

Can we tame the shrew? - The evolution of Muslim Brotherhood's ideology, its rise, its fall and the prospects of cooperation with moderate Islamists"

Introduction

Muslim Brotherhood (MB), the most prominent Islamic transnational social movement in modern history, despite its reluctance to join the Arab revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia¹, was the undisputed winner of the "Arab Spring". Being extremely strong in Egypt, it won the election without being a Western-type party, but rather a sum of diverse Muslim political tendencies. The Brotherhood reigned only for a little while until the recent coup d'etat. A cruel crackdown followed the coup's aftermath.² With the first democratically elected Egyptian President condemned to death in a trial which was a travesty of justice³, and with the Islamic extremism taking a new turn with the emergence of the Islamic Caliphate (ISIS) and its horrible crimes⁴, we need to reconsider our approach.

First of all, the widespread Islamophobia⁵ is based on many misconceptions and some of them have to do with Muslim Brotherhood. Islam is portrayed as monolithic, despite its huge differences depending on the personal interpretation or even the broadly acknowledged schools of Islamic thought.⁶ Moreover, its fundamentalism is illustrated as always and necessarily violent; jihad is understood as an aggressive Holy War⁷; finally, Christians and Jews are harassed under a Muslim regime.⁸ In this milieu it is obvious that a Religious Society can be easily categorized as a terrorist group. Nevertheless, Muslim Brotherhood is not a group with coherent and cohesive ideology. As Torstensson points out, the Muslim Brotherhood "is not

¹ Rubin Barry, *Understanding the Muslim Brotherhood*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, July 2012.

² For instance, in a single trial, 529 Muslim Brothers were condemned to death. See Kingsley, Patrick, "Egypt sentences to death 529 supporters of Mohamed Morsi", *The Guardian*, 24 March 2014.

³ See Amnesty International, *Egypt: Court recommends death sentences for Morsi, more than 100 others, in 'charade trials,'* 16 May 2015.

⁴ Muslim Public Affairs Council, *MPAC Rejects ISIS' Repugnant Crimes Against Humanity*, 14 August 2014.

⁵ Al Obeid Aref & Kleantis Kyriakidis, "Islamophobia", *Foreign Affairs Hellenic Edition*, March 2013.

⁶ Bokhari Raana & Mohammad Seddon, *The Complete Illustrated Guide to Islam* (London: Hermes House, 2009).

⁷ Jihad" derives from the verb "jahada" which means to endeavor, strive, do one's utmost and expend energy. The misinterpretation of the term in the West dates from 1143 when Robert of Keeton translated the Quran. Even the much better and less hostile translations like the one of Juan de Segovia in 1453 are considering "jihad" as a "Holy War". See R.W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962). Obviously, for the Islamists "jihad" has also that meaning (defensive Holy War), but the primary one is "striving" with one's self.

⁸ In the Holy Quran, Christians and Jews are referred to as the "People of the Book" (Ahl al-kitab) and the Muslims should respect them.

a monolith, but a dynamic chameleon that comes in many different shapes and fashions”.⁹ Consequently, in order to counter its perceived threat, we need to first understand it and discuss its different course in Egypt, Jordan and Syria.

Foundation and Beliefs

The Islamic revivalism has its roots in India and Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi.¹⁰ If Mawdudi is considered the father of the pan-Islamist worldview, it was the genesis of Muslim Brotherhood (“Ikhwan al Muslimoon”) in Egypt in 1928 that became the vehicle for modern Islamic fundamentalism. Hasan al-Banna, an Egyptian schoolteacher, not a prominent religious scholar, founded the ever since influential organization. For al-Banna the Islamic state would be born through jihad. In his “Five tracts” he declares “today the Muslims are compelled to humble themselves before non-Muslims and are ruled by unbelievers. Their lands have been trampled over and their honor besmirched...Hence, jihad has become an individual obligation...”¹¹ For al-Banna the Muslims should follow the Salaf and the Sunna¹², they should be ethical, physically healthy, compassionate and politically active. They should study religion and science and establish economic infrastructure in order to help the weakest. The organization would thus, first and foremost, foster social ties and lead by example. The objectives of Muslim Brotherhood would be to engage in “tarbiyya” (preaching and educating). Firstly, the Brothers would help to build the Muslim individual as regards his manners, his culture, his body and his worship; then they would build the ideal Muslim family based on a proper spouse selection and a proper education for the children. Lastly, through social ties they would build the Muslim society. Only if these steps succeed, there would be a chance for umma to genuinely build a true Muslim state and revive the Caliphate.¹³ According to al-Banna the Muslim success would make it possible for the word of Islam to be spread.

MB in Egypt

⁹ Torstensson, Erik, “The Transformation of Political Islam: Towards an Understanding of the Muslim Brotherhood, 1928–2011”, *Journal of Undergraduate Research University of Florida*, 14/1, Fall 2012, p.5.

¹⁰ Nasr, Seyyed Vali Reza, “Mawdudi and the Jamaat-I Islami: the Origins, theory and Practice of Islamic Revivalism” In Rahnama, Ali, *Pioneers of Islamic Revival* (New Jersey: Zed Books, 1994).

¹¹ Hasan al-Banna, *Five Tracts of Hasan Al-Banna*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 151.

¹² As regards the Muslim beliefs “The emphasis on Muhammad, the person, and his revelatory sunna, along with his closest followers as the focus of authority in Islam, rather than the intellectual tradition, is covered in the term salaf, the ‘pious ancestors’”. See Rippin Andrew, *Muslims, Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (New York:Routledge, 2001), p.157

¹³ Mustafa Kemal Ataturk abolished the Caliphate and “the abolition reverberated throughout the Muslim world. So interconnected are Muslims, so developed the notion of the ummah, that for years there was agitation in India in support of the caliphate”. See Ahmed, Akbar, *Islam Today* (New York: IB Tauris, 2002), p. 100

After the murder of al-Banna in 1949, the de facto spiritual leader of Brotherhood was another non-Islamic scholar, Sayyid Qutb, who became much more radical. Actually, he is considered the godfather of modern terrorism. When Gamal Abdel Nasser got power in Egypt, the Egyptian ruler managed through repression, land redistribution and educated youth resocialization¹⁴ to silence all the opposition forces, including the Muslim Brotherhood which had welcomed the 1952 coup. A couple of years down the road, the Muslim Brotherhood were the main victim of Nasserite Egypt. After an attempt on his life in October 1954, blamed on the Brotherhood, Nasser exiled, imprisoned or killed all its leaders and banned its activities. Sayyid Qutb was among the first victims. After many years in prison, he was hanged in 1966. In his notorious "Milestones", Qutb had suggested that "the whole world is steeped in Jahiliya (pagan ignorance) ...The Jahiliya is based on rebellion against God's sovereignty on earth...The result of this rebellion is the oppression of God's creatures..."¹⁵ Therefore, jihad is a duty and the first target should be the rulers of Muslim countries because they were apostates ("kafireen").

Nevertheless, this was not the only, not even the prevailing point of view, in the Muslim Brotherhood. As Robert Leiken and Steven Brooke point out "from his own cell, Hudaybi (the official Brotherhood leader) disputed Qutb's conclusion. Only God, he believed, could judge faith. He rejected "takfir" (the act of declaring another Muslim an apostate), arguing that 'whoever judges that someone is no longer a Muslim ... deviates from Islam and transgresses God's will by judging another person's faith'."¹⁶ The February 1968 demonstrations in Egypt were organized and conducted mainly by leftist students and workers. The Islamists were still hiding or had been practically disbanded.¹⁷

Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat presented himself as a pious Muslim¹⁸ and promised that Sharia law would be implemented in Egypt, mainly to undercut the emerging leftist opposition and the ideological limits of Nasser. In 1970, he rehabilitated the Muslim Brotherhood, he encouraged the development of Islamic student associations and allowed the publishing of al-Da'wa, the Brotherhood's newspaper. He actually facilitated the growth of an already existing "parallel Islamic sector" through traditional Islamist NGOs, which filled the vacuum in cases of evident lack of state provision of civil services. Nevertheless, the state overextension and the higher education overexpansion led to the downfall of civil service wages, time lags between graduation and governmental appointment and poorer quality of university

¹⁴ Carrie Rosefsky Wicham, *Mobilizing Islam*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p.22

¹⁵ Gettleman Marvin & Stuart Schaar (eds), *The Middle East and Islamic World Reader* (New York: Grove Press, 1997), p. 54

¹⁶ Leiken Robert & Brooke Steven, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood", *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2007, p. 27

¹⁷ See Kepel Gilles, *Jihad, The Trail of Political Islam* (Boston: Belknap/Harvard, 2002), p. 63.

¹⁸ The military slogan during the Yom Kippur war a religious one ("Allah-u-Akbar"), which points out a big turn in Egyptian politics.

education. The Brotherhood opposed to these phenomena as well as to the concept of “open door policy” (infitah)¹⁹, forcing the authoritarian regime to launch a repression campaign, arresting hundreds of Muslim Brothers. Things got really out of control after the Israel-Egypt peace treaty signed in 1979 by Begin and Sadat, indisputable high treason in the Islamist’s eyes. The clash ended with Sadat’s assassination in 1981 from a militant Islamist, who was not a Muslim Brother.²⁰

During the eighties, the Mubarak administration, which had to face the phenomenon of educated unemployment as a main social problem, further liberalized the political system. Civil society was flourishing and NGOs mushroomed. Press often criticized the government, thirteen parties were created and the nonviolent segment of the Muslim Brotherhood was tolerated, while the militant Islamists were persecuted. The Brotherhood maintained its offices, issued public statements, kept on publishing its journal and its members ran in the elections either under another official party (1984) or as independents (1987). Later on, the sweeping victory of the Brotherhood at the professional associations’ elections and its obvious rapidly growing political success led to a backlash from the Mubarak administration in the nineties. The pretext was the existence of terrorist radical Islamic groups that actually declared a war against the regime. Al-Jihad (the group that assassinated Sadat) and mainly Gamaa Islamiya²¹ overtly targeted the government. By 1997 a five years quasi-civil war was over with a total victory for the regime.²² The radical, terrorist Islamists were defeated in the battlefield and on moral ground, losing their popular support base and the Brotherhood had since been silenced. Civil society started to be more controlled. Instead of choosing the path of open confrontation, the Brotherhood showed self restraint and in the beginning of the new millennium kept a low profile by having less candidates for both national and associations’ elections. In 2004 it went through a spectacular self-reform and very pragmatic transformation of its ideology: with its Reform Initiative²³ it embraced universal human, civil, minorities’ and women rights and vehemently renounced violence. All these helped its electoral success after Mubarak’s removal from power.

The crackdown in Egypt explains why the Brotherhood was reluctant to join the Tahrir square protests. Actually some Salafists supported Mubarak in

¹⁹ McLaughlin, Gerald, “Infitah in Egypt: An Appraisal of Egypt’s Open-Door Policy for Foreign Investment” *Fordham law Review*, 46/5, 1978.

²⁰ Spencer Richard, Aboud al-Zumour, “Islamic Jihad mastermind of Sadat’s murder, comes in from the cold after Egypt election”, *The Telegraph*, 3 December 2011.

²¹ Hauslohner Abigail, “In Egypt, Gamaa Islamiya goes from terrorist group to security force” *The Washington Post*, 20 March 2013.

²² Murphy, Caryle *Passion for Islam : Shaping the Modern Middle East: the Egyptian Experience*, (New York: Scribner, 2002)

²³ Yacoubian Mona, *Promoting Middle East Democracy II: Arab Initiatives*, United States Institute of Peace, 10 May 2005.

the beginning.²⁴ Nevertheless, the vital social role of the Brotherhood, which is the main provider of health, education, charity, trade skill centers, sewage facilities and potable water projects, definitely helped its electoral success. The Islamic welfare sector in Egypt functions in parallel with the state and can be divided in three categories: Private Mosques, Islamic voluntary associations (including welfare societies, cultural organizations, health clinics and schools) and Islamic non-profit commercial and business enterprises (including banks, investment companies, manufacturing firms and publishing houses). The Islamic sector had always been so important that even when Nasser hindered all NGOs through the law 32/1964, the Islamist ones who provided 'desperately needed social services' were not hampered.²⁵

Concluding, it is obvious that the Muslim Brotherhood has undergone tremendous changes, from its foundation to its recent labeling as a terrorist group in its motherland. In the mind of its founder, al-Banna, a purely socially oriented project became quasi-militant under the spiritual guidance of Qutb. Nowadays "luben intelligentsia", mainly unemployed or employed by Islamist NGOs educated middle class (university graduates or professionals), have become the hard core of the Islamist movement in Egypt. The merchants and the upper middle class have always been challenging the post-revolutionary Egypt.²⁶ Due to the irrefutable popular support, despite its persecution, the Muslim Brotherhood is bound to resurface sooner or later.

MB in Syria

How about the Muslim Brotherhood in other countries? In Syria, it was founded after World War II and has been persecuted even harsher than in Egypt. It was outlawed by the Baathist regime since the latter's ascendance to power. In the late 1970s some Muslim Brothers advocated for armed struggle and a splinter group emerged, the "Fighting Vanguard". This militant faction answered to the regime's political violence with a terror campaign, with assassinations and bomb attacks. The mainstream Brotherhood, having as strongholds the northern cities (and especially Aleppo and Hama), organized workers', merchants' and students' protests against the Alawite dictator Hafez al-Assad. In 1980 the mere membership in the Brotherhood became a capital offense.²⁷

Similarly to Egypt, there was an assassination attempt against the Syrian ruler, allegedly organized by the organization. Assad reaction was

²⁴ Examples are provided by Brown Jonathan, "Salafis and Sufis in Egypt", *The Carnegie Papers*, December 2011, "...In December 2010, the Salafi preacher Lufti Amir issued a fatwa condemning ElBaradei's criticisms of Mubarak and authorizing the government to jail or kill ElBaradei if he did not recant...prominent Salafi leaders initially condemned the Tahrir Square protests which they considered an Islamically impermissible act of 'rebellion' against the state...Leading Salafi preacher Muhammad Hassan gave a sermon calling on Muslims not to let the country descend into chaos...Salafis in Damanhour spray-painted 'No rebellion against the ruler'..."

²⁵ Ibid Wicham, p. 95-97.

²⁶ Mansoor Moaddel, *Jordanian Exceptionalism*, (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p.71

²⁷ The notorious Law 49/1980. See Pierret Thomas, *The Syrian Baath Party and Sunni Islam: Conflicts and Connivance*, Crown Center for Middle East Studies, February 2014.

ruthless. After the killings of at least 1,000 of Muslim Brothers that had been held in prisons, Assad decided to eliminate their stronghold, the town of Hama. In February 1982 the Syrian army with tanks, attack helicopters and artillery burned the city to the ground. All families with any connection to the Brotherhood were rounded up and executed in the streets. According to the Syrian Human Rights Committee around 30,000 perished in the streets of Hama, mostly civilians.²⁸ After such a devastating blow, the Brotherhood remained silent for three decades.

The “Arab Spring” brought back Muslim Brotherhood, which has a significant support among the Syrian population despite thirty years in political wilderness.²⁹ What is even more important, the Brotherhood issued a manifesto much like the Egyptian Brotherhood 2004 reform. It promised pluralism, constitution, democracy and equality of all citizens, regardless gender or religious, sectarian, ethnic and political affiliations. The manifesto called for freedom of expression, freedom of worship and a social agenda with social justice and equal opportunities.³⁰

MB in Jordan

The Jordanian case as regards the Brotherhood has an entirely different narrative. The emergence of Arab nationalism posed an imminent threat to the Jordanian monarchy³¹, especially after the annexation of the West Bank as a result of the 1948 war, which placed the majority of the Palestinian population under the king Abdullah I. One of the major supporters of the monarchy was the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, which has always been peaceful and has defended the state against radical ideologies. The Brotherhood conducted the theological and ideological fight against the Arab Nationalism, the Wahabbism, it discredited the Mufti of Jerusalem Hajj Amin and helped to marginalize the radical Hizb al-Tahrir, an Islamist group which aimed at the restoration of the Caliphate and was banned in 1956.³²

In return, Jordan is one of the few Arab states in which the Brotherhood has enjoyed a legal standing since 1945. In 1947 Brotherhood members participated in the first National Assembly. In 1953 the Brotherhood “won broader status and a quasi-political role as a general and comprehensive

²⁸ Syrian Human Rights Committee, *Thirty three years on the Hama Massacre: The Criminals Remain Outside the Realm of Justice*, 2 February 2015

²⁹ Khaled Yacoub Oweis, *Syria's Muslim Brotherhood rise from the ashes*, Reuters, 2 May 2012.

³⁰ Ikhwan Web (Official MB site), *Syria Muslim Brotherhood Issues Post-Assad State-for-All Commitment Charter*, 7 April 2012.

³¹ In 1956 the leftist government of al-Nabulsi took control and next year the King Hussein facing a coup to overthrow his throne, declared a martial law. See details in George Joffe, *Jordan in Transition*, (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 73 The next year a coup not only overthrew, but slaughtered his brother King Faisal II of Iraq Ibid Kepel, p. 115

³² Jennifer Noyon, *Islam, Politics and Pluralism*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, London 2003, p. 84

Islamic committee”.³³ Both Islamists and pro-monarchists in Jordan have been supported by landowners, tribal elite and the emerging “devout bourgeoisie” (middle class, professional associations). Workers, peasants, Palestinian refugees living in camps, the marginal urban masses and the lower middle class (small private sector) were neither widely represented at the Brotherhood nor friendly to the regime. In later years, a large portion of the urban impoverished people joined the Islamist cause in a social-revolutionary context despite the fact that the sociopolitical program of the radical part of the Jordanian Brotherhood did not include any measures to threaten the Hashemite family. The 1967 “Six Days war” brought an even more acute humiliation than the 1948 one and the loss of Palestinian soil caused unrest among the Palestinian refugees. During the “Black September” (1970),³⁴ the Muslim Brotherhood supported the monarchy when it crushed the “secular” PLO and al-Fatah which had been stationed in Jordan and had been threatening the regime.

The peace process between Egypt, Jordan and Israel led to a temporary deterioration of the relations between the Palace and the Brotherhood. Nonetheless, during the 1989 elections in Jordan, one year after King Hussein gave up the administrative responsibility of the West Bank, Islamists became the parliament’s largest bloc³⁵ with 23 out of 80 seats. In New Year’s Day 1991 the King nominated a new cabinet with one third of the ministers belonging to the Brotherhood. Yet, he maintained tight control of the strategic ministries (interior, information, defense and foreign affairs). This year the middle class Brothers who had been pro-Saudi and the poor who had been pro-Iraqi agreed that it was unacceptable to see American forces in the land of the Two Holy Places. A little later Jordan with a broad social consensus drew up its National Charter (similar to the Egyptian one of 1962). In 1993 the Brotherhood along with independent Islamists formed the Islamic Action Front Party, which was again successful in that year’s elections. Despite the serious disagreement with the monarchy regarding the 1994 peace treaty with Israel, which actually led to a friction in the organization itself between the hardliners and the pro-monarchists, and the boycott of the 1997 elections, the Islamists seem to get along with the King Abdullah II who succeeded his father in 1999. The first Prime Minister of the young king was an ex-Muslim Brother and the Islamists participated in the elections of 2001 despite the unfavorable electoral law. Even during the “Arab Spring”, the Jordanian Brotherhood showed self-restraint, not to mention support to the King. In spite of the fact that “the Muslim Brotherhood boycotted the last parliamentary election and is barely represented in the current parliament”, it did not try to incite any disorder against the King.³⁶ Actually, regardless of the Muslim Brotherhood political clout, the pro-western policies remained intact

³³ Ibid Noyon, p.85

³⁴ Bar, Shmuel: *The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan* (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center, 2000).

³⁵ Al Sharif Osama, “Jordan’s Muslim Brotherhood maintains grassroots support”, *AlMonitor*, 31 March 2014.

³⁶ According to Sharp Jeremy, *Jordan: Background and US Relations*, (CRS Report for Congress RL33546), November 11, 2011

and Jordan is still the Arab country that enjoys the best relations with Israel. Lately there has been considerable friction and “king Abdullah II described Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan and Egypt as ‘wolves in sheep’s clothing; they are a Masonic cult always loyal to their leader’”.³⁷

As a last comment, comparing and contrasting the relations of the Muslim Brotherhood and the State in Jordan and Egypt we will quote Mansoor Moaddel: “Secularism of the state in Egypt produced the politicization of religion, while the state’s non-ideological orientation in Jordan³⁸ resulted in a secularization of religion”.³⁹

Lost Chance and way ahead

The Arab revolutions and elections, which brought to power the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab world, could have been a game changer. The cataclysmic consequences would have certainly included the de-legitimization of the so-called “Islamic terrorism”. Professor of Middle East Studies, Jean-Pierre Filiu pointed out “many consider that, even before the physical and ‘second death’, al Qaeda’s leader [Osama bin Laden] had been buried alive by Arab mass protests. The Jihadis are already speechless and leaderless; they could become transparent and irrelevant”.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the more we persecute Political Islam, the stronger it gets and the “moderate” Islamists turn to hard-line Salafists. If the differences between secularists and Copts and Muslims widen, then broadly-based representative political institutions will not be an option.⁴¹

In the late 1960s the Islamists were still hiding or had been practically disbanded, but 50 years later we witnessed their triumphant return. Moreover, in the aftermath of the “Arab Spring”, Islamic terrorism was in a decline and evolutions such as the regime change in Egypt or the civil war in Syria kindled its fire; nowadays the spark became a wildfire and it has a name: Islamic Caliphate. At this point we should point out that both the Islamic Caliphate and Al Qaeda⁴² have vehemently rejected Muslim Brotherhood, as an instrument of the infidels that distracts the Muslims from their duty to wage jihad. David Kirpatrick and Mary El Sheikh reminded us that “it was in Egyptian jails during

³⁷ Asaadi Mohamed, “Did Jordan’s King Benefit From Muslim Brotherhood Downfall?”, *Voice of America*, 18 July 2013.

³⁸ A synthesis of different trends such as Arab Nationalism, Islamic Conservatism, Tribal Partimonialism, Pre-Islamic Glorification and Western Modernism.

³⁹ Ibid Mansoor Moaddel, p. 9

⁴⁰ Filiu Jean-Pierre, *The Arab Revolution* (London: Hurst & Company, 2011), p. 119

⁴¹ Yusuf Khalil, “Does the Muslim Brotherhood still have a role to play in Egypt’s revolutionary politics?”, *Middle East Monitor*, 19 December 2013.

⁴² Ikhwan Web (Official MB site), *Islam cannot always be blamed*, 19 January 2010.

earlier crackdowns, that Brotherhood members disillusioned with its nonviolent politics nurtured the ideology that now guides Al Qaeda".⁴³

How about the perceived dangers of a Muslim Brotherhood government, especially as regards Israel? Let us observe Egypt taking into account that Cairo is the barometer of the Arab world, since Egypt has the most powerful military and the biggest population among Arab nations. Furthermore, it has a geostrategic location, controlling the Suez Canal and uniting Maghreb and the Asian Arabs. What were truly the changes in Egyptian policies, while Morsi was in power? During the most recent Israeli attack in Gaza, the Operation "Cloud Pillar", it was proven that peace and cooperation of Egypt with Israel was not actually endangered. The Egyptian Prime-Minister Hisham Kandil paid a solidarity visit to Gaza and President Mohamed Morsi supported verbally the Palestinian people much more than Mubarak, but he also played a crucial role at the cease-fire agreement and he won a diplomatic victory. Morsi walked a thin line and succeeded. He had his own ideological reasons to oppose Tel Aviv and two pragmatic ones: The first was the pressure of his Opposition; a role played by the Salafists. They were radical Islamists and they had been thinking that the Muslim Brotherhood is too moderate.⁴⁴ The second was the popular feeling against Israel. In a survey few years ago and despite Mubarak's total control, "the vast majority (92%) of respondents saw Israel as an enemy and the peace treaty with the Jewish state as a betrayal of the Palestinian people".⁴⁵ Probably it sounds like a joke but most likely it is easier to find a Palestinian who is fond of Israel rather than an Egyptian.

How about the Islamization of the countries if Muslim Brotherhood comes to power? It is true that Morsi destroyed his own image with his persistence to issue a constitutional declaration which granted immunity to himself and his partners at the constituent assembly and the Shura Council. This was the original provocation which led to the decision of the Supreme Constitutional Court to suspend its function; In a slippery slope, Morsi, passed through rigging and violence an Islamist constitution⁴⁶ which finally led to his deposition and condemnation to death.⁴⁷ He simply replicated the Mubarak style, not being ready to govern in a democratic way.

However, we should not judge by this mistake and disregard the Brotherhood's stated goals even if all Islamic parties never abandoned their dream of establishing an Islamic state. The Syrian Brotherhood manifesto and

⁴³ Kirpatrick David and Mary El Sheikh, "An Egypt Arrest, and a Brotherhood on the Run", *The New York Times*, 20 August 2013.

⁴⁴ Blanchard Christopher, *The Islamic Traditions of Wahhabism and Salafiyya* (CRS Report for Congress RS21695), January 24, 2008

⁴⁵ Rousseau Richard, "Israel: the Risk of a New War With Arab Countries", *Political Reflection Quarterly*, 2/4, February 2012

⁴⁶ El Rashidi Yasmine, "Egypt: the Rule of the Brotherhood", *The New York Review of Books*, 7 February 2013.

⁴⁷ See Malak Karim, "The Egyptian revolution: take two?", *Open Democracy*, November 27, 2012. Available on line <http://www.opendemocracy.net/karim-malak/egyptian-revolution-take-two>

the Egyptian Brothers Reform Initiative in 2004 show that the Brotherhood underwent an important self-reform.⁴⁸ All Brotherhood branches have expressed their commitment to supporting the civil, religious and human rights⁴⁹, including those of the Christians and those of women. They have at least nominally rejected theocracy⁵⁰, opting for the civic nature of the State and reaffirmed their adherence to democracy and separation of power. The Muslim Brotherhood has endorsed pluralism and firmly condemned any use of violence.⁵¹

How did the West react when Morsi was deposed? They propped up once more a military coup, which deposed the elected leader and went on labelling the powerful Muslim social movement as a “terrorist group”. While the Americans were happy to quickly acknowledge the coup as a genuine Egyptian people’s reaction to the Brotherhood’s perceived autocracy, Europe stood still and quiescent and later simply bandwagoned.

Conclusion - Recommendations

The conclusion of our analysis is that Muslim Brothers are pragmatic. Shadi Hamid wrote that “the Brotherhood - far from being ideologically inflexible - is a thoroughly political actor, routinely compromising on ideals to pursue organizational interests. That makes it far more fluid and prepared to change than many now assume”.⁵² They need the huge Western aid and they still have to trade, use the Suez Canal, keep peace with Israel and go on co-operating with the West in vital sectors, like tourism. Furthermore, Harvard

⁴⁸ Al Qummi Sayed Mahmoud, *The Muslim Brotherhood's Initiative as a Reform Program: A Critical Review*, Brookings, October 6, 2004.

⁴⁹ Ikhwan Web (Official MB site), *The Principles of the Muslim Brotherhood*, 1 February 2010.

⁵⁰ According to Dalacoura Katerina, “Turkey, Iran and the Arab Uprisings: The Failure of political Islam and Post-ideological Policies”, *Political Reflection Quarterly*, 2/4, February 2012, “Arab citizens cannot but have noticed the de-legitimization of the Islamic republic – which became apparent in the fraudulent elections of 2009 – and the suppression of the Green movement that followed. We can see the events in 2009 in Iran as a precursor of the Arab uprisings and as having many similarities with them”.

⁵¹ Critics of the Initiative point out that it “blurs the line between political vision and religious preaching”. See Farahat Mohamed Fayez, “Liberalizing the Muslim Brotherhood: Can It Be Done?”, *Arab Insight*, 2/6, Winter 2009. However, we need to bear in mind that Muslim Brotherhood is much more moderate than the second most popular party in Egypt, which consists of very radical Salafists. The term “Salafism” refers to the theory of Islamic revivalism through following the exact example of the Salaf (which means the “forefathers”, the first Muslims). According to Sharp Jeremy, *Egypt in Transition*, (CRS Report for Congress RL33003), November 18, 2011, “The Islamist Alliance consists of mostly Salafist parties that broke away from the Democratic Alliance, including the Nour Party, the Asala (Authenticity) Party, the Salafist Current, and the Construction and Development Party, which is the political arm of Al Gamaa Al Islamiya, the former insurgent and terrorist group responsible for murdering former Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. The Nour Party is the largest of the Salafist Islamist parties. In general, Salafists are supporters of a literal version of Islam. The Islamist Alliance is expected to win the second most seats available on the party list system”.

⁵² Hamid, Shadi, *The Muslim Brotherhood's New Power in Egypt's Parliament*, Brookings, 23 December 2011.

Professor, Noah Feldman, assessed that “combining pragmatism and principle, mainstream political Islam has undergone an extraordinary democratic transformation. And it has done so in the very years when radical jihadism threatened Islamic democrats with condemnation and murder. From the standpoint of the global ideal of democracy, this is a victory of historic proportions”.⁵³ Furthermore, regarding economics moderate Islamists are neo-liberals and even if they theoretically reject most political systems, they support capitalism as an economic system.

The more noteworthy peril is our arrogant self. Some might say or think that “the new Arab leaderships do need us, we do not need them and they have to go our way”.⁵⁴ Arrogance is a recipe for disaster. This was and still is the case in major Western political blunders like Cuba or Iran, where the only common thing between the government and the opposition is an anti-colonial, anti-western feeling. Robert Leiken and Steven Brooke after extensive research supported that “the Brotherhood is a collection of national groups with differing outlooks, and the various factions disagree about how best to advance its mission. But all reject global jihad while embracing elections and other features of democracy. There is also a current within the Brotherhood willing to engage with the United States. In the past several decades, this current -- along with the realities of practical politics - has pushed much of the Brotherhood toward moderation”.⁵⁵ Hence, we can cooperate with Political Islam and especially with the Muslim Brotherhood.

The prospects of cooperation with democratically elected Muslim Brothers are great and heavily depend on Western countries and institutions' perceptions and behaviour. Restraining our darkest fears, we have to negotiate and collaborate with some perceived foes. Neglecting the popular sentiments and preferences of peoples would eradicate not only our role in the area but also Middle East chance for peaceful transition and future prosperity. We need to embrace, some might use the word appease Muslim Brotherhood and moderate Political Islam, before it is too late. We should do so out of self-interest and based on a realist approach. The alternative is having to deal with Al Qaeda and the Islamic Caliphate.

Moreover, even if we apply idealism based on our democratic values, inclusion is also a *sine qua non*. The West has always been the beacon of democracy, solidarity and human rights. We should not turn a blind eye to abuses and corruption due to a perceived state of peace, stability and pro-Western policies. History has already proven, that Islamists when in power,

⁵³ Feldman Noah, “Islamists’ Victory in Tunisia a Win for Democracy”, *Bloomberg*, 31 October 2011.

⁵⁴ In a recent analysis from Andrew Terrill, Middle East specialist of the Strategic Studies Institute of the American Army War College, the main finding can be easily misunderstood by arrogant Orientalists: “Newly emerging political leaderships will not have the political clout or repressive capability to demand more sacrifice from their population in order to challenge the West”. See Terrill W. Andrew, “The Arab Spring and the Future of U.S. Interests and Cooperative Security in the Arab World”, *SSI*, August 2, 2011.

⁵⁵ Leiken & Brooke, p. 26

tend to soften their stance due to the need to face everyday problems⁵⁶ and especially the Muslim Brotherhood seems ready for such an inclusion, as portrayed in their words and in their deeds, like Morsi' s pragmatic reaction during the Israeli Operation Cloud of Pillar in November 2012.

⁵⁶ For details, see Kyriakidis Kleanthis, “Regional Cooperation in the East Mediterranean basin after the ‘Arab Spring’: Perils and Prospects”, *Southeastern European Security Strategy and Transatlantic Leadership*, III/2012. Available on line <http://www.strategyinternational.org/magazine/?issueID=14#/0>