much sharper than in any other contemporary movement. These characteristics have allowed for the evolution of a very complex cultural debate at the turn of the eighties and nineties, when the new political narrative took shape that underpins the current action of the movement.

In fact, at the end of the Eighties emerged, within the various movements that make up the galaxy of the global Brotherhood, a new class of intellectuals and leaders, who were to produce a major reformist breakthrough. They are the third generation after the founding fathers, after Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb and Mawdudi, and after that of their commentators who knew them directly, such as Abdul Qadir Awda, or Said Ramadan or Muhammad al-Ghazali. It is a generation that grew up in defeat, the first political-militarist and then ideological, and has been able to capitalize on this and on their own defeats. It is a generation that has chosen not to be drawn into the spiral of hatred and terrorism, and that is why it has refused the choices of intellectuals such as Abdallah Azzam, Omar Abdul-Rahman and Ayman az-Zawahiry, but also the strategies of violent reformists like Sami Al-Aryan, or Abdallah Shallah - theorists within the JIP - which still have the channels of dialogue with the MB because they are recognized as belonging to reformist groups, despite being allies with Iran and Turkey. The reformists currently in orbit around the MB are significantly biased against terrorism, at least in its majority members, while those outside of that close organizational orbit, such as the JIP, Hamas or reformist branches of shiismo reformists, are often transited into terrorism, on a par with strands of Jihadi salafiyyah. It is, in the end, a generation that grew up with a much greater degree of exposure to the West and cultural globalization, and so could not be content even with the solutions proposed by the

commentators of the purist thoughts of founding fathers such as Muhammad al-Ghazali (1917 - 1996), who were fundamentally prisoners of their history. This new trend is epitomized by thinkers, activists and politicians such as the economist and former Minister of Pakistan Khurshid Ahmad, the *leader* of the Tunisian party an-Nahdah, Rashid al-Ghannushi, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who has helped to reform many aspects of the rights of Muslim minorities in the West, the *leader* of the Lebanese Islamic Action Front Fathi Yakan, the former converted Marxist Munir Shafiq, who has harshly criticized the decisions of the PLO which he belonged to for years, the Moroccan intellectual Ahmad al-Raysuni, the Syrian Ali ad-Din al-Sadr Bayanuni, the Algerian Nahnah, homonymous *leaders* of Hamas in Algeria, and, finally, the most important European thinker, Tariq Ramadan. Today many of those intellectuals, in Tunisia as in Morocco, Egypt or Libya, are political leaders, as will soon probably be the case for their fellow Syrians, Algerians, and the Persian Gulf, the last Salafist bastion being targeted by the Brotherhood. Alongside these, there are numerous academics, intellectuals and technicians with an aura of neutrality such as Abd al-Wahhab al Massri, who revolve around the great research institutions of the Brotherhood in the West and the East, beginning with the IIIT (International Institute of Islamic Thought), the real *think tank* of the movement, which has had as director Ismail al-Faruqi, an academic close to the Brotherhood who, until his violent death in 1986, first experimented with rudimentary formulas of inter-religious dialogue from Islamist perspectives. These names often occupy airtime on al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya, speaking to millions and millions of Muslims around the world.

There are two most important elements that this twenty years of debate have created within the reformism of the MB:

- Democracy has always been perceived by theorists of the Brotherhood as a result of Western imperialism, contrary to traditional theories of government of traditional Islam. This idea, which was also present in many of the first and second generation of the Brotherhood, is perpetuated in the Salafi movements and those of the terrorist network of al-Qaeda. At the end of the Eighties third generation reformists broke with this cultural pattern. *"Many Islamists associate democracy with foreign intervention and untrustworthiness. But democracy is a set of mechanisms to ensure freedom of thought and of association, peaceful competition through elections, to the authority of government [...] We have no modern Islamic experience able to replace democracy. The Islamization of democracy is the closest thing to the implementation of shurah the Islamic principle of consultation. Those who reject it have not produced anything but the single party system.[...] Those who have*

*most to gain from democracy are Muslims. They should be its biggest supporters. Muslims can come to power every time there are free elections. The secularists in this phase are in the minority and they are having problems with democracy*⁶. "The leader of the Algerian movement Hamas (not to be confused with the eponymous Palestinian movement) has coined an Arabic neologism to describe this new vision of Islamic democracy: shuraqatiyyah, ie a form of government that knows how to combine the concept of Islamic democracy, based on consultation and the opposite of that which is dominated by concentrations of power and despotism. In this new vision of Islamic democracy the people, understood as the ummah, are the keeper of a legitimating power that goes beyond the logic of the majority. It is the bearer of values intrinsic to its Islamic nature.

- A different approach to the West, which is no longer just the "Great Satan" of the traditionalist journalism of the writings of Qutb and followers. The new intellectuals, such as Ahmed bin Yousuf, wondering who or what "threaten the possibilities for mutual recognition and coexistence between Islam and the West?". All the writers of the contemporary reform have a substantial lack of understanding of the profound nature of the West, of the faith that animates it and its deep spiritual roots. There remains extreme difficulty in combining private behaviour and social and family relations in the light of a Western culture based on freedom of choice of the people and in understanding how the relationship between state and religion functions, especially in light of the fact that the experience Western religion is primarily based on the living meeting between man and his God, and not a written law that is presumed to be immutable. Yet, despite all these critical elements that are still present, there is no doubt that the reformists of the Brotherhood have fielded the attempt of a new dialogue with the West which is a harbinger of many possible developments. Even Bin Yousuf, who is one of the political advisers of Hamas, the Palestinian movement said: *"The West has vital strategic interests in the Islamic sphere, especially in regard to the wealth of oil reserves in some Arab states. In light of these concrete reasons for cooperation, one must ask why the West insists on returning to the past and to history for its policy decisions, while the current issues are geopolitical [...] The fact remains that there is availability on the Islamic front to open a*

⁶ Al-Ghannoushi R., in: Abu Rabi' I. M., 2010, p. 133.

*dialogue with the West. There is also a willingness to clarify the socio-cultural reforms proposed by the Islamic agenda, if efforts have positive responses rather than prejudiced ones. The Islamists consider cooperation with the West a necessity rather than a luxury particularly in terms of democracy, political freedom and human rights"*⁷

This new ideological approach is what moulds many forms of organization. Possibly the most interesting is offered by Islamic banking systems, where the MB is very strong, thanks to the great work of cultural reflection and innovation played by Khushid Ahmad internationally. As many financial analysts remind us, the emergence of Islamic banking is the result of an agreement between the wealthy Gulf countries, where huge financial fortunes had accumulated during the 70s, and the religious class, which provides the legal means to circumvent the strict shari'ite rules on interest. Petrodollars and religion, in order to meet, needed a medium. This medium has been offered, in fact, by the flexibility of the *igtihad* reformist, who built a series of participatory models to circumvent the prohibitions of the Quaran and make banking and financial rules acceptable including their returns, within an Islamic system. The result of this alliance, which moved from ideas into practice, is for example the Jordan Islamic Bank, which was founded in the late seventies. The major contribution to this financial undertaking was provided by the intellectual "religious thinker" Sami Hammud, who in 1976 wrote his PhD thesis on this subject, exploring the fundamentals of Islamic finance law in the light of *igtihad tagdidi*. The Jordanian banking system of the time had attempted to thwart the emergence of Islamic banks. But the MB group supported the initiative and gave Sami Hammud certain key tools - always the same - to carry through his plan and change the Jordanian law: above all, a public forum in the TV *talk show* run by Sheikh al-Kilani, a *leader* of the Brotherhood (the videocracy), then the ministerial *lobby* of the political group of the Brotherhood around Kamil ash-Sharif, the Minister of Religious Foundations (the political route) and finally international relations, thanks to support from Saudi Prince Muhammad al-Faisal. This pattern of the Jordanian bank will remain a model for many other financial initiatives of the MB, also in the West, and at its most basic it describes well the relationship between ideology and organization within the Brotherhood.

It is always with this modernist form of *igtihad* that many Brotherhood *leaders* have come to develop models of convergence between democracy and Islam, from which al- Ghannushi and al- Qaradawi have taken on an almost a

⁷ Bin Yousuf A., in: Abu Rabi' I. M., 2010, pp.160 e seguenti.

paradigmatic function, especially after 11 September. Contrary to what is often repeated in the Western press, democracy is now a pillar of the narratives and the strategy of FM in the world, especially in Arab countries, where their analysis on the need to have constitutions and to choose freely, while respecting human rights, have become the *slogans* of the Arab spring. Reshaping the traditional Islamic political models, which are normally based around the Caliphate, on new democratic principles means rethinking large parts of Islamic history in a new light. This is definitely the biggest difference, for example, between MB and movements such as Hizb al-Tahrir or Salafi and Sufi movements that have long been competitors of the MB on the Islamic scene. None of them knew how to grow as big as the Ikhwan because nobody had the adequate cultural resources to address modernity and make alliances without prejudice.

The real innovation of MB is to conceive of Islam as a total system playing on traditional philosophies of tawhid, but within the framework of a flexible system that adapts to many aspects of modernity and politics.

In fact this idea of a religion that can also become a manager of society and state - and therefore walks with the legs of men and new communities - is an innovation from twentieth century Islamic reformism, of which the MB is the main result. With the MB, religion is the motor for political and social action in a totalizing way, and this is entirely new in the modern history of Islamic countries, almost a return to medieval scene, when the various religious *du'at* , with all their sectarian interpretations , prepared the way for the caliphate power struggles. Then those missionaries were the real revolutionaries, capable of opposing the regime, talking to the people and carrying out murderous conspiracy plots, but also to ally themselves with power depending on the circumstances. The recovery of that revolutionary spirit and of that great flexibility are now the styles that bear the ideology of the Ikhwan, just as they also conceal the greatest risk to their future ability to govern and reform the state in a modern sense.

In fact, within this narrative of tawhid hides the dark side of the Brotherhood, with a clear vision of history and a simplistic analysis of the contemporary socio-theological scenario: abandoning Islam, its principles, its methods, the moral and the religion is what led to the fall of the caliphate and the contemporary crisis of the Arab-Islamic world. So, reassembling unity, the tawhid, is the task of this new vanguard, able to reconnect "*the Muslim people [...] [...] full of faith [that] is a force, however, ignored*" with al-haqiqah, the truth, the real Islam. Here is the primary nature of Islamic populism: the romantic myth of the people, upon which new Islamic democracy is based. Link with the people, "wake them up" is what the action of the MB aims for, imagining (mistakenly ...) that there is a profound harmony between this spirit and divine revelation, "the deposit".

Within this view of history, which is at the heart of the MB beliefs, there are two elements that show great weakness in the political thought of the MB: the inability to separate religion and state, on the one hand, and, on the other, a radical and almost theological critique of the West that is considered morally corrupt. There is then a third element, which usually appears after the seizure of power, and which is given by the difficult confrontation with reality when the people, who believe they are the depository for the Islamic soul, begins to ask for freedom or offer ideas that are contrary to Quaranic precepts. In these phases, then, the Islamic movement can turn into a dictatorship, and the vanguard can and will become an educator, using the tools of the state.

Probably in these elements there lies the low level of political *accountability* that characterizes the MB when they assume the responsibilities of government, and always within this element there is a mature debate from many intellectuals who warn the Movement away from too much political commitment.

This dimension is certainly the strength of the Brotherhood's model at the stage where it comes to power and it has to aggregate and take root in society. But it is also its inherent weakness at the time it needs to govern, since the construction phase, how to move from a society of ignorance to a society governed by shari'ah, or a society governed by divine laws, which are all supposed to be wished by the people, is left to the unpredictable political and cultural cleansing action of each country from Western influence, intended as a source of materialism and individualism, so that it can express the inner soul of the Islamic people. The myth of Sha'ab, of the people, that today is emerging in Libya, has deep roots and can be very dangerous, because it can lead to a new "Islamic populism" and extreme forms of transnational anti-Western nationalism or populist dictatorships.

The risk for the MB is not the lack of democracy, as many believe, but rather its excess, the phase of populism, as has occurred in many other historical periods on other latitudes. The risk is that around the corner from this neo-romantic vision in the Islamic form of politics, there are populist models associated with other forms of "transnational Islamic nationalism" such as the Iranian model, or, worse still, that a "Gaza global" could arise in which case there will surely be those who make a point of repeating well known models.

This finding forces us to reflect on some aspects of Western political thought about the area. The first of these is the "Sharansky doctrine" that has characterized the Bush Administration and the American era and which also forms the basis of the present Obama Administration. It is the idea that the spread of democracy would, almost automatically, open spaces and modern systems of government and stop fundamentalism and radicalism. The political action of Sharansky in Israel is proof of how such a "political doctrine" may be unrealistic when applied to a reality such as Palestine or the Arab world at

large: Palestinian democracy can produce Hamas, and this is because of the harsh realities which even Minister Sharansky has had to take note. As we shall see below, the democratic process in reality, even in the East, as happened in the West in the twenties, may also be the *gateway* to dictatorial formulas. Transforming Democracy, which is a practical and modern method of selecting the *elite* on the basis of majority criterion, in something that it is not, ie, a doctrine of the state, is very risky. The mechanisms of democratic functioning, and in particular the principle of "one man - one vote" may bring to power totalitarian movements, as in the past when the system of checks and balances of the State has not been well articulated or was not yet ready to manage the danger of hazards and critical areas resulting from dictatorships or the imbalance of powers.

Adherence to essential values, such as the neutrality of the state to guarantee the natural and inviolable rights of a person, the division of powers and functions, and genuine freedom of the individual from social and tribal mechanisms are what characterizes modern societies; the exact opposite of populism.

The real ambiguity of FM thus doesn't lie in choosing between terrorism and democracy, as claimed by many leading figures in world politics. This question was settled by the MB some time ago, under the frame of new fully democratic populist ideologies. The real ambiguity of the MB is in the form of state and the relationship this will have with religion on the basis of respect for fundamental human rights. The form of the State is the real challenge of the current process of modernization in the Arab and Islamic world. This is the challenge which the Arab spring will be judged upon, not Islam or democracy.

Another distinctive feature of the MB is related to the profile of their intellectuals. Most of the references of the MB (with the exception of the imported al-Qaradawy and a few others), by al-Banna al-Mawdudi, from Qutb to Sa'id and Tariq Ramadan, don't normally come from the religious *establishment*, as in the case of the Salafists, who are usually imams trained in schools of Islamic law. This apparent anomaly is a trait shared by both the MB and many of the profiles of the terrorists of al-Qaeda, whose political-theological interpretations are in direct conflict with the *establishment* of the Ulema and the majority of imams, therefore, it is always missing at least one of the pillars of legal analysis that is the consensus (Igma'a). But the directions of this apparent commonality diverge when you switch to the analysis of the ideological profile. In fact, contrary to what happens with movements that inspire terrorism, this unorthodox dimension (which many consider even lax) of the *ijtihad* of the MB, at least if judged in terms of the narrow traditional formalism, actually allows the Ikhwan not only to build bridges between Islam and modernity, but also to overcome the traditional sectarian, tribal and national barriers which is exactly the opposite of the terrorist narrative, which instead is

directed towards forms of Salafism and thus becomes exclusive.

Working on their own narratives of contemporary Muslim reformism, and the topic of division in a theological sense, caused by ta'assub (sectarianism), the MB has assumed from the outset an ecumenical point of view, distancing itself from the narrative takfiris and the rigid dogmatism that is typical of Salafi movements and terrorists. This profile has allowed them to forge unprecedented alliances, for example with the Shi'ite Hizbullah, which are part of shi'ita tagdidi contemporary reformism. Moreover, since the Thirties the same al-Banna in his usul (fundamentals) attempts to minimize this gap between Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims in the name of the common faith. Simultaneously, the Brotherhood has also been able to "recuperate on the right", so to speak, with the Salafis of the Gulf and the Islamic world, to the point of becoming a catalyst in many Muslim universes who normally find it difficult even to talk to each other. In Europe, for example, FM has attracted under their organisational banner movements such as Salafists, barelevi, Deobandi, Sufi and even state government organizations such as the German DITIB, an emanation of the turkish government, thereby gaining a strong capacity of representativeness towards European governments, even if their actual numbers would not have allowed it. Other signs of this inclusive trend, which has great political value, come from the strategies of Palestinian Hamas toward Iran, often with the mediation of Hizbullah, and especially the actions of the Libyan, Syrian, Tunisian and Moroccan Brotherhood towards Turkey, which continues to re-evaluate its role as an Asian power.

This ability to be catalysts, until they are in opposition, is also manifested in Muslim countries where the MB are part of the political struggle, for example in Libya, and is an element unknown to the rigid fundamentalist Salafi movement. This ability makes us suppose that in the near future, the FM in the various countries where there are revolutionary phenomena taking place will try the way of coalition governments, preferring alliances without the Salafis, or even try to operate politically through political organizations that are not characterised religiously in order to obtain the maximum popular cohesion.

A good example of this extraordinary ecumenical ability comes from an interview I held in Benghazi with Fawzy Katif Abu Bashir, the *leader* of the ash-Shuhada Katibah, the heart of the Libyan revolutionary new military organization. The Katibah, after having defeated the loyalist forces in Benghazi, has coagulated around 300 "Afghan" fighters in its ranks released from the prisons of the Gaddafi regime. These are mostly salafists from the LIFG that, until 2004, were in violent opposition, from inside the prisons of the regime, with the MB exactly because of the size of their reformist initiatives brought to Sayf al-Islam and for their attitude towards the dictator which was seen as too accommodating. Abu Katif and Katibah have become a point of reference for all "religious" Libyans, regardless of their affiliation with the various

movements or deployments pre-revolution. In this way, the Katibah and its "April 7" barracks became a pole of attraction for all the functions of the military even those who left the Libyan army, playing a role out of all proportion to the actual military capabilities of the MB before the revolution. After the revolution this didn't stop, in the phase of consolidating power and training and forming the Libyan state, MB and Salafis, represented mainly by former members of the LIFG and their exiled leaders, divided their roads and built alternative political alliances. United during the opposition to the regime, FM and Salafist Libyans have increasingly divergent agendas in the march toward the state.

The ideological dimension of the MB is what makes them a powerful alliance, pragmatically overcoming differences and contrasts typical of sociological composition of many countries with a low degree of nationalization of the masses.

Another example may well illustrate this aspect. In Libya the *slogan* "no to party politics and no to tribalism" comes from the MB which is part of the transition program of the Provisional Government of Benghazi. On the practical side, however, this has not prevented individual members of MB in the various fields of operation from dealing with the tribes to obtain specific benefits, recognizing in them their value for traditional Libyan Muslim society. Indeed, in some cases, the tribes have been "Islamized", having quickly realized the potential advantages of this choice.

On the whole, for the MB priority goes to loyalty to Islam and to its *leaders*. But because they tend to prioritise the tool of democracy and the growth of civil society as a method of struggle, dialogue with the tribes and intermediate social bodies (professional associations and unions, which had some relevance in formal Jamahiriyyah) leads them to make alliance even with these parties, according to their own Islamization. Indeed, the alliance with these intermediate social entities is what enabled the reformist intellectuals, during the phase of dell'islah Libya, to return to having a public function, for example, defending the rights of families of the dead of Abu Salim. It is a new process of grassroots democratisation which has many implications and repercussions in political practice.

A similar phenomenon of integration in the name of democracy and Islamic modernist theology of this was recorded for national or ethnic conflicts, living creeping into the various States and the Arab-Muslims in Muslim immigrant communities, especially in Europe. The MB show that they handle better than any other organized entity this type of conflict, which ultimately hark back to the never resolved relationship between the *ummah* and *watan*, between the National State and Supranational State. "Against separatism" is one of the *slogans* that characterise the MB's Libyan campaign, just as it was used in Morocco against the Sahrawi Front to remain with the most well known

examples. In fact one of the corollaries resulting from the so-called right of minorities, introduced by al-Qaradawi reflecting on Muslim minorities in Europe and worldwide, is a substantial distance on the part of the reformist Islamic movements from various independence movements, including the Chechens who are one of the flags of Qaedism. *"Sometimes we find Muslim minorities who are seeking independence or separation from the state. This is allowed under the legal profile, but it really should not be. We ask ourselves: is the request for independence really necessary? Or we can accept a lower level of agreement, such as self management, pending the return of Islam? This applies to the Chechens, where the minority Muslim demands independence from Russia. Russia is a decadent empire and Islam can get there in time."*⁸

In conclusion, we can say that the hallmark of the MB lies not only in its organizational forms, but in the ideological *software* that inspires a myriad of interventions, analysis and narrative. So the key to movements of this type is the relationship between the religious, cultural and legal *leadership* on the one hand, and on the other hand the complex system of organizations which from time to time they ally themselves to.

It is a belief system that is very flexible and innovative in comparison to than previous Arab-Islamic models and able to adapt to the current climate, a thought that by its reformist nature allows a high level of alliance at every level, even if in the end it tends never to focus on agreements with Salafist Islamic movements. A school of thought that has as its ultimate goal supranational entity, the Ummah, but that is strongly rooted in national political formulas (*watany, qawmy, sha'aby*), to the point of not accepting forms of international supervision of the head office of the Brotherhood in Egypt and systematically rejecting regionalist (*iqlimy*) battles.

⁸ Al-Ghannoushi, op. cit., p. 131.

IV. The "History" factor: between politics and a religious mission

9. The MB are a unique phenomenon in the region's politics. Above all they have a long and articulated history, that has no paragon with any other contemporary political movement in the Islamic matrix. From this long history they have learned many lessons that they have transformed into good practices under an organisational and ideological profile. The self-reflection on its history has shaped the current varied organizations of the MB in different countries, their tactics, their relationship with politics and the dialectic between missionary work, religious, political inclusion and the conquest of power, which in some cases can even result in terrorism.

Founded in 1928 as the Association of Muslim Brothers, with a hierarchical and territorial structure that was already well established in Egypt from the thirties, based on the missionary work and the personal growth of individuals and civil society in the fifties and the seventies the MB try for the first time to play direct political roles in a variety of Arab and Islamic countries. It is the first stage of the genesis of the political movement that attempts to move from "ecclesial phenomenon" - to use inaccurate but explicit Christian terminology - to a political movement in a direct manner, while maintaining its roots in its religious dimension and the legitimacy of its action .

Consequently, at this stage the MB were subjected to very repressive measures by some Arab states, who could not tolerate internal opposition to the ruling power, either pan-Arab or pan-Islamic monarchical models or socialist or nationalist with a lay basis. The thousands of arrests in Egypt, being banned in countries like Syria, Iraq, Libya, and then Tunisia, or the military defeats in Palestine and then the political ones in Algeria forced the MB into various forms of illegality and it had to adapt to its surroundings by inventing new forms of organization.

The majority of FM components quickly understand that repression indiscriminately affects both the "political wings" and the "religious movement" without distinction of any kind. So the MB soon learn that the transition from religious and missionary movement toward political action, a party, meaning an organization aimed to conquer the consensus and power in these countries is very risky for the very survival of the organization.

The history of the Egyptian FM, for example, is rich in these debates between those who wanted to get into politics using partisan tools, and those opposed to these choices in the name of missionary and spiritual work and the provision of *welfare* services as a way to create a new Islamic society. It was only back in the nineties that the Egyptian *leadership* of the FM was strongly opposed to the Hizb al-Wasat's project, the Centre Party, to which precisely the generation of Ikhwan from the seventies had laboured in vain since 1996,

strong from their social experience in universities and unions.

Not unlike the debate that in the late sixties characterized the Front of the Islamic Charter Front of at-Turabi in Sudan and led to his first political defeat. In Jordan, the MB has always had great freedom of movement in public spaces thanks to their alliance with the monarchy. Yet even here between 1990 and 1997, the clash between the Islamic Centre Society, expression of the work of penetration through the social *welfare* subsidiary, and the Islamic Action Front Party, the expression of the political/parliamentary branch of the Brotherhood, led to political defeat in Jordanian elections of 1997 and then to the "Palestinization" of the same Brotherhood with the result that it was weakened and marginalized. In Europe and in the USA the debate is still on-going. Parallel to the majority components, however, in recent years various groups of MB, especially in Egypt, Syria and Palestine, succumb to the temptation of terrorism through the re-modelling in new forms of so-called secret apparatus, that founder al-Banna had wanted in the forties. There is not always a direct relationship between strategies of repressive governments and the secret apparatus of the Brotherhood: until the nineties, for example, the Moroccan ash-Shabibah di Mouty continued to keep a terrorist wing parallel to the official political party, which was responsible for various attacks. Similar accusations were made at the end of the 90s to An-Nahdah in Tunisia.

In reality these are fringe characters who will always remain a minority, and are inspired by qutbista. Between the seventies and eighties numerous secessionist movements are created that arise in the bosom of the Brotherhood, but which then separate in a controversy.

In many cases we are dealing with real *proxy* actors for other state subjects, who they have manipulated and used for their own political interference and regional and international hegemony, as in the case of Palestinian PIJ.

Some of these, born into the culture broth of the Brotherhood and then separated from it, such as the Egyptians Gama'ah-to-Islamiyyah, al-Jihad al-Islamy or the Syrian at-Tali'ah, flow directly into Al Qaeda.

There is no doubt that the gap between the two phenomena has been almost permanent since the eighties. The majority movement of MB, who were already under pressure and in hiding since the days of Hasan al-Hudaybi (1952-1977), the second Spiritual Guide, has always condemned these terrorist strategies, focusing on the missionary fight, politics and the long battle within the system. The intellectuals of the third generation will become even more intransigent on the point of renouncing violence. The most emblematic example of this new course is perhaps Hamas Algeria, completely opposite to the Palestinian version, which pits itself against the FIS and participates in anti-violence campaigns, Bouteflika, as will the Egyptian Brotherhood against al-Qaeda. Similarly, as could soon become evident a breach will be formed

between the Egyptian movements such as An-Nur and the Justice and Freedom Party.

The majoritarian model of political action that the MB is inspired by, even in times of difficulty, will be that of Gabbah in Jordan and Sudan, the Jamat-e-Islami of Pakistan and, especially today, the Turkish Islamic party, that is, a gradualist model of socio-political insertion and growth from the grassroots of a new Muslim society able to reconnect to the religious sources of legitimacy while playing the national and international game of politics.

Alongside this clear majority choice however there is always a lot of tensions and twists and turns, both between the religious aspects, and between the political and violent ones. This is an element with a dynamic nature that must be weighed carefully when there arises the problem of the relationship and dialogue with MB and their future.

Regarding this decision to follow a clear rejection of terrorism, acceptance of democracy and democratic methods of legal struggle, there are some exceptions, which are also typical of the oscillations of the populist movements who are always searching for shortcuts. These phenomena are explained with somewhat more urgency to promote ideological and political evolution of this movement. The most obvious of these contradictions is Palestinian Hamas, an offshoot of the Brotherhood that for a long time has maintained a military and even terrorist profile, though different from that of Al Qaeda, and recently has shown signs of a shift changing its name and the announcement of new strategies though this is all still to be verified. The main difference is that the action of resistance by Hamas, unlike that of the movements inspired by Osama bin Laden, has always been limited exclusively to terrorist activities against Israeli military occupation, therefore a limited regional scenario and with objectives that are radically different from those of Al Qaeda terrorism, that has led them to be accepted by many European and American left-wing groups. The enemy of Hamas was always internal, close. It is the State of Israel that occupies Palestinian land, while the enemy of al-Qaeda is far away: it is us, the West.

For the MB who advocate democracy and the "political way" Hamas is not an anomaly, and this is a very dangerous sign, because it indicates that the relationship with Israel continues to be the most unresolved friction between the Islamic reformists, of any type and species, and the West. More or less the same themes resonate when it comes to Kashmir, Chechnya, Iraq or Afghanistan, where terrorism, including against Westerners, is legitimized with the conditions of "resistance", in the model of freedom fighters from Nazi-Fascism, even though in the theme of separatism today there are many caveats. The belief that the idea of defensive jihad remains on the table for contemporary reformists as a political option not only government policy, given certain conditions that tend to shrink in the context of reform compared to terrorism (where jihad is

understood as an individual duty. The coexistence of terrorist ideas and apparatus and participation in the democratic game, or rather the theory of it as an alternative to Western imperialism or Israeli occupation, were the two faces of many of the Brotherhood movements in various countries in the area, especially up to the nineties, and have never been completely abandoned, even in the face of repeated declarations of non-violence and dialogue with the West. The terrorist tactic does not seem to be an option where the political struggle offers more opportunities for success, but in strategic terms, terrorist violence seems to be an option for the hard times in the background of many narratives including the reformist Islamic movements as Hamas demonstrates.

10. Hamas and support for the other Islamic "resistance" movements are the on-going proof that non-government armed fighting, in the MB's vision, is an available tool in political struggle, despite the many declarations made renouncing violence. With Hamas, which up to 2006 had always boycotted or discredited the elections, for the first time the idea that resistance and democracy are compatible begins to emerge. In fact, as the *leaders* of Hamas often highlight, Hamas is a "democratic" movement, in the sense that it definitely acquired the majority vote in Gaza in 2006 through free elections (and will probably win across Palestine today if there were free elections.) But it is also a movement that theorizes resistance as a tool of political struggle and uses terrorism, kidnappings, bombings of civilian populations, the preventive arrests and torture of opponents in the political debate inside and outside. Ahmed bin Yousuf, one of the leading intellectual of the reformism of Hamas writes: *"suicide attacks against American interests in the Middle East are politically motivated. They are reciprocal actions in a conflict between regional powers and the U.S.. Therefore, it is unfair to use these events as proof that Islam is anti-Western. These actions must remain in the environment, ie within the boundaries of conflicts between nations and not in relation with the Islamic movements - who are oppressed, politically powerless, without military support and censored (with the exception of Iran and, more recently, Sudan)"*⁹

So the struggle of Hamas is perceived not only as a "defensive", but also legitimized by popular vote, to the extent that the condemnation of its actions in the Brotherhood always arouses accusations of anti-Western "double standards": true democracy - according to this very popular narrative- would be theirs, not ours, that wield democracy only when we must defend our interests.

Again Bin Yousef writes: *"Islamic movements in Jordan, Turkey,*

⁹ Bin Yousuf , op. cit, *Islamist and the West: From Confrontation to Cooperation*, in: Abu Rabi' I. M., *The Contemporary Arab Reader on Political Islam*, London, 2010, pg. 162 e pg 170.

Malaysia and Sudan have demonstrated their commitment in the implementation of democratic practices in their essential traits. The Islamists, when their organizations were legalized, exercised responsibility and showed a great sense of moderation. Despite this, the democratic process has been suspended in some countries where Islamic movements have appeared on the verge of winning electorally. Therefore, it can be inferred that there is a plan, written or otherwise, to achieve three objectives: undermine attempts by Muslims to participate in elections, obtain the result of forcing Muslims to lose confidence in democracy and force them to resort to violence as a way to avenge their frustrations."¹⁰

In reality this debate around Hamas, democracy and muqawamah, the resistance, needs to be taken seriously. It demonstrates the contradiction of "populist Islamic democracy." Conquering power through the use of the majority, "democracy", cannot be the only condition for political legitimacy. The indispensable element of this legitimacy must be the construction of the State in a Country that has lived through Israeli occupation and has witnessed the failure of the al-Fatah *governance*.

The results are there for all to see: behind the promises of Islamic reformism which helped Hamas win the elections, now there is no citizenship, no improvement in rights, freedom and prosperity. Rather there is more conflict, even amongst Palestinians, and a new form of occupation of power on the part of the new Islamic *elite*, who are using all available methods to make society Islamic (and to maintain power, according to a well known pattern of the Pareto *elite*). When evaluating phenomena like the so-called "Arab spring" in countries like Syria or Libya, these aspects should never be forgotten.

11. What the Palestinian MB help us to understand is that despite their declarations, the MB are not interested in good governance, understood as a model of *accountability* in western terminology, of fundamental freedoms, respect for inviolable human rights and State neutrality, which are at the base of western political systems. For Hamas to have had the democratic legitimacy to create an Islamic program means that today they are able to make that program, even at the cost of coup d'état against the al-Fatah opposition, or the harsh repression against any form of dissent in Gaza. The people, the sha'ab, become the legitimising factor in the new forms of populist oppression. The centre of gravity of the debate, after taking power, moves to *governance*, the resolution of problems and state-building, the rediscovery of the people as a source of values, of liberation, of legitimacy. It is a typical scheme of western populism.

Gaza is a living example of a form of democratic populism in Islamic

¹⁰ Bin Yousuf , ibidem, pg. 167.

form that can happily live alongside dictatorships, just like a large part of populism in history.

Hamas is not the only situation where democratic profiles and tendencies towards coups coexist in the same populist framework. Let's remember that behind the Sudanese military coup in 1989 that brought Omar al-Bashir to power, it was the NIF from the MB. Besides, since the fifties, the "head office" of the Egyptian Brotherhood had supported the al-Nasir coup in Egypt, and in many other countries, the Brotherhood has often been involved in a conspiracy together with the army or in attempts at armed insurrection. Such a situation is now to be considered totally obsolete or will it recur again in the future, albeit in a different internal and international political context? We should consider Iraq or Syria, for example, where the multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of the nations is the constituent element of the State. Will Islamic movements know how to manage this complexity without falling into sectarianism and chauvinism, as has happened too many times in the history of European populism?

The level of internal revisionism within the MB on these subjects is very low, when it exists at all, even in the displaced community in Europe, culturally more exposed to this type of critical thinking. This shortcoming can be traced back to the kind of populist democracy that has made its way into the MB and threatens to produce a short circuit between the contents and the structure of democracy: if the majority wants sharia, which, being a medieval codex, violates the rights of minorities and fundamental human rights, paradoxically it would be right to impose sharia in the name of democracy. It seems evident that the discriminating factor is not democracy, as unfortunately has so far been supported by Anglo-Saxon political doctrines, but rather the inalienable values of the political system, namely the neutrality of the state that guarantees the inviolable rights of the person without religious distinctions, of which democracy is only one application in the selection of the ruling class. Indeed, on this point, even some of the ideologues of contemporary reformism in the MB show dangerous failures. Rashid al-Ghannushi, for example, has continued until recently to keep a specious and dangerous distinction between technical/legal full citizenship (*muwatanah Ammah*) and Special Citizenship (*muwatanah khassah*), the first being reserved for Muslims and the second for everyone else, according to the traditional scheme of the *dhimmi*, the "protected". Only the former would have access to important political positions. If this might be sustainable, despite being unjust, in countries like Tunisia or Libya, that are mono-ethnic and mono-religious, what effects would similar doctrines have in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon or the West?

The debate within the various movements of the Brotherhood about what happens and how politics should lead the government when the demands of the people (either the majority or parts of it) collide with the basic principles of the

Quran, ie the non-negotiable part of Islam, is still an open question. Indeed, the cultural scheme of the new Islamic populism has almost no provision for this eventuality, it is assumed that the people redeemed by Islamic democracy would invariably only rediscover their alleged Islamic nature, his fitrah. In the current debate, this issue is dismissed with references to tawhid, the unitary nature of Islam and the inability to create distinctions between power and society. But, in fact, the modern state is the guarantor of its own distinctions, as we know from many experiences, for example, the Italian Catholic movement in the face of issues such as abortion or divorce. When you move forward from making general statements about political practice, especially that of government, the MB movement continues, right up to today, to be lacking in real answers. Its models, from Hamas to Sudan, from Pakistan to Jordan, with the exception of Turkey, remain weak. The issues of state and government are well know to the MB's thinkers, so that al-Ghannushi writes: *"for Islamists the most dangerous thing is being loved by the people before they come to power and then being hated."*¹¹ This is precisely the challenge today in the Arab spring.

V. The "History" factor: the development of a rhizomatic organisation

12. One of the most important consequences of reformist thinking and experience of FM in the relationship between missionary work and politics led the movement to the development of new organisational structures and formulas in the Arab political landscape. The FM has, over time, constructed new organisational forms, which are more focussed on civil society and the *welfare* state than on hizbiyyah, the party system, they considered out-dated tool in the mobilization of the masses. Its reasons are clearly tactical but primarily we are dealing with ideological issues linked to the evolution of Islamic populism.

For MB the most important issue is not the organization, but rather the relationship between the tali', the vanguard, and the "ignored force", the Muslim people, who, having often basically conservative inclinations require solutions in line with the "worst" Islamic tendencies in matters of the State, civil rights and liberties. So the party is a sub-model. To turn on democracy, as al-Qaradawy often reminds us, means an awakening of conscience.

Principles such as the new Islamic democracy, the enhancement of civil society and the rediscovery of individual rights can not be separated from this populist framework that has its roots in the Islamic concept of khilafah, a human substitute for divine law. This is the essence of populism, which has as

¹¹ Al-Ghannoushi, op. cit., Islamic Movement: Self-Criticism and Reconsideration, in Abu Rabi' I. M., The Contemporary Arab Reader on Political Islam, London, 2010, pg. 132

its corollary a fluid dimension of organisational principles and the struggle for power. As Rashid al-Ghannushi reminds us, "*the pseudo-modern State has occupied the remaining structures of civil society. Mosques, donations, courts (Sharia-prescribed), religious institutions, unions, political parties, charities and the press, are all occupied.*"¹²

The FM, as a result of these ideological evolutions, in the nineties became the first separatist and federalist Arabs, putting in place very advanced subsidiary systems in terms of organization and responsibility, and abandoning the centralist structures and those which are purely political, so therefore searching within themselves to assert ideological principles in society. According to the Algerian Nahnah "*the geographical, linguistic and doctrinal differences in the context of Islam are a natural and healthy phenomenon that enrich life and stimulate society to look inwards - shura - dialogue, fair competition, the exchange of ideas and constructive criticism*"¹³.

This diversification had been interpreted by some as a hegemonic occupation of power, proposing obsolete Gramsci patterns as keys to interpretation, when in reality these are the fruit of a missionary approach to a society that has its roots in Islamic populism. The same political choice, in fact, was and is the object of ferocious debate within the Brotherhood, which in several cases even to a break between the social and political dimensions.

Al-Ghannushi asks: "*is our priority working for society or taking power? These two can not exclude one another - Islam wants to Islamize society and politics simultaneously - but if the interests of the missionary work contradict the political interests, social ones must take precedence over everything else. It has been proven that what is obtained through social change is more stable and better than what is obtained politically. The modern experience has taught us that things obtained through the state are fast but short-term because they depend on force. This is done through social activities endures because it depends on persuasion. Human beings don't like being forced into things. The people of Mecca offered Mohammed the state but he refused it preferring instead to found his own mission*"¹⁴. This quote shows that using an interpretive lens of a Gramsci hegemony type to interpret the evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood means not giving credibility to the tensions and internal debate that has been going on and is going on in the Brotherhood about organisational

¹² Rashid al-Ghannushi, *Secularism in the Arab Maghreb*, in *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East*, New York, University Press, 1999, pg. 101

¹³ See Movement of the Islamic Society (HAMAS) – Program of Election (Agiers, nd.)

¹⁴ Citazione di al Ghannushi pg. 35, Rashid al-Ghannushi, *Islamic Movement: Self-Criticism and Reconsideration*, in Abu Rabi' I. M., *The Contemporary Arab Reader on Political Islam*, London, 2010, pg. 132

models, about the relationship between politics and *welfare* and between worldly and missionary tools to access the people and the power. Consequently, it also means not understanding that one of the possible outcomes of the Brotherhood, if it fails at a political level will be that of pure religious and missionary action, as happened to many Sufi groups and other Islamic movements in history.

Allergic to the form of a "party" which can only be experienced as a restriction of their aspiration to Islamic based universalism, the MB soon abandoned centralist models of development and organization that are typical of the lay movements and secular Arab-Muslims, and rather trusted in the liberal initiatives of individual national or regional organizations that can adapt to the contextual reality, defining on a case by case basis gradual and sustainable goals in total freedom. As Esposito and Voll remind us, one of the main characteristics of reformism from the 80s onwards comes from this idea that the "Islamic movement must develop adequate responses at a local and national level and according to their regional context"¹⁵.

In this way, the MB on one hand have created autonomous movements born following the Egyptian and Pakistani experiences and on the other, they have broken away from the single political experiences of the religious movements, leaving the judgement about the victories or defeats of the single political movements in the hands of the individual and thus trying to preserve the missionary heart of the movement. In the countries where the repression was strongest, these were addressed towards rhizomatic models of organisation based on the role of civil society as a factory in the Islamic growth of society: an indispensable premise in the new populist democracy according to the ideological model of shuroqratiyyah. The weight of state repression has forced them to assume informal organisational formula, based on personal networks and with a high degree of compartmentalisation, that in reality adapted well to their nature. The model, in this sense more than the Egyptian one which was always characterised by the attempt to politically insert itself either directly or indirectly in the various phases of the Sadat and Mubarak regimes was the Turkish, Syrian or Libyan one.

13. In Libya where the pressure was great on the apparatus of the State, their *leadership* was safely moved abroad, especially to Europe (between Switzerland, Ireland and England) maintaining individual ties both with international *leaders* and spiritual and legal guides as well as activists in the country. The Libyan case is exemplary: Suleyman Abd al-Qadir has remade his life in Switzerland. The managing director of the Brotherhood until November

¹⁵ ESPOSITO J. E., VOLL J. O., 2011, p. 109.

2011 and his two deputies, Ahmad Bushah and Ahmad al-Quasayr joined him there. Wanis al-Mabruk, member of the Union of Ulema Muslims and President of the Shura Maglis of Rabitah, a very important religious body has moved to England. Again in London, we can find Muhammad Abd al Malik, president of the Brotherhood's foundation for Human Rights and Muhammad Latyush, who looks after the website Al Manarah al Ilamy which helped to coordinate a large part of the revolts on 17 February 2011 in Libya.

The MB militants who remain in Libya, where they are not called on to sign up to a party or make an oath as in some other parts of the Brotherhood's movements (Egypt or Tunisia for example) were diluted in civil society, becoming activists for human rights, representatives of professional associations, of the Khayrat (charities) and above all leaders of the official religious centres inside the mosques, next to the imam and the Islamic organisations selected by the regime like the Libyan Da'wah al -Ilamiyyah. The discreet presence in the mosques, their *fund raising* work, as well as the initiatives of local communities, have become the distinctive hallmarks of the brotherhood in the world. It should be well understood that this is not just a tactical choice. This is firstly and above all an ideological option that takes us to the heart of the democratic ideology of the Brotherhood and its populist essence, that is then absorbed in the daily practices at every level.

The Libyan case of the group of founding members of Fariq Nida'al-Khayr is interesting (فريق نداء الخير)¹⁶ that well illustrates this dynamic. This organism was born in Cairo on the same day as the Libyan revolution, February 17. It is an ONG that is put under the protective umbrella of the other Muslim Brotherhood institutions in Egypt, such as the Union of Arab Doctors, Risalah and the Union of Lawyers, all the groups that animated the revolution in Piazza Tahrir in January and brought the Brotherhood to victory in the vote on the constitution in May. Without their support this new NGO would not have had the legal possibility to operate. The Nida'al-Khayr was created by another organization of the alleged civil society, the British NGO Wafa Relief. In a short time Nida' al-Khayr became the biggest supplier of *welfare* services in today's Cirenaica. Amongst them there also features Umran al-Qattani, who is also a member of one of the most powerful tribes in Cyrenaica, that of the Qattani, who can be found between Alexandria in Egypt and Ajdabiya in Libya. During the revolution these helped thousands of Libyans and where the rebel troops went, so did Nida al-Khayr with their trucks, their volunteers and their

¹⁶ Analysis by the author through interviews conducted in Libya with the group of founding members.

offices. Already during the Gaddafi era Wafa was a secret organisation that helped families of prisoners in Abu Salim thanks to funds from the zakat and also tax funds from the English cooperation. Today Nida al-Khayr doesn't have direct political objectives, they are rather at the forefront of civilian organisations that revolve around the shabab and all'tilaf. But it's clear that this NGO carries a lot of weight, highly professional important directors emerge from there, some of whom make social consensus without sectarian limits, and above all, have the ability to internationally connect which no other Libyan religious political movement has.

The political battle for these groups has always been of secondary importance for the entire period of Gaddafi's rule and it will remain that way for a certain amount of time. Don't forget that the Libyan Brotherhood didn't even want to enter into the Libyan provisional government, they always maintained a certain reluctance towards all the new political parties (although it is likely that they will form their own movement in the first half of 2012), they have also made statements stressing their independence from other branches of the Brotherhood, to the point of giving their national leader the title of *mas'ul 'amm*, instead of the traditional name of "guide" (*murshid*). Their primary action right from the first national Libyan congress in Benghazi was to take root at a level of organizations and local government, as well as *da'wah*, doing missionary work through the consolidation of a multi-communication system, solid and independent. For the radar of a normal political observer, they were often invisible.

This low profile has allowed MB in these countries to survive in the folds of the regimes, and eventually became the soul even of reformism, alongside Saif al-Islam and his group.

This method, which in the case of Nida al-Khayr we have seen in practice - was previously used in Tunisia, Morocco and Libya and is emerging in an increasingly blatant form in Egypt and Syria and is in a latent phase in Algeria and the Persian Gulf - has been carefully theorized by the reformists of the Brotherhood: *"Even the Islamic state doesn't control everything under it. The government is a small part of the institutions of civil society. It is there to support and strengthen civil society. There should be more civil society institutions, enough that people no longer a State. The Islamic movement must give back power to society through grassroots institutions"*¹⁷. These ideas echo both the typical reasons of populism and liberal lesson of Anglo-Saxon culture on the role of civil society and the limits of the State. It is clear that here lies a

¹⁷ Rashid al-Ghannushi, *Islamic Movement: Self-Criticism and Reconsideration*, in Abu Rabi' I. M., *The Contemporary Arab Reader on Political Islam*, London, 2010, pg. 132

big window of opportunity for future development of the Brotherhood in terms of renewing Eastern and Arab institutions.

A good illustrative example of this grassroots approach could be that of the Libyan Adam Argig who was part of this very cohesive Libyan managing group, well connected in Egypt and in all the Arab world but who has settled for the last 17 years in Dublin where he has become the *leader* of the muslim immigrant community. From Dublin, despite being exiled for his membership in the Brotherhood, he soon became the chief editor of the *online* newspaper Libya Al-Youm, the oldest example of the Libyan national reformism, well-liked by fringes of the regime, at least until February 17, 2011. The newspaper, which published continuously since 2004, it was the fruit of the season of so-called reformist Libya, when Suleyman Abd Al-Qadir started a political-ideological dialogue with Sayf al-Islam, Gaddafi's son. The watchwords of the revolution of today were born in those days, around newspapers such as Libya al Youm, Kourina, Irasa, Oya or Libya al Ghad, within which are present the FM alongside other secular representatives, technocrats and thinkers from the left. There is talk of human rights, constitution, freedom of press, free elections, in short, the themes that emerge in the revolution of February 17 and which are typical of the reflection of the reformism of FM throughout the Arab world, Asia and the West.

14. In other countries, where the political climate was more tolerant, like Jordan and Pakistan, but also in Morocco after the nineties or Algeria under Bouteflika, the MB has instead temporarily and tactically used party formula, participating in political and Parliamentary life and, in some cases also assuming the responsibilities of government, that will inevitably lead them to political defeat or disintegration.

An example of this is Jordan. In 1990 after the "bread revolution" the local MB went to the government and would then subdivide into many parties and smaller parties between 1992 and 1993 until the boycotting of the elections in 1997. With the rise to power of Zaki Bani Arshid they became one of the many Palestinians based in Jordan, and in the elections of 2008 they were to undergo a dramatic electoral defeat, which leads to yet another change of *leadership*, more and more leaning towards Hamas. In Jordan as in Morocco the social organisations have a dialectical relationship with the party which at times requires them to break away and seek alternatives. Between a socio-religious movement and a political party there is always a tensions that is the fruit of this populist dimension of the movement and its search for populist roots able to legitimise political action and possible shortcomings of *accountability*.

The MB dynamic in Morocco is the same. They reached their peak between 1990 and 2002 when the PJD obtained 42 seats in 56 constituencies where it is present. After this *exploit*, in the 2009 administration the FM did not

get to 6%. Ahmad al-Raysouni is one of the major theorists of Moroccan Islamist reformism. In his book/interview he writes: *"as far as the "Islamic State" is concerned, I would like to argue that aside from what Hasan al-Banna has said about this, for the Islamic movement it is a serious error to focus their priorities on the state. I believe in the revivification of society and not the state, as well as in relying on the Islamic community (ummah) as a whole. I would be happy if my position on the Islamic state should prove incorrect. But even Islamists who have seized political power, as in Iran and Sudan, have discovered that the state is not an immense power that can change everything in just one night. There is something other to be trusted in beyond the State. Even the religious schools in Iran have discovered that their influence in society was much greater twenty years ago than it is today. At the time the large majority of people were used to revering, loving, treating with respect and following their religious leaders. Today because of their role in the State and their political authority they have made many enemies. I believe that Islamic thought can still be the answer to problems of the State but when it comes to this issue the Islamic movement has made many mistakes. Today, differently to yesterday, the question of the State does not take up much space in the thought of the movement."*¹⁸ Today an MB party is in power in Morocco and is preparing to implement these ideas through a constitutional and substantive alliance with moderate royalists.

But the most emblematic example is probably that of the Sudan which al-Raysouni reminds us of where the MB leadership was held by Hasan al-Turabi, a man of great culture and world knowledge for the problems connected to sharia and the relationship with western constitutions: above all, he was an exponent for a generation of reformists that had already moved beyond the phase of the founding fathers and therefore pretty much a paid up member of the new trends. In 1995 the MB took over the government in Sudan after the coup d'état by al-Bashir. In the 1996 elections the NIF had a sweeping victory that took al-Turabi to the head of Parliament and led to them joining with the National Congress Party. The same will then be the sudden break with al-Bashir, leading al-Turabi first to prison and then to found various opposition movements. The experience of introducing sharia as the basis of the Islamic state and the experiments governing that followed were both disastrous, also because in Sudan, it led to the exacerbation of conflicts with the Christian minorities of the South and the African peoples on the borders .

In all of these cases, contrary to what happened in Egypt between the

¹⁸ Ahmad al-Raysouni, *Al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah al-Maghribiyyah: Su'ud am Uful*, Casablanca, Alwan, 2004, pg.230

fifties and nineties, the political victory or defeat had never ended in creating a whole underground movement of the MB, but only to the reorganization of the various political branches, who are under the responsibility of this or that manager.

This is not only for obvious survival reasons but also because in reality the option of a political party has never been central to the internal debate of MB. The party, for its nature is a partial subject that doesn't marry easily with Islamic populism: "*the Islamic movement should not be an excuse to divide the people (...) even the notion of an Islamic party should be abandoned*", writes al-Ghannushi¹⁹. Therefore, the analysis of the political platforms of the acts of parliament from the MB members, which, under their individual responsibility create political organizations of every kind, is almost never able to make us fully understand the true nature and organizational dimension of the MB in that country. As proof of this in fact, the legal and spiritual *leadership* are hardly involved in these organizational forms.

15. Like the skin of a snake, each party form can be easily and hastily abandoned by the spiritual core of the group, which at any moment can leave them to their fate. The policy for MB is the land of the tactic, never the strategy, which has at its heart the relationship with the people and its symbolic dimension. It's not a matter of political tactics, but it is the very essence of this very Islamic populism that imposes these dynamics. Politics is always a smaller instrument, also because for the MB there is no legitimacy or power that is inseparable from the religious virtues embodied and enacted by the people. Just think that in the Egyptian elections of 1984 and 1987, when what was the MB made their first concrete steps in the institutions, their political branch is the first alliance with the neo-Wafd and then with the Islamic Alliance, mixing liberalism, nationalism and sharia and managing to get some 38 seats in 1987. While it always, paradoxically, the expression of a religious movement in hiding, the representatives elected by the MB, which will then become the major opposition force in Egypt, they will not hesitate to support the policy initiatives of the second term of Mubarak, in an effort to accredit the missionary movement and remove the ban. The equilibrium remained until 1993 when the level of politicisation of the entire movement grew until it interfered with Egyptian foreign policy, and that created the repressive reaction of the regime. At that point the same leaders of the political movement abandoned politics and during the 1990s blocked any attempt at reconstructing parties. That same

¹⁹ Rashid al-Ghannushi, *Islamic Movement: Self-Criticism and Reconsideration*, in Abu Rabi' I. M., *The Contemporary Arab Reader on Political Islam*, London, 2010, pg. 132

religious leadership that today supports the political alliance of Justice and Freedom with some of the army but that tomorrow, if this fails, won't hesitate to distance itself. The attempt to influence society by moving closer to political power can also be seen in Morocco in the same decade, when clearly the political part of the MB opposed the Monarchy on internal and foreign policy questions (the Sahrawi front). But also here the political party has historically only had an instrumental function without any pretence at hegemony.

Moreover, the "political network" is always made up of a myriad of unions, professionals, charity workers, financiers and similar that have as their main objective the Islamisation of society, they also pertain to individual responsibility, they often compete or team up with other political and social organisations, creating very complex dialectics, Country by Country, and next to this there are often linked personal fights for success, family issues, group issues etc. The struggle is often fierce and the reality of this analysis and personal stories clearly contradicts the vision of those who conceive of the Brotherhood as a monolithic block that wants to hegemonise society according to the Leninist or Gramsci model.

16. It is interesting to note in any case that even in the social organisations, across the board of different unions, the MB always try to keep a low profile, putting neutral people in the role of chairman or supporting exponents of various governments, through whom they can have a controlling role without putting themselves openly forward. This choice of a low profile is not only tactical. It is an indication of the "inclusive" nature of the movement that doesn't want to express one point of view, or plant a single flag but instead aims to reconstruct single, national and popular processes. This is also an ideological choice. Recreating unity is in some ways always the goal, even at an organisational level, of the Brotherhood, when it is working in foreign contexts, especially because this form of tawhid guarantees access to ummah. Populism therefore in a way influences deeply the movement and its choices. But this ideological process, which is at the base of populism and of several of the organisational characteristics of the Brotherhood, in another way constantly comes up against other factors that are typical of organisations that are in a phase of transformation, for example; the formation of oligarchs, surrounding families and/or nationalities, that then become conservative and block the "revolving door" of circulating leading groups. So these cause conflicts and arguments between and within the various organisations. In short, whilst within the Islamic framework, as the MB slowly approaches politics and the organisations that surround it, it increasingly takes on the characteristics of the competitive *elite*, according to the movement of *elite* according to the sociology model created by Michels. This becomes a contradicting factor for the base majority of the movement, which has its own interests at the centre of the

attempt to revive the values of the people and thus experience the logic of power as "illegitimate."

Within these processes there is a new element that should be noted and that could represent a real transformation in the medium term: the emergence of intellectual-activists. What the elections of 2011 and 2012 are making clear in the various Arab countries with the emergence of political Islam, is the political and cultural weight of the leader and the strong political profile which tend to overtake spiritual leaders. Whilst the weight of politics grows, so also does the activist model of leadership which dirties its hands with politics whilst still maintaining a strong intellectual profile and a strong reformist character within the movement itself. Characters such as Ar-Raysuni or al-Ghannushi, without mentioning Erdogan, in this phase, are more popular and more recognisable than leaders such as al-Qaradawy. The activist and political intellectual, that arab-islamic society seemed to have forgotten, in this phase has a prominent role with respect to the religious judiciary, as an expert of Ijtihad (mujtahid) and Fiqh. Even in a cohesive and consolidated country like Iran, the fight between Ahmanadinejad and the religious leadership, with the surrounding debate about *velayat-e faqih* (the role of religious jurisprudence) is become a signal of these polarisations²⁰.

In consequence of these dynamics the MB have become a movement that is apparently rhizomatous, kept upright in between a referential *elite* caught between a religious / legal and an activist base: a movement that organizationally has learned to adapt to its surroundings taking on the most appropriate forms and tactics based on the individual responsibility of individual members, who often do not even have a formal relationship to it. What characterise them is not a static organisational model but rather a strong ideological link between the members of the *elite*, often even reproducing family type systems that are typical of Arab societies. Another characteristic is that the spiritual *leadership* understood as the religious vanguard, that is the person who should awaken the authentic values and the truth of the people, often he does not even appear in the organograms of the myriad of organisations through which the MB operates in the public arena according to a model similar to that taken up by Hezbollah. The "concealment" of *leadership* and the amount of organizations through which they operate are perhaps the most distinctive features of the organization, that allow us traceability and allow their survival in the event of repression and defeat.

²⁰This subject has been treated recently by Raz Zimmt, Between a domestic challenge and the Arab Spring: the rise and fall of the Iranian revolutionary model, The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Glyulot, December 20, 2011

VI. The geographical factor: globalisation of the movement and Europe

17. The third factor that shows the peculiarity of the MB regarding other Islamic political movements is their global dimension. Right from the outset the MB have assumed an international profile, demonstrating a missionary capacity that is unique in the history of Islam. Since the 1940 they have been present in large numbers in a geographic area that goes from the Indian sub-continent to North Africa. In the Sixties and Seventies, following their repression, above all in Egypt and Syria and the occupation in Palestine, many Muslim Brothers, particularly from the second and third generation, escaped abroad. In the Gulf amongst those who sought refuge was Yousuf al-Qaradawy, the ideological inspiration of a new reformism within the same Brotherhood. Even today from Qatar a dense network of cultural, educational and religious organisations is unfolding which through the new digital satellite platforms is affecting the public Islamic opinion at a global level often with devastating effects. But above all in the Gulf the Brotherhood has found economic support that is essential for its penetration in the West and for the support of the networks in Arab countries. Between the theocratic Monarchies in the Gulf and the MB a relationship of reciprocal usefulness has been created that continues to this day. But the Brotherhood has always maintained a high level of autonomy with respect to the organisations and the activities financed by Saudi Arabia, from Kuwait and from Qatar, despite the fact that the financing and the support of these States has been essential for the development of the MB in the world. According to reliable analysts such as Abdullah Salem, now a new act is in progress of difficult confrontation between the Islamic based monarchies and the Islamic reformist movement that could soon explode into a real insurrection, taking advantage of the contradictions of the political legitimacies of the monarchy. It is clear that this scenario could change the destinies of the world, if it were to take place.

In Europe on the other hand in the sixties important *leaders* such as Sa'id Ramadan, the brother in law of Hasan al-Banna, Yussuf Nada and the Syrian Ghaleb Himmat landed. In 1962 Jamat-e-Islamic began the Islamic Mission in London, a centre from which another key figure in the diffusion of the MB in Europe will operate, the Pakistani politician Khurshid Ahmad, one of the biggest theorists on Islamic economy.

In Europe between Paris and London, an important intellectual such as Rashid al-Ghannushi lived and trained during his exile until he went back home as a political *leader* after the Jasmin revolution and many of the reformists cited in this study have spent long periods inside Europe and American universities, which confirms the importance of mobility initiatives as keys to the global dialogue.

Since the 60s a small group of Kurds who are part of the Brotherhood (Jamal Barzinjii, Ahmad Totonjii e Hisham al-Talib) founded the MSA in America (Musli Student Association) which would then produce tens of other professional, cultural associations and associations to defend Islamic identity, amongst them is ISNA, and there are also economic associations, such as NAIT (North American Islamic Trust). In Pennsylvania in 1980 the IIIT was incorporated (International Institute of Islamic Thought) which after its transfer to Washington DC would take of the real function of a *think tank* for the MB in the west (amongst its founder are Anwar Ibrahim who would become the Vice Prime Minister in Malasia) with headquarters in every continent. The chairman of the IIIT until his mysterious assassination in 1986, was a giant of Islamic reformism named Ismail Ragi al Faruqi, a pioneer of creating dialogue and relations between islam and Christianity.

According to data from the Brotherhood, they are present today in more than 80 countries from Xingjian in China to South America. With the arrival of thousands of brothers between Europe, the United States and the Gulf, the MB are trying to give life to a wide range of international organisations. But contrary to what many international analysts believe, the organisation that was begun in 1982 with this goal has never worked which is confirmed by what has been shown in the earlier chapters regarding the rhizomatic nature of the Brotherhood. The structures that are slowly being created in several Countries, based on shared ideas, objectives and methodologies given by al-Banna, had not intention to be dominated by the Egyptians the headquarters in Cairo, or by the huge flow of funds from the Saudi royal family. Muhammad Akef, who, until 2010 was the Supreme Guide, describes the Brotherhood today as "*a global movement, the members cooperate amongst themselves based on the common religious vision of the world, the diffusion of Islam with the aim of it guiding humanity*"²¹.

With this decentralised, informal philosophy based on individual responsibility, the "European" MB are able to form strategic alliances with the Gulf countries, above all with Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait. It is an operation that would not have been possible if the MB had remained prisoners of their nationalist logic, in a purely political system. From the dense network of personal and cultural relationships, from the frequent travels, and often arranged marriages, the first European Brotherhood organizations are being founded, such as the Islamic Council of Europe, the Islamic Foundation in Leicester and then, recently, the European FIOE.

Said Ramadan, son in law of al-Banna, father of the brothers Hani and

²¹ VIDINO L., The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West, New York, 2010, pg 65

Tariq and today the *leader* in Europe of Islamism, who in the meantime has now obtained a Saudi diplomatic passport, helped found the Muslim World League, the quasi-governmental Saudi organization for the worldwide spread of Islam, cementing a strategic relationship with the Saudi royal family that was a harbinger of tremendous opportunities. In the eighties, again thanks to contacts with the Saudis, Nada, who has an Italian passport, and Himmat, who has since climbed the hierarchy of the mosque of Monaco, founded Champion of Italy to Taqwa Bank, which will be the engine of many business and cultural initiatives for the MB in the West until its ban in 2001 (without having ever had a case against them ...); yet again oil money and the Koran.

18. The other major area of activity, interwoven with this, is their becoming *leaders* within the associations representing Muslims in the West, with the founding of Awqaf for the establishment and management of mosques and the structuring of a myriad of business ventures, modelled on the Jordanian Brotherhood. The waqf is an institution typical of Islamic law, and is the point of greatest strength of the MB regarding the system of control in mosques, even when if the MB may lose control of the association. Controlling mosques is a strategic option for the Brotherhood, both in the West and East. Indicative in this respect, is the behaviour of the Syrian MB in UCOII, which was defeated in elections in 2011, but continues to exert a major influence on the financial plan thanks to the waqf, who are in control. In some cases, internal disagreements end up in court, as in the case of the mosque of Viale Padova. In other cases they are mediated between the various actors with the typical techniques of Islamic negotiation, just as in the case of the irregular funding of the community of Brescia to that in Vicenza.

Winning hearts and minds of immigrant communities is an action where the representatives of the Brotherhood are very active, because it permits them to interact with governments, as well as to extend their missionary activity. Especially after September 11, the various campaigns to fight terrorism and radicalization have to play an important role in these associations, although highly controversial.

In Europe, the MB have put into practice the ideas developed through decades of struggle in the Middle East creating freestanding structures based on the objective of gradually spreading Islam through education and *welfare*, primarily aimed at the immigrant communities, and overcoming all the barriers of ethnicity and national, as well as ideological.

But Europe, without them even noticing it at first, has played a central role in their evolution, both organizational and cultural. Contact with European systems of government has created *leadership* that came from countries with dictatorial regime to the new ideas of democratic representation and freedom.

Due to their cultural flexibility, provided by heterodox *ijtihad* models, as

we have seen, the MB expatriates have begun to develop new ideas. It is the *milieu* in comparison with European concepts that arise as the right of minorities of Islamic democracy, and respect for human rights, which is often confused with the duty Islamic identity. Also in Europe issues for debate are emerging even on the possibility of abandoning the Shari'ah for secular constitutions.

19. Today, with the fall of the regimes that expelled them, many MB are returning to their countries of origin, as indicated by the Tunisian and Libyan case, where they lead political movements and governments. All this processing, all these models and these experiences inevitably contrasted with the Jasmine Revolution. Returned to their countries of origin, MB "Europeans" are compared with the local MB, who have remained "hidden" inside the mosques, in professional organizations, in the folds of the local system and civil society. They bring a wealth of strategic experience in many fields, and especially a dense network of international relations, from governments to universities to individual companies.

Therefore there is not only a move from south to north. Immigration now leads a movement from north to south. Europe therefore has a possibility to *gently* make an impression, which could be even more important to many aspects of formal foreign policy.

This comparison between the two worlds is happening now, for example, in Libya, between the Brothers who have come back from Europe and the Brothers who have lived under the regime, it will be a critical step for the new political order.

It can have unpredictable results. Much will depend on whether the European MB will carve out a space of adequate political freedom in the new local contexts. But much more will depend on their cultural and political evolution when they will have the responsibility of being in government.

Surely these *elites* are an important factor towards a further development of Islamic reformism towards the construction of new models of *governance* and state.

VII. Conclusions

20. In the Arab-Islamic world a profound process of circulation of *elites* and political transformation is in process similar to that which over fifty years ago brought to government existing systems of national secular mould. This process is accompanied by a strong conflict for regional leadership between Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia, which is part of the larger imperial conflict between the United States, China and Russia, the three real world powers, with an imperial vision, after the disastrous collapse of European soft power. It is easy to foresee that in a relatively short period of time radical changes in the hereditary regimes of the military dictatorships of North Africa and the Near East will take place. But even the monarchies of the Gulf can not sleep soundly. Equilibrium consolidated, such as the Iran-Syria-Lebanon axis, will be challenged, but this does not necessarily bring benefits to those states, such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, which have always tried to offset the Iranian axis. Already the Turkish policy, which can also count on a special relationship with MB, has suffered a strong backlash from the Arab spring, which has forced it to review its framework of alliances²², with repercussions from the Mediterranean to Central Asia. The West, led by the United States, has "lost" (others say "left") some of its major allies in the area, and therefore must build a new framework of alliances and, above all, new strategic doctrines. In short, the story is moving mightily.

On the Arab front it seems like the moment for political moderate Islam. The reformism of Nahdah, the "Islamic resurgence", has given birth to many movements in the contemporary age. A large part of these movements have a modern, reformist soul and are ready to challenge the government. The MB appears as the set of movements that today is best equipped as an organisational and ideological profile to respond to the challenges of the Arab spring, since before others were able to critically review their own ideological baggage and modernize its facilities, making the head of their organizations from third generation of reformers. It's easy to assume that they will play prominent roles in the Arab transitions, which have contributed to the insurrection in countries like Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt and Syria. Even in the Gulf region, from Iraq to Bahrain, Kuwait and up to Saudi Arabia their presence is important and constantly monitored for the potential threat they represent to the regional

²² During the first phase of the revolt in Libya Erdogan's position oscillating between a supportive role to the regime and a mediator between the regime and the insurgents has caused numerous events throughout the Cyrenaica anti-Turkish.

governments. With the current Iranian regime there are old relationships that date back to the forties and have been established around the Hezbollah-Hamas axis, that are now threatened by the Syrian rebellion, however, where the MB are the authors of the revolt against the Syrian ally Iran they are also the allies of Hezbollah in Lebanon. The geopolitics is dividing them, shifting them increasingly towards Egypt and Turkey (among other things, the new leader of the Syrian Brotherhood, Muhammad ash-Shaqfa Riyadh, lives right in Turkey), which until recently did not hesitate to give Iranian support, demonstrating the fragility of the theories that they want as the unbridgeable gap between Shiite and Sunni ..

21. In fact, the MB, have been able to develop a suitable framework to overcome the old ideological conflict Shi'ah / sunnah, and this places them in a new condition compared to traditional Sunni revolutionary movements, like the salafists, who directed the politics of theocratic Gulf States and its allies, which tend to exacerbate this conflict, as is evident in Iraq. This represents a brake on the potential ability to aggregate even at the fringes of reformism shi'ite the geopolitical factor; the struggle between the States: the Shi'ite strongholds Iran, Iraq and Lebanon, which also may have many good reasons for supporting the fight and pushing the reform and anti-monarchy MB, today are faced with a conflict with them in Syria, where the clash now seems inevitable for the Alawis, another shi'ite minority threatened by the intolerance of Sunni Salafism. On this precipice the ideologies are at odds with geopolitics and this probably explains many tactical openings from the United States regarding the Arab Spring. Openings, which perhaps do not assess with due attention the independent agenda of the MB compared to the contingencies of the moment and to temporary²³ alliances, especially in light of potential future developments in the Gulf, where the interests of the Brotherhood and minority Shi'ite could recompose in the fight against anti-monarchical and Western influence.

21. In the Gulf, until recently, the MB had some of their sanctuaries, protected first by the Governments of Kuwait, and then by Qatar and Saudi Arabia. They knew how to use the Wahhabi generosity to power their network and build strong alliances. They have shown great flexibility and attention to local political dynamics, knowing their place in the political culture of Qatar

²³ Zogby also published the results of an interesting survey of 4000 respondents in Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan and UAE, which shows that the U.S. can not even benefit from their contribution to rural anti-Syrian, Arab American Institute, Arab Attitudes Towards Syria, 2011, November 2011

and, above all, supporting the Kuwaiti resistance against Saddam Hussain, breaking the solidarity of "Hadas", the Kuwaiti branch of the FM, and creating the autonomous movement of Murabitun, the prevailing opinion against Saddam Hussein thread branches of Palestinian and Jordanian.²⁴ Above all, they have penetrated deep into the media system and universities. So in this area they can wait for events, as they have a broader framework of options that today can not exclude the direct comparison with regional governments. The reform process could bring the Brotherhood to a real ideological battle with the Gulf monarchies. The nature of the monarchies, considered discredited because they are not based on the people or Islamic democracy, could exacerbate the already harsh confrontation with the Salafist parties, across the whole geographical area. Today you can read with some clarity the hegemonic design of the Gulf monarchies, which attempt to exploit Salafists, tribal conflicts and territorial-national disputes to stop the advance of MB throughout the area. A plan that is difficult to realise, if the Brotherhood is able to produce political accountability and new models of Islamic governance, given the strength that Islamic reformism is showing at this stage. On the one hand, the more the strength of the MB consolidates in North Africa, the more their coordinated and joint action will tend to expand internationally, driven by the political ideology of ummah. On the other hand, if the project fails and the Brotherhood returns to their old missionary and religious models, it is certain that the extremist Salafists would benefit from it.

At the same time, however, the MB have a *leadership* that has been largely educated in Europe and the USA, and therefore know exactly what the West wants from them and know how to "talk" to Western governments and the White House. In summary, they have the capacity to make alliances at 350 degrees. The last 10 degrees are called Israel, and it is Israel that probably puts the MB on a collision course with the West and its allies in the Arab world, if it doesn't change extremely pro-Israeli Western policies. A policy that could also push in the direction of acceleration the MB and Shi'ite situation, if the conflict with Iran does not resolve itself. The Palestinian issue will weigh a ton on every government where the MB are present, and could lead to unusual alliances in the area, certainly not favourable to us, hence the support that Israel is giving to the dying old regimes, the continuous American interference area and any further escalation in the Gulf of Hormuz, with a policy that may seem short-

24 The Mair Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, The Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab World and Islamic Communities in Western Europe, January 2012, pg. 46-47

sighted, but which in reality is dramatically closed off. This is a strong destabilizing policy, since it is based on "Druze model", ie supporting minorities to destabilize the formation of strong governments. The spectre of various civil wars cannot be excluded, from the Near East to Chinese Xingjian. The populist cultural approach of the MB leads us to believe that they will choose formulas of coalition in moving closer to governments of various countries, keeping themselves far away from the Salafists and trying to avoid any hegemonic display even avoiding Islamic formulae and denominations in their choice of parties with whom to conduct the inevitable electoral battles.

22. Finally, compared to the third element of those involved, the military, as their story shows us and, more recently the Libyan and Egyptian cases, the FM has never abandoned maintaining a military branch, particularly in the form of military cadres close to their organizations. In Libya, they have even chosen not to enter directly into the Provisional Government in order to keep control of the military branch of the ash-Shuhada Katibah. So, if old patterns of military coup were to be repeated, which are a constant in Arab countries, probably the MB would employ the functional tools needed to restore democratic processes. Egypt will be an important test in this direction.

The strategy of the MB is long term and as such, indeed, may not always coincide with the expectations of change of the Arab masses that today for the first time have the opportunity to go to the world through satellite platforms and globalization.

Their banners and their *slogans* are the same that were drafting reform that started over twenty years: democracy, constitutionalism, human rights and global Islam. In fact, behind this reassuring picture for Western governments new dangers generated by the Islamic populism are forming.

The first is of a domestic nature, the Arab-Muslim society in transformation: will these new *elites* respond adequately and in time to the needs of welfare, modernization, social justice and participation that the various peoples are bringing up? The experience, until now, gave negative responses. And the fact that the debate on the reform of the state is still at an embryonic state is not a positive indicator in this sense. The rediscovery of identity will not be enough in the medium term to ensure the tightness of these phenomena reformist, if not accompanied by a real government reform and administration. These are subjects that fascinate the MB, which are often employed to reason with people, the ummah, and they see the nation as a simple transient entities, or even the result of Western colonialism. Any failure of political *leaders* does not automatically lead to the dismantling of the entire organization, but rather to the separation of some of its internal cores, the missionary, on the one hand, and the more violent one on the other. However they will remain a *player* on the field for a long time.

The second critical element comes from the fear with which these movements have so far addressed the question of the relationship between religion and power, or, if you will, between church and state - although there is formally no church in Islam. The *igtiḥad* of the MB has hitherto been used only on matters for which there are no express precepts in the Koran or the Sunnah, according to the motto "do not interpret a written text" (*La yugtahida ma'n an-nass*). In fact this formula is destined to generate large contradictions in terms of law, the state government, the relationship between public morality and private morality, and all the great ethical questions with which the Muslim countries in a state of mass development will confront. The Islamic banking model shows us that there can be a degree of hypocrisy on technical issues, but against the substantive issues of law reform the wiles of reformist strategy are likely to tail off. Reference to the shari'ah, even using the sweetened formulas assumed by the Brotherhood, is very dangerous unless you have really advanced tools of textual hermeneutics of *igtiḥad*, which can overcome all the contradictions that the "written text" brings with it. Moreover, the practice of *igtiḥad* can generate objections from the opposition "right", that of the imams and ulema, who have always been opposed to the reformist discourse. Even in Islam there should be a Second Vatican Council, but the religious class, the only one that really can justify such an operation, does not appear interested or ready for such a leap. However, these are long processes, as the Iranian case indicates.

23. As regards the relationship with the West it is evident that the MB come from anti-Western roots, from Qutb to this day. Anti-Westernism with time merged with the anti-imperialist tendencies, and has assumed a new character.

The third generation of reformers shows a greater willingness to dialogue, despite the fact that at the end there remains the idea of a sort of metaphysical distance between Islam and the supposedly materialistic West. The image of the West is clearly distorted by the Brotherhood's literature when doesn't seem able to move past the current stereotypical model. The deep spiritual roots of the western world, the model of the relationship between the State and religion and above all the spiritual roots of individual liberty do not have any echo in the cultural reflections of the reformists. The willingness to dialog, that emerges from various reformist *leaders*, will necessarily be reconcile with the pan-Islamic motives of the populist ideology that is at the heart of the MB narrative. Above all it will come up against the west's politics towards Israel. All of this could transform into ideological and aggressive foreign policies made not unimportant for countries by the fact that we depend on a large part of these countries for our energy supplies. More than the theme of democracy, it would be helpful to renew the line of interreligious dialogue that reformists such as Ismail al-Faruqi began and that is on-going in various

organisations of the Brotherhood in Europe.

We need to understand that it is a global challenge where, as well as the traditional political/diplomatic themes, we are called on to answer a serious cultural confrontation, something that was never asked of us in the years of supporting the dictatorships.

Essential chronology of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement

1924: Abolition of the Caliphate by the Turkish National Assembly

1928: The Muslim Brotherhood is founded in Egypt by Hassan al-Banna.

1948:(November) The Egyptian government proclaims the dissolution of the Brotherhood, (December) The Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmud Fahmi Nokrashi is murdered by Muslim Brotherhood member Abdel Meguid Ahmed Hassan. According to the Brotherhood there are half a million members in Egypt.

1949:(February) Al-Banna was assassinated by gunmen in Cairo.

1950: Martial law is removed and the announcements are removed on the Brotherhood, which is re-legalized, but only as a religious organization.

1951: Hassan al-Hudaybi, considered a moderate, was elected *leader* of the Brotherhood. Sayyid Qutb enters the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt to return from a stay in the United States.

1952:(January) Members of the Brotherhood take part in anti-British riots in Cairo. A military coup, with the support of the Muslim Brotherhood, puts an end to British colonial rule over Egypt.

1954: (October) failed attempt on President Gamal Abdul al-Nasir from the member of the Brotherhood Abdul Munim Abdul Rauf, motivated by the Anglo-Egyptian agreement relating to Suez. Persecution and imprisonment of members of the Brotherhood (4,000 arrested) including Qutb, who was sentenced to 15 years hard labour. The organization goes underground and many members flee to Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Syria.

1964: Egyptian President al-Nasir proclaimed a general amnesty, which includes many members of MB, the association is made legal again and releases several prisoners.

1964: Sayyid Qutb publishes Milestones.

1966: 1,000 brothers were arrested, 365 sentenced, and Sayyid Qutb was hanged by the Egyptian Government along with other top-level *leaders* of the Brotherhood.

1968: President al-Nasir releases 1,000 members of the MB.

1970: (September) Death of Egyptian President al-Nasir. Anwar Sadat becomes president of Egypt and initiates a more tolerant policy towards the Muslim Brotherhood. Many of the prisoners are released MB inmates.

1975: General amnesty in Egypt frees all the members of the Muslim Brotherhood still prisoners.

1976: The MB is not allowed to participate in elections as a political party. However they participate as individual candidates obtaining 15 seats.

1979: The MB vigorously opposed the signing of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.

1980: (June) failed attack against Assad in Syria. The Syrian Parliament outlaws the Brotherhood in Syria. The army organized the repression that sees its climax in the massacre of Hama.

1981: (September) More than 2,000 dissidents, mostly members of FM, were arrested in Egypt (October) Egyptian President Sadat was killed by four members of the radical movement Jama'at Al Jihad, founded by Faraj, a former member of the Muslim Brotherhood disappointed by its moderation.

1984: The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is readmitted as a religious organization. It participates in the general elections in cooperation with the New WAFD Party getting 8 seats.

1987: In the general elections the FM obtained 37 seats in a coalition with the Liberal-Socialist Party and the Labour Islamic Alliance.

1992: Victory of the Islamic movements in Algeria elections.

1992: Salsabil *affair*. Discovery of a plan to seize power in Egypt by the Muslim Brotherhood through infiltration of state institutions and the security apparatus.

1995: New wave of repression and arrests of members of the Muslim Brotherhood on the eve of elections to the National Assembly. 80 members of the shura of the movement are imprisoned.

2000: Members of the Muslim Brotherhood take 17 seats at the political elections.

2005: In the general elections in Egypt, the members of the Muslim Brotherhood win 88 seats, becoming the biggest political opposition.

2007: Constitutional amendment that prohibits the establishment of political parties of a religious nature; arrest of Khairat al-Shater, Deputy General Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood.

2011: After the fall of Mubarak, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt register (April 30) the new Party of Freedom and Justice to participate in the elections of 2011 and the following parliamentary elections.

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