



Maria Dolores Algora Weber
CEU San Pablo University

THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD FOLLOWING THE “25 JANUARY REVOLUTION”: FROM THE IDEALS OF THE PAST TO THE POLITICAL CHALLENGES OF THE PRESENT

In the framework of the Arab Spring, as the wave of social mobilisation of 2011 has come to be known, the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt marked the beginning of a process which has deeply transformed the reality of many countries in the Arab World. In Egypt, the events that took place in Tahrir Square not only put an end to President Mubarak's dictatorship, but also paved the way for new political actors, among which the Muslim Brotherhood has played a key role. During the subsequent transition, the Brotherhood gained control of the National Assembly and positioned their leader, Mohamed Mursi, as the new President. The present debate is focused on the true democratic vocation of this movement and its relationship with the other social forces inside Egypt and beyond. This article intends to address these issues. To that end, it begins with an explanation as to the ideological and political evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood and its internal changes brought about by the end of the previous regime, closing with an analysis of its transnational influence and the possible international aftermaths.

[Islam, Islamism, Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt, Arab Spring](#)

INTRODUCTION

In 2011, a wave of social mobilisations took place in various Arab countries and which came to be known as the “Arab Spring”. This name is undoubtedly an attempt to draw a comparison between the historic process that unfolded in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century and the events that have taken place in the Arab World. We should not overlook the fact that that historic “People's Spring” was not the end of an era, but rather the definitive first steps towards transformations that had been brewing for decades. Far from considering the revolutionary path of Arab nations as completed, we start out from the premise that what we are witnessing is actually the beginning of a long road ahead. Despite the recent nature of the Arab uprisings, these are now equally as historic as those of the 19th century, though their evolutions may not be identical.

The Arab world is a cultural space with its own dynamic. Even taking into account its westernisation, also the product of history, it still has traditional and extremely deep-rooted Arab and Muslim foundations. Consequently, to expect the same outcome as that of the events in Western Europe almost two centuries ago would significantly limit our insight as to the fate of Arab societies. If the two “Springs” share any common ground, it does not go beyond an “awakening of the people”: a demand for access to power. All else is in stark contrast, which does not necessarily mean antonymic¹.

¹ Attempts have also been made to liken the fall of Arab dictators to the events in Europe following the fall of the Berlin Wall. While this may be a somewhat logical comparison, it is nevertheless misleading. Culturally, those countries had a model which they could identify with: the western model. However, the Arab nations will have to create their own model. This is an historic aspiration pending

The “25 January Revolution” of 2011 in Egypt and the consequences thereof is a perfect illustration of this point. The outcome of Egypt's first ever free general election brought this hidden reality into stark relief. The transition towards a new regime has begun but is yet to be fully realised. Within this framework, the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*) as a dominant force on the political stage is leaving its mark on the constitutional task, which must gradually take Egyptian society into a new phase.

To understand what can be expected from the changes in Egypt, it is appropriate to focus on the Muslim Brotherhood. A study is needed reminding us of its origins and traditional aspirations, as well as the challenges it is currently faced with. This new situation will affect the internal profile of the Egyptian government as well as both regional and international stability.

Before starting our analysis, we should first review some of the geopolitical facts that form the backdrop to the circumstances in Egypt; although the events in Tunisia may well have triggered the unrest within the Arab world, it has very little bearing on the Egyptian context.

When considering the parameters that best help to provide a framework for the revolution in Egypt, we should highlight the fact that the country has a surface area of one million square kilometres and a population of 82.5 million. Of these, 43.5% live in urban areas and the remainder are concentrated along the fertile valleys of the Nile². It has a 66% literacy rate, 3.8% of its GDP is spent on Education and 2.4% on Health Care. These indicators mean Egypt ranks 113th on the HDI. It has an aggregate external debt of 16.2% (2010)³; the poverty rate is 22% (in 2008); unemployment is at 9.4% (in 2009).

Egypt's parliamentary tradition dates back to the late nineteenth century, when Khedive Ismail established the Advisory Council of Representatives (*Majlis al-Shura*) in 1866. From the establishment of the British Mandate, the Parliament or People's Assembly (*Majlis al-Shaab*) was dominated by the *Wafd* party, created in 1922⁴. In

fulfilment. The new Governments will have to face the challenge of seizing this opportunity and States from beyond the Arab world will have to learn how to assimilate and cope with this new context.

2 The data corresponds to the United Nations HDI Index of May 2011 (the most recent data available at the conclusion of this paper).

<http://hdrstats.undp.org/es/paises/perfiles/EGY.html>.

For the case of Tunisia, the same source provides the following data: A population of 10 million within a surface area of 163,000 km²; a 77.6% literacy rate; 7% of its GDP is spent on Education and 3% on Health Care. Tunisia ranks 94th on the HDI.

3 This data was obtained from the World Bank. <http://datos.bancomundial.org/pais/egipto-republica-arabe-de>. The same source for Tunisia: external debt of 51.1% (2010); the poverty rate is 3.8% (in 2005); unemployment is at 14.2% (2008).

4 The *Wafd Movement* dates back to the 19th century, when it was the principal voice in negotiations between the Egyptians and the British that led to independence in 1922. In the first parliamentary

1952, it was at the very heart of political life thanks to the Free Officers Revolution, which soon led to a single-party regime, the National Union Party⁵, followed in turn by the Arab Socialist Union. In the 1980s, President Mubarak reinforced the ruling National Democratic Party, continuing the policies of his predecessor, Anwar al-Sadat. The party was dissolved in response to the “25 January Revolution”. The remaining parties have helped to maintain the, apparently democratic, multi-party system of the different Egyptian regimes, particularly since the mid-20th century.

In Egypt, there are also a number of active social movements. Among these, one in particular took centre stage in promoting the demonstrations of Tahrir Square: the *Kefaya* (Enough!) secular youth movement, founded in 2004⁶. However, the most influential and traditional movement has always been the Muslim Brotherhood, which has been deeply rooted in Egyptian society since the late 1920s. Its first participation in the elections came in 2005; as a consequence of the most recent revolutionary events, it has since gone on to become part of public life as a political group. With an eye towards the electoral process, it split into various parties, the largest being the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), which obtained a landslide victory with almost 50% of the votes in the parliamentary elections that concluded in January 2012.

We shall now look at how the Muslim Brotherhood has evolved and the resulting consequences that may arise.

THE PATH FOLLOWED BY THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD UP TO THE CREATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES

The origins of the Brotherhood

It pertains to the group of movements that define what is understood as “political Islam”. To be able to analyse the current situation of the most important and oldest branch of the so-called political Islam, or moderate Islamism, we must go back a few years and briefly review the origins of its organisation and ideology.

elections of 1924, it obtained a huge majority and became the leading player in the turbulent Egyptian politics over the following decades. The party was dissolved in 1952, then re-founded in 1983 under the name of New *Wafd* Party and has remained active through to the present day. See: Chatterji, Nikshoy C.: *History of Modern Middle East*. London, Oriental University Press, 1987. Pgs. 20-28.

5 The National Union Party, created and installed to power by Nasser, later became the Arab Socialist Union, which was in turn dissolved in 1978. Others have followed this party, upholding the Nasserist ideology to the present day. See: Chatterji, Nikshoy C.: *Opus cit*, Pgs. 251-252 and 414-417.

6 For more details on the role of this and other similar movements in the Egyptian mobilisations, see: “Atalaya sociopolítica de Casa Árabe”, no. 14, March-April 2011, pgs.7-10.

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded by Hasan al-Banna in the Egyptian city of Ismailia in 1928. He drew his inspiration from the different Muslim regenerationist movements, according to which of them endowed his theories with a political and social dimension. It was to become the most important organisation in Egypt and part of the Muslim world, as well as a benchmark for 20th century Islamic movements⁷.

Through his family, a young al-Banna was introduced to Sufism, a tradition which would greatly influence him. By way of a prayer group, he met Ahmad al-Sukkari, with whom he founded the Hasaniya Charitable Society, the purpose of which was to uphold Muslim moral thinking, combat the forbidden and address Christian proselytism. This Society and its goals would later become the embryo of the Muslim Brotherhood.

At the same time, his attachment to tradition and his nationalist sentiment grew still further due to the violent repression of 1919 following the uprising against British colonial authority and which put paid to the British Mandate.

The spread of “Kemalism” in Turkey, which put an end to the Ottoman Caliphate, together with the antipathy towards British colonialism and the wave of secularism which attracted the more affluent sections of Egyptian society, were seen by some sectors as an affront to Islamic traditions and principles. It was within this context that al-Banna decided to give definitive impetus to his preaching and calling towards Islam. As a teacher, he was able to attract groups of students, who followed him in his ambitions. They united under a credo that continues to this day: “Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. The Koran is our law. *Jihad* is our way. Death in the service of Allah is our most exalted wish”.

The Muslim Brotherhood thus arose as a Movement that pursued a social model. They expanded a network organisation which gradually provided it with a service structure parallel to the Public Administration. Such planning led to their being seen as a threat to the regime's conception of State during the final years of King Faruq's reign. They did not become truly involved in political matters until the late 1940s. The outbreak of the first Arab-Israeli conflict was a turning point that led them to take this step. Al-Banna was assassinated in 1949.

In the 1950s, during the height of the Cold War, Said Ramadan, the founder's son-in-law and follower, maintained contact with President Eisenhower. At that time, the Muslim Brotherhood was perceived by foreign countries as the best instrument in the fight against the Nasser regime, who in turn began a campaign against the Brotherhood, ultimately dissolving it in 1954. Over the following decades, the Brotherhood was repressed and spent most of its time underground. Many left Egypt for Europe, the US and Saudi Arabia.

7

Martín, Javier: *Los Hermanos Musulmanes*. Madrid, Los Libros de la Catarata, 2011. Pg. 17, 19, 21-22.

Ideological division and radicalisation

At that time, Sayyid al-Qutb instigated an ideological transformation of the Movement, replacing the original doctrinal principles of al-Banna with a series of radical theses. These new ideas paved the way for their expanding the concept of *Jihad*, understood as the duty to apply *Sharia* or Islamic law in all of society and in the individual behaviour of each Muslim. This saw the beginning of their rejection by Western governments and those Arabs who had succumbed to westernisation. This in turn contributed towards the social isolation of its members. Such circumstances deepened the permanent misgivings as to the aims and actions of the Muslim Brotherhood, further increasing harassment. Al-Qutb was executed in 1966, but his followers received the protection of Saudi Arabia, and these ties led to contact with the *Salafist* Wahhabi movements. In the meantime, in the Middle East the Six-Day War of 1967 gave rise to fresh arguments for radicalisation.

During his presidency, Anwar al-Sadat allowed the Muslim Brotherhood to renew its activities as he saw this as a chance to counteract the remnants of Nasserism. This allowed the Brotherhood to reorganise. The end of its clandestine existence enabled the Brotherhood to recruit a new generation of followers from universities, but it did not set up its own political party as this was never on the agenda.

In the 1980s, the Brotherhood's situation changed completely when some members of its most radical branch were linked to the assassination of President al-Sadat. This branch, known as the Islamic Group (*al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyya*), had evolved towards terrorism following the Camp David Accords⁸. Although the normal practice was to deny all links to the Movement, some of its members took part in the political system as independent candidates of the different authorised parties⁹. Nevertheless, the tone of Hosni Mubarak's regime was that of closely controlling all humanitarian businesses or activities which, by way of its associations, were related to the Muslim Brotherhood. In spite of this, its social penetration was not curbed. This was because, as Mubarak's power became stronger and more corrupt, shifting toward foreign diplomacy, Egyptian society was neglected to an ever greater degree. That is to say, government social services became increasingly beyond the reach of the working classes who, as the elites close to power grew wealthier, suffered ever greater misery.

Such was the internal situation in Egypt. Once again, the regional context has to be taken into account. On this occasion, it was the Islamic revolutionary tidal wave unleashed by the return of *Ayatollah* Khomeini to Iran following the fall of Shah Reza

8 Other groups were also involved in the President's assassination, such as Islamic Jihad (*al-Jihad al-Islami*), which Ayman al-Zawahiri subsequently joined while he was still a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. He was to spend years in prison accused of assassination. In 1998, he unified the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. He was later to become Osama Bin Laden's right-hand man and, as his successor, is the current leader of Al-Qaeda.

9 Some of its members took part in the 1984 and 1987 elections, though representing other political parties, such as the New *Wafd* or *al-Ahrar*.

Pahlevi. Beginning in 1980, and coinciding with the outbreak of the first Gulf War between Iran and Iraq, the spread of Islamism soon penetrated Arab nations. Regardless of the differences existing between *Shiites* or *Sunnis*, the reform drive ultimately translated into a process of Muslim affiliation against Western governments. The failed unity pursued by the “Arab Nation” ideology, based on secular regimes of the 1950s and 60s, was replaced by Moslem identity. In other words, the *umma* or Muslim community embarked on its own model, which strived to replace the political systems of the previous four decades. From that moment on, the Islamic and secular models became antonymic.

In Egypt, the re-Islamisation of society was not long in coming. The promotion of charity was the most effective tool employed by the Muslim Brotherhood for presenting its work as a way to regain Islamic purity. During that period, it adopted a slogan that was to indisputably attract the masses towards the Brotherhood: “Islam is the solution”. In the last decades of the twentieth century, no political party slogan permitted in election campaigns was able to compete with this. It became a social hook backed up by real, visible solidarity. The Muslim Brotherhood thus began losing the image that had linked it exclusively to the poor. The middle classes and part of the elites, whether collectively or independently, were becoming increasingly instilled with that message and such activity. This explains why, as political Islamism gained followers, the restrictions imposed by the authorities also increased, as did their control of the Movement.

As time went on, the revolutionary attrition and fundamentalist behaviour of the regime in Iran caused much dissatisfaction among those who had been attracted to that purest of ideals associated with the *Ayatollahs*. This situation led to internal debate in the *umma* concerning the different ambits and degrees of application of the *Sharia*. The underlying difference between *Shiites* and *Sunnis* became increasingly evident. Faced with the fading idea of a worldwide Islamic system, the more radicalised sectors of the two sides of Islam increased their proselytism. In other words, among Arab societies, predominantly *Sunnis*, dissatisfaction with the Iranian model became ever more widespread and their support declined significantly.

At that time, the stage of Afghanistan, first in the throes of a civil war and subsequently at the height of the Taliban regime, became the ideal framework for those attracted to *Jihad*, now regarded as a Holy War, who had conceived the idea of recreating an Islamic Caliphate. This aspiration attracted many who, disillusioned by the weakening of *Shiite* Islamism, its years of splendour having been and gone, hoped for an alternative to the Iranian model. The aforementioned Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian doctor linked to the Muslim Brotherhood at the origin of his ascent, found in Afghanistan the chance to openly accuse the Movement of treason for having rejected the use of violence in the pursuit of *Jihad*. Let us remember that within this context al-Zawahiri became the main anchor for Osama Bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda network¹⁰.

¹⁰ As regards the Muslim Brotherhood's position in respect to Al-Qaeda, see the article by Marwan Bishara on its official website (19 January 2010).

<http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=22699>.

All these circumstances did not go unmissed by the Brotherhood. On the one hand, most of its members distanced themselves from the radicalisation towards which part of political Islamism had evolved. But, on the other hand, the increased presence of Islam in public life was exploited by the Brotherhood for its greater expansion and work among moderate Muslims. In other words, it was the regional context that helped to raise social awareness of Islam. This is well illustrated by the more widespread use of veils among women and *galabeyas* (tunics) among men, though the underlying issue went far deeper than external appearance. A “good Muslim” was one who backed the spread of this alternative version of political Islamism in all walks of life. The rest, the defenders of system secularisation, were the exogenous elements of a society in which nationhood, the concept of *watan* or homeland, had been replaced by Islamic fundamentalism.

This explains how the Muslim Brotherhood became caught up in such a framework of debate and radicalisation. It also affords an insight into the Egyptian government's asserting of control and repression in the late 1990s.

The return to moderation

The attacks of 9/11 gave the Muslim Brotherhood the chance to show both Egyptian society and the world as a whole its incompatibility with the Salafist jihadist sectors¹¹. Though it once drew from their ranks, it had since distanced itself from them. The Brotherhood condemned international terrorism, as stated at the time by its spokesman Mohamed al-Hudaibi. This step represented a major turning point in its trajectory. It became increasingly necessary for the Muslim Brotherhood to show the distance it sought to maintain from the radical dynamic into which political Islamism had entered over the previous two decades. From that moment on, its leaders focused on the Brotherhood's conciliation with peaceful methods for transforming society, which did not imply renouncing its religious principles and values. In essence, it was a return to its ideological roots that would allow it to consolidate the trust which had spread among Egyptian society through its solidarity.

Despite its rejection of violence, the Muslim Brotherhood has never openly condemned the ideology and methods of al-Qutb. Rather, it had justified them as the logical “resistance” to government oppression, derived from its collusion with foreign powers. Its rejection of radical Islamism is, however, more evident, especially with regard to Al-Qaeda. Its specific positions on Palestine or Iraq still give rise to differing interpretations.

Even allowing for such ambiguities, the condemnation of the 9/11 attacks also led Mubarak to change his attitude towards the Muslim Brotherhood. This was not only a

¹¹ Two branches exist within the Salafists and which share significant conceptual differences. The “Salafist Jihadists” permit the use of violence – Jihad or Holy War– for the expansion of Islam; the “Preaching Salafists” reject this concept. Ever since Osama Bin Laden disassociated himself from the Saudi dynasty, this division has become far more evident but, doctrinally, both movements share a strict view on the application of the *Sharia*, thereby distancing them from the Muslim Brotherhood.

result of his own initiative, but also of encouragement from overseas. The underlying reality of that democratic appearance could no longer be ignored or forcefully covered up. This is because, among other reasons, its roots in society were such that its containment directly affected the increasingly negative public opinion towards the regime. Such disrepute grew significantly once the intention to continue the dictatorship through the succession of Gamal Mubarak as President was revealed¹².

On the other hand, true moderation of the Muslim Brotherhood seemed possible by way of its social visibility. If the Brotherhood could fit in with the political game, this would potentially lead to acceptance of the bases for a secular State and in which it would have a place. After all, the emergence at that time (2001) of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey showed the compatibility between political Islam and the democratic party system.

Thus, the most notable change in its history took place when the Brotherhood allowed some independent candidates, with their own identity as Muslim Brothers, to take part in the 2005 elections. The Brotherhood went on to acquire a hybrid status, whereby it was tolerated but not legalised. The results failed to calibrate its true acceptance in society, but they at least afforded the Brotherhood parliamentary representation: 88 seats out of 454. This was not enough to silence the critics of the regime. On the contrary; Mubarak decided to prolong his restrictive measures, keeping a third of the Brotherhood's member in prison, including some of its most important leaders. At local level, many of the elected Members saw their actions limited and were even unlawfully arrested.

Despite its social integration and its participation in the elections, during last years of the Mubarak regime the Muslim Brotherhood was considerably weakened due to internal rifts regarding the succession of its spiritual guide. This was not the first time that differences had surfaced. But this occasion was the first time they had been made public by the media. Such differences damaged its reputation by giving the impression that there was major attrition going on within the organisation.

Before the 2010 elections, the Brotherhood joined in with those parties calling for a boycott due to the lack of transparency in the electoral process with regard to candidacies outside the Democratic National Party. This again affected relations between the Brotherhood and the Mubarak regime as the Brotherhood felt it had been let down by such presidential manoeuvring, which one moment was favourable for its acceptance, the next moment for its marginalisation and persecution.¹³

Although the Movement's internal crisis had been resolved prior to the “25 January

¹² For more information on how this aspect influenced the outbreak of the “25 January Revolution”, see: Lampridi-Kemou, Athina: “Egipto la revolución inconclusa”, *Informe sobre las revueltas árabes*. Madrid, Ediciones del Oriente y el Mediterráneo, 2011. Pp. 59 y ss.

¹³ Nathan Brown: “The Muslim Brotherhood”. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (April 13, 2011). Pg. 8.

Revolution”, it nevertheless revealed the existence of different groups, subsequently resulting in spin-off parties when elections were held following the fall of the dictatorship.

In recent years, the Brotherhood has often stated that it pursues a peaceful transformation of the political regime. The fact that it joined in with the demonstrations of Tahrir Square may be interpreted as being evidence of this. Far from having had no participation in the revolutionary outbreak, the Brotherhood has benefitted most from the end of the regime.

The Brotherhood's presence in the “25 January Revolution”

When the demonstrations in Tahrir Square began, a group of younger, university activists from the Muslim Brotherhood fully participated from the first day. They did not do so as members of the Movement, but rather as Egyptian citizens against the dictatorial system. During the weeks-long mobilisations, they did not even appeal to the organisation's leadership, but rather they identified with new, young reformist leaders. Eventually, the whole Brotherhood became involved, including its most prominent representatives. However, the different steps that were taken during this process until Mubarak was finally overthrown brought into stark relief the rifts that existed between them. From the very outset, there was no consensus as to which position they should uphold. When Omar Suleiman, named Vice President during the “25 January Revolution”, opened a dialogue with the different members of the opposition, there was clear disagreement between the youths, who were seeking a total change of regime, and the elders, who were content to accept the usual set of concessions towards greater tolerance.

Today, the university youth linked to the Brotherhood tends to confer greater spontaneity on the organisation than that afforded by the elders. The youth makes use of new technologies for networking purposes. Around 70% of Egyptian website visitors are Muslim Brothers. The rejection of internal hierarchy in the election of posts is one of their doctrinal aspects. They are closer to understanding the practice of Islam as being a personal experience, which would in principle facilitate their empathy toward a multi-party system, even within a secular State. It is also obvious that a generation gap exists. Therein lies the main challenge for the Movement and its short-term ideological evolution. This does not mean that their ideals are no longer compatible with the pillars of Islam; indeed, many of the voices of reform uphold the *Ijtihad*¹⁴ principle, implying a capacity for renewal and adaptation to modern societies.

Beyond such ideological differences, it should be noted that the current doctrinal principles of the Movement are the result of a return - according to them a definitive return- to its moderate origins. These foundations have not been altered even by its entry into politics.

This led to a situation whereby, following the long road it has travelled and with an eye towards the first free elections in Egypt, held in late 2011/early 2012, the Mus-

14 Orti Pérez, Juan: “Islam y Democracia”, *Boletín de Información*, no. 280. Madrid, CESEDEN, 2003. Pg. 43.

lim Brotherhood founded three political parties: the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) (*Al-Hurriya wa al-Adala*), recently created; the Centre Party (*al-Wasat*), founded in 1996 but only now legalised; and the youth party, known as the Egyptian Current Party (*al-Tayyar al-Masry*).

The differences between the three new parties have more to do with their degree of pragmatism, in their desire for integration in democratic parliamentarianism and political tolerance, than with their ideology. Having taken this step, the expression used among the members of the Brotherhood is “Islamic democracy”, given that it does not regard the order of Islam as being incompatible with today's demands for freedom, citizen consultation, equal rights and education for women or the adoption of Western technology in everyday affairs.

Finally, while not being a uniform movement, certain elements are common to all branches of the Muslim Brotherhood. All of them regard their political agenda as being less important than their social, humanitarian, charitable or educational agenda, which is what they believe will help them to transform society into an exemplary society. It is hoped that this will spread the Muslim paradigm as the foundation of global governance. According to the legacy of al-Banna¹⁵, this goal must be achieved gradually, through peaceful phases of social and political reform.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

Its continuity as a Brotherhood

Since its foundation, the Muslim Brotherhood has survived the various regimes and governments. We shall now analyse some of the key factors that have allowed it to prolong its existence as a Brotherhood in spite of the difficulties. There are various reasons behind it.

The first is well known: its structured, widespread and consolidated organisation. As Essam el-Aryam, Vice President of the FJP, affirms: “the Brotherhood may become weakened, but it always recovers; it may get sick, but it never dies”¹⁶. Indeed, the unflagging attempts by its detractors to dismantle the Brotherhood have favoured its cohesion and resistance.

The Muslim Brotherhood has an extremely hierarchical organisation. The highest representative of the Movement is also its spiritual or general guide. Since 2010, this post has been held by Mohamed Badia, a conservative professor who is nevertheless

¹⁵ The legacy of al-Banna is contained in a series of letters that he wrote for his followers and which constitute what is known as the theory of “Gradualism”.

¹⁶ Al-Aryam, Essam: “Egypt: New Phase in Muslim Brotherhood”, 5 January 2010, <http://www.onislam.net/english/politics/africa/418513.html>.

willing to live in a multi-party and multi-religious regime. This post is decided by way of a secret ballot held within the *Shura*¹⁷ Council, a conference that brings together all the Brotherhood's representatives, who are in turn chosen within their local cells. Being a consultative and representative system, all its members are obliged to follow the recommendations of its spiritual guide.

Its national operations are structured through a central office (Guidance Office) in Cairo, connected to a network of provincial and local branches as well as a series of Departments that would be equivalent to government ministries. From here, the spiritual guide (general guide) draws up the guidelines that the Brotherhood must follow throughout the country and also deals with international relations. The Brotherhood has its own courts of law. It also has an “Intelligence Service”¹⁸.

The sustained funding of the Muslim Brotherhood supposedly comes from donations made by its members in Egypt and other Arab countries, but this is one of the most secretive issues among its representatives. Contributions would come from donations made by individuals and foundations, from fund-raising activities, from *zakat* or compulsory charity –the third pillar of Islam - and from business fund investments. The Movement has close ties with major Islamic banks around the world.

Apart from its robust organisation, other psychological factors help to explain its continuity. The Muslim Brotherhood has always identified society with a culture that goes beyond the Arab culture itself: namely, Islamic culture. This has spread and become consolidated as the alternative to Western culture. This is not only a religious perception, but rather a vision for society, its organisation and its institutions. That does not necessarily imply incompatibility with the West. Yet certain elements have indeed led to its being presented in that way, such as the secular Arab dictatorships that followed the colonial era.

The Arab elites copied the same methods as their colonial rulers instead of creating their own model, which remains a pending issue for the Arab-Muslim world. Thus, it should come as no surprise that, following the revolutions that led to their downfall, new systems are emerging based on Islam. The Muslim Brotherhood has found its place within this framework.

Secular policies, promoted by dictators, have led to Islam's being identified as the true channel for political opposition, thus denying this function to the remaining lay groups. The repression of Islamists has helped to foster this perception. At the same time, governments have exploited this argument in order to win over Western powers, which has inevitably given rise to this interpretation.

On the other hand, within the framework of the aforementioned dictatorships and whether through fear or convenience, the secular opposition has been unable to deal

17 Orti Pérez, Juan: Opus cit, Pag. 44.

18 Source: The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (June 2011).

with the regimes from within society. The limited criticism of governments made by Arab citizens have usually been issued from outside the country. This explains why the uprisings caught many non-Islamist sectors unawares and with no means of propaganda, whereas the Muslim Brotherhood had both a consolidated ideology and a solid structure.

Finally, the strength of the Muslim Brotherhood lies in its social actions, helped to an equal degree by the political circumstances. The succession of unassailable and corrupt governments has meant that the only aid targeting very large, disadvantaged sections of society has come from Muslim charity instead of the help that should be provided by public services. Such solidarity has been an essential vehicle for doctrinal propagation, but should not be regarded as the only method of persuasion. The Muslim Brotherhood has additional collective backing that has not arisen from such beneficence¹⁹. Namely, the support of liberal professionals, especially those linked to Medicine and Judicature, as well as many Trade Union leaders. This shows how the Brotherhood is seen as an actor representing the fight against social injustice in very broad terms, thereby encouraging allegiance.

For a long time and due to its clandestine nature, it was not possible to precisely gauge the Movement's capacity to influence society. Nevertheless, no-one was surprised at the social backing it received, firstly during the elections and, subsequently, in the race for the Presidency.

Alliances in parliamentary elections

Despite its definitive legalisation, the Muslim Brotherhood has continued to provoke mistrust among those who do not share its ideology. One of the reasons behind this is the insistent tendency to believe it has a hidden agenda²⁰. In other words, its moderate stances are no more than a smokescreen that has allowed it to enter the political arena in order to take power. Many believe the Brotherhood will ultimately reveal its true nature and introduce an Islamic State based on the *Sharia*.

This shows the importance of the current political climate in Egypt and in Arab society as a whole. The Brotherhood has gone from being marginalised to occupying centre stage in the political arena. Since its landslide victory in the general elections²¹, it has become the most influential force in the Constituent Assembly, charged with drawing up the new Constitution. Its members face the dilemma of evolving towards the definitive adoption of either a democratic or a fundamentalist system, wherein the

19 Lampridi-Kemou, Athina: "The Muslim Brotherhood: A Centrifugal or Centripetal Force?", *Revista d'Afers Internacionals*, CIDOB, no. 93-94, 2011. Pg. 6-8.

20 Nathan Brown: *Opus Cit.* Pg. 4.

21 The Freedom and Justice Party obtained 38% of the seats set aside for political parties, followed by the *al-Nour* Party with 29 %. <http://www.rtve.es/noticias/20120121/hermanos-musumanes-vencen-elecciones-legislativas-egipto/491424.shtml>.

latter would mean a reversal for the rights and liberties of Egyptian society. This does not seem to be the most likely option, although the FJP is under enormous pressure from the Salafists of the *al-Nour* party. However, we must not forget the different internal stances into which the Movement branched out in past decades, in accordance with the more or less radical tendencies.

In this regard, the existence of an alleged hidden agenda would bring the Muslim Brotherhood closer to the Salafists, but arguments exist which call for this approach to be ruled out. For instance, it is significant that the Brotherhood did not align itself with any Islamist forces during the general elections. On the contrary; even the most traditional wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, concentrated within the Freedom and Justice Party, had no objections to joining the Democratic Alliance coalition, which it shared with the liberal *Wafd* Party. As regards the other two parties, the Centre Party (*al-Wasat*) acted independently, whereas the Egyptian Current Party joined ranks with the Permanent Revolution block, which encompassed a diverse group of parties (left-wing, Coptic Christians and Sufis). Such positioning does not therefore reveal the much-feared hidden agenda. This does not mean the Brotherhood intends to renounce its religious profile. All indications point toward the Muslim Brotherhood's carrying forward the prejudices - well-founded or otherwise - in which it has been caught up for so many years. This is one the biggest challenges it currently faces: gaining the trust of society, both in Egypt and beyond.

Little has been said about the relations between the Muslim Brotherhood and the approximately six million Egyptian Sufis, many of which pertain to the Liberation Party. As happens elsewhere in the Arab world, such ties may prove hugely beneficial to the understanding of a plural, non-radical Islam. Indeed, the Sufi influence in rural areas of Egypt has traditionally carried a lot of weight, which would imply a trend towards the rapprochement of the two tendencies. We should not forget the importance that the rural vote has had for the Brotherhood's electoral success, since it has managed to attract the marginal classes through its charity that extends beyond the doctrinal differences between *Sunnis* and Sufis. In the best case scenario, within the framework of these new circumstances arising from the “Arab Spring”, it is possible that the necessary ideological maturity for bringing together political Islamism and Sufism may emerge. This has fuelled intellectual debate (including that of Hassan al-Banna²² himself) within the different Muslim societies for many years.

Among the Islamist sectors, overcoming the clientelism of the different movements or branches of Islam towards a nationalist stance represents a step forward in the consolidation of a national and plural State. This is the essence of the message that most Muslim Brotherhood leaders tried to transmit from the moment they joined the “25 January Revolution”. And so it was maintained during its general election campaign, paving the way for the Brotherhood's incorporation into the dynamics of political parties coexisting with other secular parties. As illustrated by the previous

22 Burgat, Françoise: *Islamism Face to Face*. Barcelona, Bellaterra, 2000. Pg.109-114.

example, the efforts of Mohamed Mursi have been following the same line since he became President of the Republic in June 2012. This is an important aspect within a society that is facing a new political reality, which does not involve dismantling the system itself, only the authoritarianism. A new reality in which the middle classes may come to power with their own social conscience.

Yet instead of this analysis, what predominates among observers is a predisposition to confuse the positions of the Muslim Brotherhood with those of the Salafists, for whom there is no hidden agenda whatsoever. They are highly transparent in their desire to convert the changes into a radical Islamic revolution. Indeed, this is the greatest temptation for the followers of the majority Freedom and Justice Party: to ultimately become engulfed in this context of religious fanaticism. As stated by Essam al-Eriam during the first elections²³, the FJP has distanced itself from the Salafist members of the *al-Nour Party*. In contrast, he called for unity among all the Muslim Brotherhood, dispersed within the three parties. Even after being backed by the most radical sectors in the presidential elections, the evolution towards moderation announced by the Brotherhood was carried through. By way of illustration, amid the controversy over its desire to monopolise the draughting of the Constitution²⁴, the Brotherhood refused to include an article proposed by the Salafists asserting the “sovereignty of Allah”.

Other regional circumstances may curb this trend toward Islamic radicalism. On the one hand, jihadist Salafism has been in a state of confusion since the death of Bin Laden. It seemed that the Arab uprisings had left the most radical members devoid of arguments, but the support received in the elections may make it necessary to refine this conclusion to a certain extent. However, the notoriously radical behaviour of the Salafist community and its efforts to remain isolated from society as a whole may prove to be a major barrier when it comes to imposing its objectives. They will not free society from violent episodes, but they will provide it with pretexts to react against them. If, on the contrary, progressive integration occurs, they will in all likelihood become more moderate and find their own niche among the Muslim Brotherhood voters.

On the other hand, we must not overlook the fact that the “25 January Revolution” had marked Arabic and nationalist overtones. This again suggests that any attempt to transform Egypt into an Islamic State will spark a strong social response. This is how the Muslim Brotherhood seems to have read the situation. It seems aware that it has been able to exploit a context that was not created by the Brotherhood itself. What is more, it is not exactly appropriate to establish this division between secular and religious sectors. Even though such a split may occur, it is not what characterised the general mobilisation of Egyptian society.

23 Read the unequivocal statements from Essam al-Eriam, distinguishing the concept of *Sharia* upheld by the Freedom and Justice Party from its understanding by the *al-Nour Party*. <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/04/180672.html>.

24 Abdu Hassanein, Mohamed: Egyptian Constituent Assembly close to finalizing Constitution, in *Asharq Alawsat*, 6 October 2012. <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&cid=31336>.

The Muslim Brotherhood is thus understood to have been pressured, during its constitutional work, into seeking a balance between those who fuelled the revolution and those who now intend to exploit its outcome. Amid this situation, the Brotherhood itself is shifting its ideas towards a model that will allow it to govern society.

The political system model following ascent to the Presidency

The Muslim Brotherhood took a major step forward by deciding to present a candidate for the Presidential elections. In June 2012, Mohamed Mursi narrowly defeated Ahmed Shafiq, former minister of the Mubarak regime²⁵. This fact is representative of the complexity involved in avoiding social fragmentation by way of the Republic Presidency. It entails creating a model which, while remaining true to those voting for Islamism, is also compatible with the other secular and progressive reality of Egypt.

Among the arguments that afford an understanding as to the proximity or estrangement between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists, we can highlight the one relating to the future political system. The Muslim and democratic Turkish model presents a far more inclusive and persuasive model than the one offered by the more radical Islamists. Yet we cannot again assume that it will be easy to copy other models, even one in which the religious option is compatible with the democratic dynamic. There is no similarity between the historical trajectory of the Turkish political system and that of Egypt; even less so in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed, the Justice and Development Party, founded in 2001 by the current Prime Minister of Turkey, Tayyeb Erdogan, acts upon the foundations of a secular State, but this is not the State model sought by the followers of al-Banna. In Egypt, there is intense debate between the secular conception of the State, defended by the liberals, and the denominational version of the Islamists. Faced with the likely electoral victory of the latter, the moral authority of the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Ahmed al-Tayyeb, was consulted in an attempt to resolve this controversial issue. In a document accepted by both parties, the future State was defined as “modern, democratic and constitutional”, but which must be governed by the *Sharia*, meaning it would be denominational. As the Brotherhood itself affirms, denominational governance does not necessarily conflict with a respect for religious plurality. Yet it obviously differs significantly from the Turkish model.

For the Muslim Brotherhood, community values have priority over individual liberties and rights, a debate which must be resolved through the application of democracy. Therefore, part of the ideological evolution of these sectors will have to incorporate this change. Some observers point out that this principle had not been a barrier to political participation in the 2005 elections. But its effects have not been tested within a regime controlled by Mubarak's party.

.....

25 In the Presidential elections, it obtained 51.73% of the votes compared to the 48.27% of its rival, Ahmed Shafiq. <http://www.rtve.es/noticias/20120624/islamista-mursi-vencedor-elecciones-presidenciales-egipcias/539427.shtml>.

Following the strengthening of the Brotherhood, thanks to the overwhelming electoral support it received from Egyptian society, Mohamed Badie stressed²⁶ his intention to reconcile Islamic doctrine and democratic values, in reference to the *Shura* or consultation. However, the panorama remains somewhat ambiguous in terms of their aspirations regarding the change they expect from Egyptian society.

This confusion favours the conspiracy theories of those who still fear that it is all nothing more than a game of words. Indeed, those who regard it as such believe that the flexibility shown by the Muslim Brotherhood leaders is simply a new stage in the theory of “Gradualism”, as described by al-Banna himself. In other words, we would be facing a further step forward in the process of applying the *Sharia* to individuals, the family, society and the system of government, ultimately culminating in the restoration of Caliphate.

In late November 2011, Yusuf Qaradawi²⁷, a disciple of the Founder and a spiritual guide for the Muslim Brotherhood, launched a *fatwa* reflecting this process towards Islamic governance. In his speech, Badie would seem to have echoed this. While it does not represent the Freedom and Justice Party, it does form part of its ideologies.

The goals presented by this party in its electoral programme also leave room for possible misinterpretations of this fusion of a modern, democratic State based on the application of the *Sharia*²⁸ according to the guidelines set out by *al-Azhar*. This may ultimately affect not only certain social norms, but the economic system as well.

In short, virtually everything said by those connected to the FJP can be given a second interpretation. Their public statements reveal signs of progress being made as regards liberties, albeit with some nuances. In view of such circumstances, it is hard to discern the true stance of the Muslim Brotherhood in the medium term. The most high-profile leaders of the Brotherhood seem to have changed their discourse as the months went by. Nor is it easy to tell when they are speaking on a personal level or on behalf of the Movement. Or to gauge the influence that the more charismatic or traditional leaders may have. The internal division when it comes to forming political parties thus reveals the existence of a generation gap. The university youth pertaining to the Brotherhood coincide in terms of their ideological foundations, but probably not as regards their political realisation.

26 Halawa, Omar: “Brotherhood close to achieving its ultimate goal, says Badie” in Egypt Independent, 29 December 2011. <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/574431>.

27 Yusuf al-Qaradawi returned to Egypt from his exile in Qatar in February 2011. He was one of the members of the Muslim Brotherhood who took part in the protests of Tahrir Square. At that time, his sermons called for unity between Muslims and Coptic Christians in the fight against the Mubarak dictatorship. As a Sunni leader, he has tremendous influential capacity, channelled through his programme on the *Al-Jazeera* network, “*al-Sharia wal-Hayat*” (*Sharia* and Life), his website “*OnIslam*” and such works as “*Islam: The Future Civilization*”. <http://www.andrewbostom.org/blog/2011/12/09/>.

28 OnIslam and News Agencies: “Policies of Egypt’s Brotherhood (Factbox)”, Monday 05 December, 2011. <http://www.onislam.net/english/news/africa/454911-policies-of-egypts-brotherhood-factbox.html>.

Aside from what the political future of Egypt may have in store, following its victory in January's parliamentary elections and the Presidential elections of June 2012, the Muslim Brotherhood has undeniably entered a new phase in its history.

The Muslim Brotherhood's relations with other social forces

The Egyptian Armed Forces, traditionally allied with the government, have been slow to assimilate the political transition, thus remaining a disquieting actor in the immediate aftermath of the revolution. This may be understood in broad terms, yet far more so if we talk about their relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood.

Following the downfall of President Mubarak, they became the two leading actors on the Egyptian stage. The Army had been the instrument most commonly used to repress and persecute the Brotherhood, so the difficulty in their mutual understanding was easy to foresee. Yet the “25 January Revolution” meant a radical shift in the attitudes of both.

The Muslim Brotherhood's relations with the Armed Forces began to change with the outbreak of protests. For a while, they both agreed on the need for a swift political transition. However, throughout 2011, but especially once the strength of the Islamists became clear (more so the Salafists than the Brotherhood), the military was reluctant to hand over the reins of power so easily. In any case, contact between the Superior Council of the Armed Forces and the Brotherhood has always been tenuous; or it has revealed major differences as regards the principles of the transition.

For months, the social unrest arising from this attitude on the part of the Military was seen as a risk that could have provided an opportunity to spark a military coup, wherein the most immediate losers would have been the Muslim Brotherhood since it had benefited the most from this new context²⁹. For this reason, the Freedom and Justice Party ended up adding to the harsh criticisms coming from other groups against the governing role of the military leadership.

The clearest example of these tense relations came in August 2012, when Mursi relieved Field Marshal Tantawi as Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces and Minister of Defence. The standoff between the Government and the Military had intensified following dissolution of the Parliament by the Field Marshal two months earlier. The visit by the US Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, proved to be the final endorsement for Mursi to take such a step³⁰. Predictably, this measure was to favour the decline of military power and, consequently, political change.

29 Saad al-Katatni, elected President of Parliament on 23 January 2012 following the electoral victory of the FJP, used his inaugural speech to thank the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces for fulfilling the promise it made to the Egyptian people to hold elections.

30 Al-Jazeera, 16 July 2012. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/07/2012715234146640765.html>.

The fall from power of the military leaders has been seen as a step in the right direction for the transition. This may encourage other secular sectors to collaborate with the President, given that the imposing of a new secular dictatorship would be unfeasible or undesirable. Egyptian society is aware that a return to the previous system could have unforeseeable consequences for the country, as well as for the Middle East and the Maghreb.

The Coptic Christians are the other sector that raises question marks over its relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood. The possibility of now being able stand in the 2005 elections led to the youngest and most well-educated sectors of the Movement to also acknowledge the sovereignty of the people, the democratic alternation and the rights of the minorities. Many even changed how they dressed by switching to Western styles. This step had a positive influence on bringing the Muslim Brotherhood and Coptic Christians closer together.

In December 2010, an attack took place on a church in Alexandria during the celebration of the Coptic Christmas. An attempt was made to lay the blame on Islamist groups, though vague details began to emerge pointing to a possible connection with the Mubarak regime. This was taken as a further attempt to justify the control and repression of the Muslim Brotherhood whereby, once this came to light, a situation of unprecedented solidarity arose between Coptic Christians and Muslims. When the first demonstrations in Tahrir Square began, the effects of this presidential manoeuvre could still be strongly felt. The opposition to the dictatorship ultimately achieved a unity which has become a matter of fact within Egyptian society. But, over time, attempts have been made to manipulate this.

The outbreak of mobilisations was the chance to highlight a possible, and now present, reality: the relationship between the Brotherhood and the Coptic Christians, who numbers amount to some 10 million Egyptians. During the outset of the "Arab Spring", the conciliatory tone between both communities and adopted by the Brotherhood was maintained. However, there is no denying the deterioration of the situation for the Christians as society has moved deeper into the transition process. The strength of religious Muslim extremism in the elections, especially with the rise of Salafism, has gradually weakened the Coptic Christian community, which is often a target for violence.

The initial hopes of the Christian community, focused on overcoming its prevalent condition as second-class citizens through democratisation, are still far from becoming a social reality. In the short term, their circumstances remain ambiguous, but not devoid of progress. For instance, the draughting of the new Constitution will maintain the *Sharia* as a source of law, though non-Muslims such as Christians and Jews will be able to turn to their own legal systems for civil matters. It is an accommodating, yet discriminatory, feature. Neither should it be overlooked that a Coptic Christian representative, along with a Salafist and a woman, has been included among the presidential advisers.

The role of the military and Christians within society will depend directly upon decisions closely connected to the evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood.

THE TRANSNATIONALISM OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

The Muslim Brotherhood in other Arab countries

The constant persecution suffered by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has favoured its expansion in other Arab countries. Among others, there are branches in Syria, Jordan, Sudan, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia and Morocco; and, in the Gulf, in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait.

Since the 1940s, similar movements in terms of organisation and objectives have emerged in these countries. Their nature and performance capability have differed, according to the degree of tolerance or repression of each government. They have each gone through different phases. They have even become integrated into political institutions. Normally it is within the framework of municipal elections when they initiate their incorporation into the party system. Because their social work is what ensures them a large number of votes. All such communities are connected to the central Egyptian Movement, particularly so in regard to doctrinal aspects, though they remain virtually independent in terms of their actions. Despite this, they maintain ties that give the Movement an international dimension; i.e., a Global Brotherhood which repeats the structured organisation described above.

Up to this point, the transnationalism of the Brotherhood can hardly be called novel. But it can in other aspects. The first refers to the tools used for dissemination purposes. “Deterritorialisation”³¹ has definitely been helped by Internet social networks, which were used in the mobilisations in both Tunisia and Egypt. As a consequence, the second aspect refers to the fact that, beyond their mere presence, what has been produced is a strengthening of their influential capacity. Indeed, links with the Brotherhood³² itself or with other Islamist movements and which until now had been very weak are starting to multiply. In this regard, particular mention should be made of Tunisia and Libya, where there have also been occurrences and which, within the revolutionary framework, have completely changed their situation.

The Tunisian Muslim Brotherhood are concentrated in the al-Nahda Party, led by Rachid Ghannusi, who has now returned from exile in Britain following the fall of the Ben Ali regime. Its stance is more extremist than that taken by the Brotherhood in other countries.

The landslide victory of the Islamists in Tunisia has been one of the most astonishing developments within the panorama that arose in the aftermath of the dictatorships.

³¹ Roy, Oliver: *El Islam mundializado. Los musulmanes en la era de la globalización*. Barcelona, Bellaterra, 2003. Pg.169-187.

³² Due to the success of the FJP in the elections, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood sent a delegation to Cairo led by Faruq Tayfur, representing the leader of the Syrian Brotherhood.

Contrary to what was expected in Egypt, the rise of the Tunisian Muslim Brotherhood was not expected to reach the levels that it has achieved. Nor was it foreseeable that the Salafists would gain such momentum; they are currently seen as one of the main obstacles to consolidation towards a process of democratisation. Neither the high level of education among Tunisian society, nor the economic level of the middle classes - despite the sharp rise in unemployment over recent years - nor the country's political culture suffice to explain this drastic change in the situation³³.

In Libya, the Muslim Brotherhood was also strongly repressed by Colonel Gaddafi. The problem facing the Brotherhood and Libyan society as a whole is not only whether to enter the democratic game, but rather one of creating the system itself, since the previous regime was not based on the existence of political parties.

The Libyan Muslim Brotherhood formed part of the National Transition Council that was established during the war of 2011 to lay the plans for a new regime once the dictatorship had fallen. Prior to the first elections to be called since 1969, Mohamed Sawan has been the central pillar of the Justice and Construction Party, which has shown itself to be ideologically open to the introduction of political changes within Libyan society, despite its Islamist profile. It failed to gain a majority in the elections of July 2012, thereby halting the dynamic rise of Islamism that began with the "Arab Spring".

Relations with other Islamist movements

The Muslim Brotherhood has given its support to certain Islamist movements, regarding their actions as the compelled "resistance" to foreign occupation of Islamic lands, as understood in their doctrine. Such has been the case of *Hamas* in Palestine, *Hezbollah* in Lebanon or the Islamic Party in Iraq.

The Muslim Brotherhood was always the reference movement for *Hamas*, which was created as a result of the Palestinian Intifada in 1987. Its spiritual leader and founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood from the 1970s onward. In turn, they have always recognised the Palestinians' right to "resistance" against Israeli presence in the Middle East. This position has never altered. The Brotherhood has always been openly against Israel. Over the years, the discourse upheld by the Brotherhood in this regard has not distinguished between the civil Israeli occupation and the military operations of the Tel Aviv government. This argument has led the Muslim Brotherhood to condone terrorist actions, defined as legitimate acts. The case of the *Hamas* Movement, into which many members are integrated, is a perfect illustration of such behaviour.

In 2006, through the Change and Reform List (*kaa'mat al-taga'ir ual-islam*), *Hamas* obtained a clear victory in the parliamentary elections, whereby Ismail Haniya became the Prime Minister. The international reaction was not slow in coming, de-

33 Algora Weber, M^a Dolores: "Túnez busca un modelo", *Foreign Policy en español*, 3 August 2012. <http://www.fp-es.org/tunez-busca-un-modelo-arabe>.

spite the legitimacy of the elections: an immediate blockade of the Gaza Strip was put in place. Soon after, the fratricidal struggle between the factions in favour of *Hamas* and those supporting *al-Fatah* led to the breakdown of relations with the Palestinian National Authority. *Haniya* declared self-government in Gaza. The situation fully deteriorated in the aftermath of the Israeli attacks between 2008 and 2009.

More than twenty MPs linked to *Hamas* have been imprisoned by Israel, including the President of the Palestinian Parliament, *Aziz Dweik*. The effects of the “Arab Spring” in Egypt in relation to this situation have led to close ties being forged between *Haniya* and *Badie*, who has invited the Palestinian to join the Global Muslim Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood in Lebanon has its own organisation; the Islamic Association (*al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyya*). But they have also been associated with the Party of God (*Hezbollah*)³⁴. The Muslim Brotherhood's influence on this movement is complex due to the circumstances surrounding it. While the Brotherhood has attracted the more moderate wing of the Lebanese Islamists, who claim to have dissolved their armed group known as “*al-Fajr*”, other sectors have become divided between the power of *Al-Qaeda* and the *Shiite* predominance of *Iran*. The first are associated with the Salafist Jihadists of “*Fatah al-Islam*”, a terrorist group fed by Palestinian refugees from southern Lebanon, and the latter, with *Hezbollah*. This country therefore represents one of the scenarios in which the struggle between the two great branches of Islam has best been revealed.

Following the Lebanese War of 2006, the influence of *Hezbollah* on Lebanese life was irrepressible. Its leader, *Hassan Nasrallah*, became very popular among the Lebanese people, regardless of their religious beliefs. The subsequent Israeli attacks on Gaza propitiated unity between *Nasrallah* and *Haniya*. In both cases, the usual formula for penetration, namely social work, was enhanced by a widespread social awareness as to their common purpose: resistance against Israel. Following these events, *Hezbollah* strengthened its presence in Parliament in the 2009 elections.

The “Arab Spring” could bring about a significant and surprising change in Lebanon. Not to its political system, which is firmly established due to its secular and multicultural profile, but to internal conduct of *Hezbollah*. It will all depend on how the remaining Islamist movements in the region evolve. This may be a complex process, as the transnational ties in the area are also complex. If the current spiritual guide of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood manages to steer the leader of *Hamas*, *Haniya*, towards moderation, it would be highly likely that they could induce some Lebanese sectors to adopt the same moderation. This would have an effect on the Lebanese Brotherhood, already integrated into society to a large degree, which could in turn

³⁴ Hamzeh, Nizar: “Lebanon's Islamist and local politics: a new reality”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21 no. 5, 2000. Pgs 739-759.

sway *Hezbollah*, thanks to its close relationship with Palestinian Islamists³⁵. Should this relationship chain prove successful, it would bring about a major change in the region³⁶. While it may not be wise to become overly optimistic regarding the outcome, neither should such a political shift be ruled out. Since mid-2012, there has been a gradual estrangement in the relations between Iran and *Hamas*. However, the biggest problem presented by these groups would continue to be the disarming of their militia, even if they were dissolved.

In relation to this possible evolution of the movements in Palestine and Lebanon, another conditioning factor is the worsening internal situation in Syria. *Hamas* has established the headquarters of its delegation on the outskirts of Damascus, so there are now ties between the Palestinian movement and the Brotherhood in this country. But even more importantly, the worsening situation directly affects the ties between Syria and Iran, since the *Shiite* Alawi minority of Bashar al-Asad's government is a means of communication for the Ayatollahs' influence. The possible triumph of a moderate Islamism, arising from the "Arab Spring", could stem the covert Iranian interference in the Syrian government. Pending the outcome of the people's rebellion against the Syrian regime, one may foresee that the ideological struggle between the regional powers will once again be settled therein.

If the situation in Syria changes radically and the current President is overthrown, the Muslim Brotherhood would have considerable support that could catapult it to power³⁷. From that moment on, Syria's ties with Iran would be weakened and could be replaced by Turkey. Despite the fact that the Turkish model does not correspond exactly to the aspirations of the Brotherhood, Egypt's recently created Freedom and Justice Party has clearly been inspired by Erdogan's model. And this may be the same line chosen by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood.

However, we must also consider the possible rise of Salafism, given Saudi Arabia's support of the rebels. This would seem the best way to prevent Turkey from gaining a more dominant foothold in the region. This scenario would mean Iran losing influence in the region. That would in turn weaken *Hezbollah*, who also supports al-Assad. Therefore, the "Arab Spring" could paradoxically lead to a re-Islamisation of the Arab

35 "Badie meets Haniya in Cairo", *al-Masry al-Youm* (Egypt Independant), 27 December 2012. <http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/571276>.

36 Al-Qaradawi, acknowledged leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and who reappeared in Egypt amid the "25 January Revolution", has for many years fluctuated between criticising and supporting *Hezbollah*. He rejects the movement's ambitions to spread *Shiism* in *Sunni* countries, but admires Nasrallah's firm stance against Israel.

37 It is thus understandable that the demonstrations originated in the city of Hama, home to the greatest concentration of Syrian members of the Muslim Brotherhood and where many were slaughtered in the 1980s. From the very outset of the demonstrations in Syria, Vice President Abdel Halim Jaddam, who was a member of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood in 2005, has been promoting international intervention. This leader, who actually came from the Ba'ath Party, is highly criticised by some members of the Brotherhood in Syria.

world, but different from that of previous decades. Likewise, it would be accompanied by the recuperation of Arab nationalist spirit, distancing it from the Iranian positions.

In Iraq, the Muslim Brotherhood has united under the banner of the Iraqi Islamic Party (*Hizb al-Islami al-'iraqi*), yet they do not regard themselves as part of the Brotherhood in spite of its ideological influence. As happened in Egypt under Nasser, it was repressed in Iraq by Saddam Hussein during the Ba'ath regime. The party was banned from the 1970s onward, leading to its radicalisation. In 2003, it was made legal once more in exchange for its collaboration with the transitional government until, one year later, it retired from the political scene as a consequence of the bombing of Fallujah³⁸. It later re-joined the system. It has some ministers within Maliki's government; at the same time, it is also his most powerful opposition.

Both *Hezbollah* and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood blame the sectarian divisions in Iraq on the US occupation. They blame radical groups for the religious intolerance that is destroying the country. They thus expressed themselves following the attack on a Baghdad church in November 2010³⁹. The current Vice President of Iraq, Tareq al-Hashimi, who is accused of being a terrorist and was recently sentenced to death by an Iraqi court, belonged to the Iraqi Islamic Party until 2009. Since 2011, he has been living in Ankara under the protection of Erdogan's government with the assurance that he will not be extradited.

THE MAJOR POWERS AND THE BROTHERHOOD

The main issue faced by the international community is the lack of trust in political Islam, which is only sometimes justified. The Muslim Brotherhood is not exempt from such mistrust. While it is perfectly true that the Brotherhood has spawned violent groups that have embraced terrorism, it also contains a multitude of Muslims who strive to bring about a social transformation based on Islamic morality.

The “Arab Spring” has aided the inevitable. The Muslim Brotherhood, as part of political Islam, has become a key player in terms of relations with the Arab world. This calls for a re-thinking of international relations.

In turn, the Muslim Brotherhood's access to the decision-making process will force it to adjust its ideological positioning for the sake of the pragmatism that is required for any Egyptian government.

38 The visible head of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, originally came from the Iraqi Islamic Party.

39 “Solidaridad musulmana con las víctimas cristianas de Bagdad” (4 November 2010), <http://www.welislam.com>.

Therefore, the influential capacity which the “Arab Spring” has afforded the Brotherhood entails a major challenge both for the Brotherhood and for all other international actors. The maintaining of international peace and security will depend greatly upon both the internal and external willingness to understand this new reality.

United States

The United States does not see the revolutionary changes in the Arab world as a political issue, but rather as an issue of international security. This view entails a risk in itself, such as pushing the US government to go on the defensive. From a viewpoint of political realism, which guides the actions of the White House, no State goes against its own interests, but how such interests are managed is the overriding question.

The US has maintained diplomatic relations with other Islamist movements when these have become part of the political system, such as in the case of Morocco, Jordan or Kuwait. Yet, in Egypt, there has so far been virtually no contact at all. As regards Hamas in Palestine, contact is forbidden by law.

International order is dependent on whether Washington views the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood as a threat or as a chance to redefine its presence in the Middle East.

Relations between Washington and the Muslim Brotherhood has been affected by the events of the last decade. From the condemning of 9/11 through to the “Arab Spring”, the US government has maintained different attitudes, though the general stance has been one of acknowledgement.

For the Muslim Brotherhood, contacts with the US have always been complicated, which explains why such contact was usually denied while it was merely a Movement. When some of the more reformist members were incorporated into the Egyptian parliament in 2005, this position began to change.

Since the outset of the “25 January Revolution”, President Obama has sought to establish closer relations with the Brotherhood, which has brought him considerable criticism at home. This policy shows that the security criterion holds sway over all other criteria. What concerns the White House and is motivating this new approach is not so much the institutionalisation of the new Egyptian regime as the situation in which Israel is soon going to find itself. From now on, the US will have to rethink how it intends to maintain its influence in the region. To do so, it will need to establish an open dialogue with the Muslim Brotherhood.

Within this framework, the Turkish model appears to be the best formula for simplifying the management of its relations in the region. However, we must reiterate that there is no guarantee that this will be the profile of the new political system in Egypt. As regards the Arab uprisings, these have strengthened the Palestinian position, which can already be seen through the improved internal relations between *Hamas* and the Palestinian National Authority, which led to a request for the Palestinian State to be admitted into the United

Nations in September 2011⁴⁰. The increasingly probable end of Bachar al-Asad's Syrian presidency can be interpreted in various ways, such as the cited Iran connection.

Israel

The case of Israel best reflects the Brotherhood's ideology in justifying the “resistance” of the Palestinians, which Islamist groups regard as a sacred duty. Such sentiment runs deep in these movements. They may become part of the political scene, they may even recognise the existence of the State of Israel, but the Israeli authorities are fully aware that regional tensions are not going to disappear. Therefore, as far as the Israelis are concerned, the conflict in the region is here to stay.

The increasing Islamic influence on the governments in the region gives rise to two options. The first is to attempt to reach a balance through open dialogue with those groups that have become part of the political system, among which the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is the most important. The second and the least desirable due to its dramatic consequences would be to raise tensions to such a point as to trigger an armed conflict.

Just as Israel has already negotiated with *Hamas* and *Hezbollah*, it can also negotiate with the Muslim Brotherhood, who are far more willing to maintain a peaceful co-existence in the region. The Brotherhood's majority in the Egyptian parliament may now alter the situation. The Muslim Brotherhood regards the agreements between Egypt and Israel as null and void. Without making specific mention of the agreements signed in 1979, two issues have been announced that may result in major changes. The first refers to the willingness to have social support for an extension of the treaties. The second refers to the freedom to respond should Israel breach the agreement.

However, all statements from the leaders of the Brotherhood are highly ambiguous at this time. They seem intent on subjecting the treaties to a parliamentary decision, as opposed to the national referendum that had been promised. In any case, the electoral results suggest little variation in the final decision. The most we can hope for is a renegotiation that is more favourable towards the Egyptian position; an issue that will remain pending until the allocation of portfolios within the new government is known. The appointment of a Minister of Foreign Affairs from the FJP may trigger conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean regions.

If these new politics are imposed on the region, two conditional factors come to light. Firstly, the political weight that the Muslim Brotherhood will acquire in other countries. Secondly, Israel's energy dependency in regard to Egypt. Unless further major developments occur in the region, the Israeli government will have to show that is prepared to make greater concessions to the Palestinians.

⁴⁰ In October 2011, Palestine was granted admission to UNESCO as a Member State.

To all of the above, we must add another new factor which Israel will have to address: the strategical shift which the US intends to implement. President Obama, who raised new hopes in his foreign policy through his speech in Cairo, has come up against the inflexibility of Prime Minister Netanyahu regarding his policy on settlements⁴¹, which has stalled the negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis. Such debilitation has harmed the image of President Obama, who has failed to bring the Peace Process to fruition. Within this scenario, the White House has decided to make the Muslim Brotherhood its new partner.

To sum up, if the government in Tel Aviv were able to view these changes as an opportunity rather than a threat, possibilities would arise to moderate certain postures maintained by their neighbours.

Europe

The Muslim Brotherhood is present in many European States. Europe has been one of the most common safe havens for those fleeing oppression in Egypt and other countries. During the Cold War, Europe's rejection of the policies introduced by Nasser became a pole of attraction for many members of the Brotherhood. Immigrant communities frequently include groups associated with this Movement. Upholding the Islamic morality of those who have abandoned the lands of Islam has always been one of the aims of the organisation. The Muslim Brotherhood has always tried to keep a low profile in public life, especially so after the attacks of 9/11 through fear of being confused with Salafist sectors. Despite this, in countries such as the UK, France or Germany major hubs exist which are indirectly connected to the Brotherhood. While it has never renounced its peaceful ambition to have the *Sharia* become the moral template for society, in reality and regardless of their indoctrination, most live side by side with the political system just like everyone else.

In Europe, they both share and contribute towards the rejection of Israel, whereby some members become involved with left-wing parties that foster anti-Zionist campaigns and actions. Such people seldom have direct attachment to Islamist terrorist groups⁴². As would occur anywhere else, they are exposed to ideological radicalisation through the Salafist groups who have also penetrated into Europe.

Turkey

Within the framework of the “Arab Spring”, President Erdogan hopes to become a reference model for those promoting revolutionary change, whether through the prototype presented by his Justice and Development Party, particularly in the case of the Muslim Brotherhood, or through his actions within a democratic and secular system.

41 Algora Weber, M^a Dolores: “Las negociaciones palestino-israelíes en el proceso de paz de Oriente Próximo”. Documento de opinión, 24/2011. Higher School of National Defense Studies. http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2011/DIEEEO24_2011ProcesoPazOrienteProximo.pdf.

42 Source: The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center (June 2011).

Yet issues exist which raise doubts as to the influence that Turkey may have on the new Arab regimes. The balance of forces within the Egyptian parliament, inaugurated in January 2012 with a Muslim Brotherhood majority of 235 seats followed by *al-Nour* with 123, allows the draughting of a Constitution in which application of the *Sharia* can be accommodated far more significantly than that reflected in the Turkish Constitution, which was amended in 2010. In other words, once Egypt has overcome its social unrest, it is capable of creating a new model that acts as a far stronger pole of attraction than the Turkish model. The Turkish option would respond better to secular Egyptians, but these lack specific weight in public life. In the Turkish parliament, alongside the prominent Islamist group, the second major force is a secular social-democratic party. This is a different situation from that of Egypt, whereby the results will also differ.

This reality may affect the Turkish aspirations for its foreign policy towards the Arab world. Ankara's current opposition to Israel is the element connecting Turks and Arabs. But, once Egypt regains its role, Turkey may find itself being pushed out of region's diplomatic loop. The government that emerges in Cairo may be able to draw on Turkish mediation in the Middle East peace process, while maintaining its protagonism in the negotiations over Gaza. Especially now as it strengthens its ties with *Hamas* and holds the key for Agreements between Egypt and Israel.

However, Turkey's economic relations with Arab governments may become more successful and continuous. In spite of the internal reforms implemented by President Erdogan, Turkey is encountering an increasing number of obstacles to its possible admission into the European Union. It is clear that the Turks themselves are beginning to lose interest. The Arab world now represents a major opportunity to strengthen the Turkish economy, which has ably withstood the global crisis, but will doubtless establish trade links far removed from any bias Europe may have toward the region.

Iran and Saudi Arabia

The balance of power between the two major Islamic powerhouses may become significantly altered by the “Arab Spring”. Although it would appear that internal stability is being maintained in both Iran and Saudi Arabia, the long-term consequences will ultimately come to light.

In 2011, it produced major internal issues in Iran, despite the social mobilisations not having been openly successful. The Ahmadinejad regime has been forced to intensify its internal repression for fear of a revival of the Green Movement. For the last two years, meetings have been held among those with the stronger voices daring to question the Islamist system imposed by the Khomeini revolution. It is becoming ever more obvious that the regime lacks the decisiveness required to resist the onslaught from the revolutionary changes in the region calling for political pluralism and respect for human rights. If to this we add the pressure being exerted by the international powers, as a consequence of Iran's nuclear programme, it may well end up succumbing to the consequences of the mobilisations led by its Arab neighbours. The fates of

Iran and Syria have become even more closely connected within this context. The fall of al-Asad would mean an irretrievable loss for Iran's objectives as regards its penetration in the Middle East. However, under the current circumstances in Syria, he would be unable to survive without Ahmadinejad.

Saudi Arabia exerts its influence both directly and by means of the Gulf Cooperation Council. During the "Arab Spring", it saw the need to address, firstly, the *Shiite* influence in Bahrain, which it curbed by sending its own Armed Forces in March 2011 and, secondly, the situation in Yemen, the destabilisation of which has heightened the risk of its being exploited by the greatest enemy of the Saudi dynasty: Al-Qaeda.

The Saudi authorities have attempted to stifle the revolutionary success in terms of its potential affect on the Gulf region. In the remaining Arab countries, the Saudis have supported the monarchies, such as those of Morocco and Jordan, which so far seem to have escaped the consequences of the uprisings by introducing certain reforms, in addition to the legitimacy to rule enjoyed by their monarchs.

The outcome of the Egyptian elections would indicate that the Saudis have supported the Salafist groups of the *al-Nour* Party. Saudi politics does not share the moderation that has allowed the Brotherhood to join the party system; nor does it share the religious and political pluralism through which the Brotherhood strives to gain internal and international trust. Similarly, the demonstrations led by the more extremist groups in Cairo and Tunisia throughout 2012 have been supported by the Saudis.

The "Arab Spring" has led to the rise of a State that could rival the Saudi influence in the Gulf region: Qatar. The broadcasting of all Arab uprisings by its *Al-Yazeera* network, together with the heavy investment it makes in those countries, has afforded the Qataris a leadership status in the Arab world, which to some degree pits them against Saudi Arabia. The Qataris have managed to keep up with the changes, whereas the Saudis have resisted them. To this, we must also add the results of their funding, which is enabling many Arab countries to overcome the economic crisis, by which the Maghreb and the Middle East have not remained unaffected. The economic stability of those countries with new regimes is crucial for their progress. The government of Doha is therefore associated with the revolutions for having tried to exploit this context.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar share strategic interests in terms of the new opportunities presented by the revolutions and the common need to curb the power of Shi'ism within the Arab world. Though such an assessment may be premature, certain data would suggest a future estrangement between the two Gulf powers should the Irani threat weaken.

CONCLUSIONS

An increasing amount of data is being obtained which will soon allow us to make an assessment of the changes in Egypt and the Arab world, as well as the international dynamics.

The political normalisation of the Muslim Brotherhood has allowed the Movement to become integrated into the democratic game. Its balance and moderation will doubtless be one of the greatest challenges facing Egyptian society.

The Brotherhood, through its political party, will need to win over the trust of the secular parties, broad sectors of society and the Armed Forces. The only way this can happen is if it truly incorporates democratic values, pluralism and tolerance into its political ideology. It must also establish channels affording it compatibility with the practice of Islam.

If this transformation occurs, the Muslim Brotherhood may prove to be the chance for creating a model of governance that is extendible to the different Arab societies of the Maghreb and the Middle East. Without such doctrinal progress, the Brotherhood will be at the mercy of the influence exerted by Salafist groups. In which case, the Mubarak dictatorship could end up being replaced by an Islamist system, offering no guarantees for ensuring the success of the Tahrir Square revolution.

Therefore, the challenge for this movement will be its ability to evolve towards a political system to which its organisation will have to adapt. It is too soon to know which direction this new reality will take.

Although its positions on terrorism are somewhat blurred, by walking a line between what they regard as “resistance” to foreign occupation and unequivocal condemnation of attacks, the Brotherhood dissociates itself from the radical sectors.

In a best-case scenario, in the short term a peaceful re-Islamisation will be seen in the Mediterranean Arab nations. The Muslim Brotherhood belongs to the group of Islamist powers destined to transform the profile of this region over the coming years. Its definitive entry onto the political stage will enable it to reap the rewards of the renunciation of violence, which will help to strengthen Muslim transnationalism.

The international powers should not be expressing their concern over moderate political Islam, but rather those forces that inspire and promote radical movements, such as Salafism. The West's energy dependence on countries that have fundamentalist governments represents a barrier to its being able to contribute, from beyond the Arab world, to peaceful progress towards modernity. The spread of radical movements will be inevitable for as long as they are supported by heavy funding. In order that the “Arab Spring” may bear its fruits towards the creation of non-antagonistic political systems imbued with democratic values, foreign powers must address their own revolution; namely, the energy revolution.

A further conclusion that can be drawn from this study is the need to apply a long-term strategic vision for the Middle East. The changes in the Arab world do not only entail a period of transition for these societies. Due to their significance, they also imply changes for international politics as a whole. These transformations have been made from the inside up. Therefore, under no circumstances will international relations ever be the same as when the elites were in power.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALGORA WEBER, M^a Dolores: “Las negociaciones palestino-israelíes en el proceso de paz de Oriente Próximo”. Higher School of National Defense Studies. Documento de opinión, 24/2011.
- “Túnez busca un modelo”, *Foreign Policy en español*, 3 August 2012. <http://www.fp-es.org/tunez-busca-un-modelo-arabe>.
- BURGAT, Françoise: *Islamism Face to Face*. Barcelona, Bellaterra, 2000.
- CASA ÁRABE, “Atalaya sociopolítica de Casa Árabe”, no. 14, March-April 2011.
- CHATTERJI, Nikshoy C.: *History of Modern Middle East*. London, Oriental University Press, 1987.
- HAMZEH, Nizar: “Lebanon's Islamist and local politics: a new reality”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21 no. 5, 2000.
- GUTIÉRREZ DE TERÁN, Ignacio & ÁLVAREZ-OSSORIO, Ignacio: *Informe sobre las revueltas árabes*. Madrid, Ediciones del Oriente y el Mediterráneo, 2011.
- Lampridi-Kemou, Athina: “Egipto la revolución inconclusa”, *Informe sobre las revueltas árabes*. Madrid, Ediciones del Oriente y el Mediterráneo, 2011.
- “The Muslim Brotherhood: A Centrifugal or Centripetal Force?”, *Revista d’Afers Internacionals*, CIDOB, no. 93-94, 2011.
- MARTÍN, Javier: *Los Hermanos Musulmanes*. Madrid, Los Libros de la Catarata, 2011.
- NATHAN BROWN: “The Muslim Brotherhood”. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (April 13, 2011).
- ORTI PÉREZ, Juan: “Islam y Democracia”, *Boletín de Información*, no. 280. Madrid, CESEDEN, 2003.
- ROY, Oliver: *El Islam mundializado. Los musulmanes en la era de la globalización*. Barcelona, Bellaterra, 2003.