

Evolution and trends in the of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Light of the Qur‘ān and Sunnah

Abstract

After eighty-six years of existence, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) has become a well-known name around the world and it has attracted a lot of controversy and some applause to itself while claiming to further the interest of Muslims. Despite the ubiquitous nature which the Muslim Brotherhood has assumed in the news media around the world, the true character and agenda of the Muslim Brotherhood remains shrouded in uncertainty to many. This is because the Muslim Brotherhood has detractors and admirers in the West as well as in the Muslim world, for setting and pursuing a cultural and political agenda for Muslims around the world while harping these agenda on Islamic theology. Against this background, the article attempts to demonstrate the true nature of the Muslim Brotherhood by highlighting the activities of the organisation, against the injunctions of the Qur‘ān (The words of God sent to Prophet Muhammad through angel Jibril) and the Sunnah (Sayings, practices and tacit approval of the Prophet which along with the Qur‘ān constitute the primary source of Sharia) , as the Muslim Brotherhood evolve across time and space. The research demonstrates that the MB began its mission of Islamic acculturation by using a civil approach in its first decade of existence and it also employed violence in pursuit of its objective of promoting Islamic culture which it revised and discarded in the 70s for the original non-violent civil approach. Each of the approaches adopted by the Muslim Brotherhood is backed by the Sharia.

Introduction

The establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in 1928 by Egyptian school teacher, Hasan al-Banna, marked the beginning of a new kind of tension and conflict in the Egyptian society and indeed around the Muslim world where the vision of the Muslim Brotherhood reached. Since the second decade of existence of the Muslim Brotherhood till date, the group has been surrounded by controversies of different kinds in terms of its interpretation of the Muslim society and state and how it pursues its vision of the global ummah. These criticisms come from both within and outside the Muslim world with questions on the soundness of the Muslim Brotherhood’s theology. While scholars like Malik and Awadallah (2011) in their work, *The Economics of the Arab Spring*, Badmas L. Yusuf, (2009) in his *Sayyid Qutb, A Study of His Tafsīr*, Asem (2012) in *The Muslim Brotherhood*

from Opposition to Governance: Examining Classical and Contemporary Political Literature and Hussain in partnership with P. N. Howard (2013) in *Cascades? ICTs and the Fuzzy Causes of the Arab Spring*, have presented the Muslim Brotherhood with sympathetic tone, many western scholars present the group in negative light as seen in the works of W. Picket and M. Gardener (2005) in *The Book and the Sword: the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe*, Murr (2004) in *The Power of Ideas: Sayyid Qutb and Islamism*, and J.M. Bale (2009) in *Islamism and Totalitarianism*, among other scholars who suggest that the Muslim Brotherhood is a totalitarian, bloodthirsty and unaccommodating extremist group. This view of the MB fits into what El Aswad (2013) describes as “New Orientalism”. According to him, New Orientalism is the promotion of Islam as a religion characterised by anti-democratic and anti-modern outlook.

While the possibility of New Orientalism being at work cannot be foreclosed, it is not an uncommon for ideologies and other human enterprise to mutate into offshoots that have different shades and nuances. Sometimes, some of these derivatives are total departures from the original ideas or even counter ideas to the original philosophy. To insist that the Muslim Brotherhood has been immune to this possibility in its 80 year history, having traversed generations and borders, will amount to being parochial. Indeed, as closely associated as the words liberal and moderate are, Mazrui (2005) successfully demonstrates that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is liberal and conservative at the same time. Liberal in terms of its choice of allies but conservative in its interpretation and implementation of the Shariah. He illustrates how flexible and fluid states can be even when their philosophy is literalist Islam.

The Qur’ān is clear on the fact that people will always differ and that if Allah had wished, human beings will be a single community. The verse in reference ends the discussion by saying that people will never cease to differ (11:118). Without prejudice to this verse, the

Qur'ān in another chapter and verse (3:103) enjoins Muslims to unite and also evokes memory of the times of enmity between people who Islam later united and gave peace. In the interest of peace, the Qur'ān instructs Muslims to obey their leaders and it similarly recognises that disagreements are inevitable, in which case, the parties have to refer to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah as their arbiter thus:

مُتَّعِزَانِ تَنْ إِفْ مُكْنَمِ رَمَّالِ يِلْوُأُولُ وُسَّرْلِ أَوْعِي طُأَوَلَّالِ أَوْعِي طُأَوْنَمَآ نِي دَلِ أَهْيَآ أَيِ
سَحْ أَوْ رِي خَ لِكَلِ ذِرْخَالِ مَوِيْلِ أَوَلَّالِ ابْ نَوْنِ مَوْتِ مُتْنُكْ نِ لِ وُسَّرْلِ أَوَلَّالِ لِيْ لُ مَوْدِرَفِ

O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if ye do believe In Allah and the Last Day: that is best, and most suitable for final determination. (Qur'ān 4:59)¹

The Muslim Brotherhood attempts to give the Muslim world a leadership but members of the organisation also have differences and sometimes the differences are strong enough for aggrieved members to part ways with the MB.

Trends and evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood

1.1 Original philosophy

The founder of the Muslim brotherhood, Hasan Al-Banna did not adopt any single school of Islamic jurisprudence but left his followers with the decision to follow any of the Sunni schools of Islamic law (*Madhāhib*) as a precautionary measure against the possible fragmentation in the group. Al-Banna did this in an attempt to reduce Islam to its basic elements (MENA Report 2013) and halt the schisms and balkanisation between different sects and national identities in the Arab and Muslim World. Such schism which started on a large scale around 661 (C.E.) and its major legacy being the Sunni Shia divide. This,

Al-Banna was inclined to do, because of the exposure and background which he had to both Muslim Mystical (Sufi) and literalist (Salafi) training. In its first decade of existence, his Muslim Brotherhood existed as a civil society which sought to propagate Islam and carry out charitable activities with different types of programmes in the areas of education, health, juvenile care and distribution of wealth (the MENA Report, 2013; Yusuf 2009). Indeed, what the Muslim Brotherhood did was a redistribution of wealth in line with the philosophy of Qur'ān 59:7 which speaks of preventing circulation of wealth among a rich few thus:

What Allah has bestowed on His Messenger (and taken away) from the people of the townships,- belongs to Allah,- to His Messenger and to kindred and orphans, the needy and the wayfarer; in order that it may not (merely) make a circuit between the wealthy among you.

نَوْدُبْ عَافْ مُكْبَرِ أَنْ أَوْ عَدِحْ أَوْ هَمْ مُكْتَمُ إِهْدَه نَا

Verily, this brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Cherisher: Therefore serve me (and no other).

This, he attempted, with the strategy of relocating the headquarters of the Muslim Brotherhood from Ismailia where he was teaching to Cairo in 1932. The relocation of the Headquarters must have aided the expansion of the organisation all over Egypt in terms of geographic spread, and aided the growth in terms of the population of its members which Encarta puts at about 500,000 in the 1940s. It is apparent that throughout the history of the Brotherhood, it always tried to return to development of the individual Muslim through spiritual development and provision of social support after the group might have strayed into politics, as politics often lured the MB away from its original objective and strategy.

1.2 Politicisation of the Muslim Brotherhood

The Muslim Brotherhood first became involved in politics in the late 1930s when it assumed a stance against British colonialism and subsequently, against the creation of the state of Israel in Palestine. This is the first instance of revision of the vision of the Muslim Brotherhood. The group transited from being an apolitical group to a politically inclined group. This revision was to later have far reaching effects on the character, development and challenges before the organisation. Initially, the Muslim Brotherhood rejected partisan politics under Al-Banna on account of how it was practised (S. Ansem, 2012; Y. Qaradawi 2004). The generation of Sayyid Qutb took the aversion to the social systems introduced under colonialism further by declaring democracy as infertile as he describes both the systems of the East and West as failures (Qutb, 2006). However, by 2006, the Muslim Brotherhood was so much involved in politics that 88 of its members were elected to the Egyptian parliament as independent candidates because the group was officially banned (see MENA, 2013)

Writing in 2012 during the Egyptian transition, Al-Anani notes that since the Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1928, the organisation avoided radical revolution or

comprehensive change and embraced a gradual and sometimes sluggish reform policy under Hassan Al-Banna. He insists that al Banna abandoned the word “revolution” (*thawrat*) in all his tracts and advocated for reform (*Islah*). He notes that the movement has a programme of induction for the movement’s members which he says disavows radical change. The programme includes an education (*tarbiyya*) process which every active Muslim Brotherhood member must pass through. In this training, members are said to be taught steady and incremental reform of the self, society, and the state. The scholar notes that the consequence of this is that the MB avoids words like confrontation and clash which are alien to what he calls the Muslim Brotherhood’s “leaders” and “cadres”. This, Al-Anani thinks, mitigates the Muslim Brotherhood’s boldness and confidence to confront the Egyptian state. He believes the group was over-cautious with the Mubarak regime and it therefore did not join the revolt against the Mubarak regime early enough (Al-Anani, 2012)

Shadi Hamid (2012) expresses a similar opinion in an article where he also notes that the Brotherhood’s unofficial motto under the repression of Hosni Mubarak’s regime was “participation, not domination”. He recalls that during an interview of his with Muhammad Morsi in this period, Morsi insisted that the Brotherhood was not an opposition group because the word opposition suggests that the MB sought to take political power from the ruling class. Conversely, he observes that the Brotherhood became uncharacteristically assertive in the course of Egypt’s transition as it reneged on promises not to seek the presidency. Indeed, one may see the stance of not seeking the presidency, and Al Banna’s initial condemnation of competitive politics against the background of Islamic teachings in these hadith [which is the record of Sunnah (sayings, practices and tacit approval of Prophet Muhammad0 against division in the Muslim community].

Narrated by Anas bin Malik:

Allah's Messenger said, "You should listen to and obey, your ruler even if he was an Ethiopian (black) slave whose head looks like a raisin (Bukhari N. D., al-sunan.org)

2

Narrated Ibn `Abbas:

The Prophet said, "If somebody sees his Muslim ruler doing something he disapproves of, he should be patient, for whoever becomes separate from the Muslim group even for a span and then dies, he will die as those who died in the Pre-Islamic period of ignorance (as rebellious sinners). (Bukhari N.D., al-sunan.org).

3

Narrated by Abdullah:

The Prophet said, "A Muslim has to listen to and obey (the order of his ruler) whether he likes it or not, as long as his orders involve not one in disobedience (to Allah), but if an act of disobedience (to Allah) is imposed one should not listen to it or obey it (Bukhari N.D. al-sunan.org).

The Muslim Brotherhood and scholars of Islamic Political theory have however rethought involvement of Muslim groups in partisan politics. Asma Asfarudeen (2008), for example, explains that shortly after the death of the Prophet in 632, different candidates were promoted for the position of the first successor (*khalifah*) of the prophet by the camps of the Migrants from Makkah to Madinah (*Muhajirun*) and their helpers (*Ansar*) who accommodated them. This gives the Muslim Brotherhood and other Muslim groups reference in historical precedence with which to argue that the companions of the prophet engaged in partisan politics.

Hamid (2012) notes that when the Muslim Brotherhood decided to show interest in the Egyptian presidency, it had open confrontation with the ruling military council which succeeded Hosni Mubarak. The interest of the MB in the Egyptian presidency gave concerns to the United States and to the Egyptian Liberals who were thinking that if unchecked, the presidency of a Brotherhood member would be dangerous to their interests. In contrast to

this, Amin (2012) in his own article categorises the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian military together as an “anti-revolutionary bloc” which was supported by Western powers operating in Egypt. He also argues that the Brotherhood was an organic part of the Egyptian power structure and it did not belong to the opposition block.

According to Andrea Teti and Gennaro Gervasio, (2012) Muslim Brotherhood leaders like Aboul Futouh and Essam El-Erian, who are the more “politicised, pragmatic and liberal” were marginalised within the governing structures of the Brotherhood before the January 2011 uprising. While, on the other hand, octogenarian leaders, like Muhammad Badie, who preferred the Brotherhood’s historically moderate, pragmatic and apolitical stance were prominent. They argue that the conservative leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood attempted to negotiate with the regime rather than use the Brotherhood’s mass support to put pressure on the military for radical change. While this is true, the Brotherhood might have been wary of chaos (*fitna*) which the Muslim Brotherhood had experienced first-hand, and in the hard way, under tyrannies such as that of Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt and Muammar Qadafi in Libya. Whichever decision the Brotherhood had taken would have found backing in the Islamic political jurisprudence (*fiqh siyasiy*) and what they thought was the moral decision to take would have sufficed. This is because the prophet describes speaking truth to tyrant as the best jihad (Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, and ibn Majah, al-sunan. org) and he also counsels against rebellion to avoid anarchy in the Bukhari hadiths quoted earlier.

The Muslim Brotherhood joined the uprising eventually and emerged as the leaders of the leaderless youths who started the Egyptian uprising. The Muslim Brotherhood regulated and coordinated the events at the protest ground of *Tahrir* (freedom) square where people had gathered spontaneously. They did this at a point during which criminals infiltrated the protest grounds and were molesting women and robbing people. Egyptian liberals like Muhammad

al Baradei saw the Muslim Brotherhood's leadership differently as they accused the MB of hijacking the uprising by becoming the leaders at the protest grounds and by belatedly joining the presidential race which they went on to win. While it is true that the MB was late to join the uprising against Mubarak, yet again, their hesitance finds justification in the principle of avoiding anarchy (*fitna*). The eventual involvement of the Muslim Brotherhood while chaos was the order in Tahrir square also has basis in the Qur'ān which instructs that groups must always emerge from the Muslim community to provide the necessary leadership that will promote good and forbid evil.(Q3:104)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا رَكُنُوا لِرَبِّكُمْ أَعْيُنًا وَلَا تَرْكَبُوا فِي الْمَوَارِثِ وَالْأَمْوَالِ الْيُسْرَىٰ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ۚ

04. Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong: They are the ones to attain felicity.

1.3 Militarisation of the Muslim Brotherhood

The involvement of the Muslim Brotherhood in domestic and international politics directly resulted into a militarisation phase of the group. The Muslim Brotherhood supported resistance to the founding of the state of Israel in Palestine. Rubin (1990) writes that “ By 1948, the Muslim Brotherhood played a particularly prominent role in raising funds, purchasing weapons, running military training camps, and sending hundreds of volunteers to fight in Palestine. By this time, the Brotherhood's membership had risen to over half a million. Students, workers, civil servants, and the urban poor attended its meetings and enthusiastically echoed its ideology.” (Rubin 1990, 11) This is the root of the accusation of

terrorism against the Muslim Brotherhood particularly in the West, but it finds justification in Qur‘ān 2:190 as legitimate resistance.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا فَلَا تَمُوتُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ مَنِ أَحْبَبَ الدُّنْيَا فَلَا تَمُوتُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ مَنِ أَحْبَبَ الدُّنْيَا فَلَا تَمُوتُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

Fight In the cause of Allah those who Fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors.

The Middle East and North Africa Report (MENA Report 2013) aver that Muslim Brotherhood had a secret armed wing which had an agreement between the Free Officers that toppled the Egyptian monarchy in 1952. Gamal Abdel Nasser was part of both groups and he was also an Egyptian export to Palestine to support the Arab resistance earlier. Abdul Hakim Amir, Nasser’s defence minister in 1967 was also in that resistance army sent to Palestine (MENA: 24). Violence however dominated the relationship between the Egyptian State and the MB under the regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser which came to power in 1954 through another coup d’état.

Regardless of the fact that Abdel Nasser has a history of attending Sayyid Qutb’s public lectures (Yusuf, 2009), Qutb was one of leading members of the MB who were tortured, jailed and executed by the Nasser regime . The result of this was further radicalisation of some members of the Muslim Brotherhood. With the crackdown, Qutb and many of the younger members of the Brotherhood believed that the Nasser regime deserved no allegiance and they declared Nasser and his ilk as non-Muslims. The older members of the MB were however more cautious in their condemnation (See: Olimat, 2008; Ramadan, 2012). Crises ensued in the MB and it heralded dissent in the Muslim Brotherhood. The younger members argued that the strategy of being law abiding had failed and they are said to

interpret the works of Sayyid Qutb, most of which he wrote under tortuous prison conditions, in radical terms, and they called for violence. They moved from advocating the jihad of self-discipline to violent jihad. Qutb himself can also be described as a young member because he did not join the Brotherhood until the 50's After Albanna had passed on.

Individuals like Ayman Zawahiri, the current leader of the Al-Qaida, was a teenage member of the Muslim Brotherhood when Qutb was hanged and he left the Muslim Brotherhood for new associates. Lynch (2012) explains that the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaeda have been fierce rivals for a long time and they competed with each other in defining the Islamist identity, doctrine and politics. In his reflection on the crises which ensued within the ranks Muslim Brotherhood during Nasser's regime, Tariq Ramadan writes that:

“Within the Muslim Brotherhood itself, where several trends of thought co-existed, the decisive split was not long in coming. The organization's Guide, Hassan al-Hudaybi, laid out the Brotherhood's historical position in a book explicitly entitled: '[We are] preachers, not judges.' It was meant as a reply to the younger generation, which had only recently joined the movement (just before the Free Officers Revolution, during the repression and after the death of Hassan Al-Banna) and could no longer accept imprisonment and torture. They were drawn to the thought of Sayyid Qutb, who had joined the Brotherhood in 1951 and whose positions were harsher and more radical. According to him, there could only be two alternatives: societies founded on Islam, and those of jahiliyya (the pre-Islamic period of ignorance). A “true believer” could not choose the latter without risking the loss of his status as a Muslim. The Brotherhood had thus come to comprise trends ranging from fidelity to the organization's original, legalistic tradition to the radicalization that followed Nasser's repression in the early 1950s. Some, disheartened, left the organization and/or founded new Islamist groups: al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya (Islamic Groups), Tanzîm at-Takfîr (Order of Anathema), Takfîr wa-Hijra (Anathema and Exile), Tanzîm al-Jihâd al-Islâmî (Order of Islamic Jihad), and others. They may have agreed on objectives, but their understanding of Islam and their methods of action displayed fundamental differences.” (Ramadan 2012,72)

Although Al-Banna's generation of the Muslim Brotherhood founded a secret military unit, they were largely disposed to peaceful outlook and peaceful change overall. Their main tools were preaching, teaching and writing . Following the assassination of a judge and the Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmoud al-Noqrashi Pasha in the name of the Muslim Brotherhood, Al-Banna is reported to have disowned the perpetrators saying: "They are not Muslims, they are not Brothers" according to Ramadan (2012, 71) who quoted Eugene Rogers(2010).

After Hasan Al Banna was assassinated in 1949 at the age 43, the Brotherhood oscillated between peaceful jihad and violent struggle. Under the leadership of Umar al-Tilmisani in the early 70s however, the moderates in the Brotherhood steered the movement back to the principles of its founders as his team embarked on a campaign of reinterpreting the works of Sayyid Qutb along moderation (MENA 2013). It is important to state that Nasser died in 1970, of a natural cause and his exit would have pacified the situation naturally. Nasser's deputy, Anwar Sadat, on his part, tried to promote himself as a Muslim who is committed to his faith when he assumed the office of the president, he supported different Muslim groups (Aishima and Salvatore 2009). The violent history of the Muslim Brotherhood before 1970 however haunted the Muslim Brotherhood as it was again accused of assassinating Anwar Sadat after Sadat signed a peace agreement with Israel. The group was also accused of attempt on Hosni Mubarak's life in the 1990s just as the reigning Abdulfatah Sisi's regime blames the MB for violent skirmishes in Egypt. The Brotherhood deny the allegation by these three military rulers

The posture which the Muslim Brotherhood assumed in the ouster of Hosni Mubarak regime promotes the group as a non-violent and a moderate civil organisation. It would have been impossible to win the 2012 elections if the MB was an extremist group. Indeed, the

Qur'an proposes moderation to Muslims and promotes the moderate as the champions of the ideal human being thus in Q2:143

يٰۤاَيُّهَا مَثٰىلُ عُلُوۡسٍ رَّالٍا نَوٰكِيۡوَسَّالٍا ىلَّعَآءِ اَدٰهٰشٍ اُوۡنُوۡكَتِلَ اَطَسَوَّهٖمُۡمُكَاۡنَلَّعَجَ لٰكِلَ دٰكُوۡ

Thus, have we made of you an Ummat justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves.

1.4 Internationalisation

With the politicisation of the Muslim Brotherhood in the beginning of its second decade, the group became internationalised because the Muslim population which it sought to influence spread beyond the borders of Egypt. This is more so because one of the major sources of the de-Islamisation of Muslims which the MB wanted to reverse was rooted in the colonial experience of Egypt and that of the Muslim World across the globe. Also, one of the sources of concern that led to the formation of the Muslim Brotherhood was the loss of the Turkey based Muslim caliphate in 1924 to secularism, four years before the establishment of the Muslim Brotherhood. This global Muslim caliphate was known as the Ottoman Caliphate. Another reason for the internationalisation of the Muslim Brotherhood was the creation of the state for Israel by the Western powers in the heart of the Arab land with majority Muslim population, following Adolf Hitler's attempt to annihilate Jews in Europe. This also inspired the internationalisation of the vision of the Muslim Brotherhood. In addition, the Qur'an declares that the message of Islam is for all of humanity.

نَيۡمَلَاۡغَلَلَّ قَمَّحَرَ اِلٰكَاۡنَلَّسَّرَاۡ اَمَوۡ

We sent Thee not, but as a Mercy for all creatures. (Q21:107)

On account of these, the Brotherhood spread rapidly to Sudan and other parts of North Africa and to Syria and other parts of the Levant. The earliest recorded delegation sent outside Egypt by Hasan Al-Banna was to Syria in August 1935, followed by another to Beirut in October of the same year. Given the political situation of those times, the leaders of the two delegations placed strong emphasis on jihad against colonialism. (MENA Report 2013). In the view of this publication, the push for independence would have significantly attracted support from the young and the educated in these countries to the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood's founder also sought support and converts to his vision among the political class in his quest to effectively influence Muslims through a letter which he sent to King Faruq of Egypt and the Sudan, and to the Egyptian Prime Minister, Mustafa Al-Nahaas Pasha, and to the kings, princes and rulers of many countries of the Muslim world, as well as to civic and religious leaders in those countries in 1947 (See Al-Banaa, 1947). In the spirit and content of this letter, we can see the founder's attempt to comply with the principles of proselytization (*da'wah*) espoused in Qur'an, chapter 16 verse 125, which raises the points of:

- (a) Invitation to the way of Allah (b). Applying wisdom in the invitation (c) Engaging in enchanting preaching (d) Presenting superior arguments

وَهُ كُتِبَ رَنْ إِنْ سَحَآ يَه يِتْلْ إِبْ مُهْلْ دَآ جَوْهَنْ سَحَآ لَآ عَظْ غَوْ مَلْ أَوْهَمْ كُحْ إِبْ كُتِبَ رَلْ يَبَسْ يَلْ إْغْدَا
نَ يَدَتْهُمْلْ إِبْ مُلْ عَآ وَهُوْ هَلْ يَبَسْ نَ عَ لَاضْ نَ مَبْ

Invite (all) to the way of Thy Lord with wisdom and preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and Most gracious: for Thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His path, and who receive guidance.

Earlier in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood sold its ideas to the adviser to King Abdul Aziz al Sa'ud of Saudi Arabia, Hafidh Wahba, and other foreign dignitaries. In his pursuit of the globalisation of the Brotherhood, Al-Banna devoted an entire section in the first edition of al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn newspaper in 1933 to news from the Muslim community (*ummah*) around the world. In the newspaper, Al-Banna stressed the fact that the Brotherhood viewed Islam as a Muslim's primary identity, irrespective of ethnicity and background. By 1935 the paper was circulated in Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Djibouti, Sudan, Iraq and the Levant. The Brotherhood's message also reached global audiences through foreign branches which it established and which were directly linked to the mother organisation in Egypt. The branches were however autonomous in their operations as each dealt with its domestic challenges. In an article entitled *The irrelevance of the International Muslim Brotherhood*, Nathan Brown wrote that:

There is an international Muslim Brotherhood. Chapters of the Muslim Brotherhood exist in a number of societies; each one of them is headed by a "general supervisor." Most chapters are members of an international body; they also accept the overall leadership of the "general guide," a figure who has almost always doubled as the leader of the Egyptian organization (the original branch, often referred to in other countries as "the mother movement"). The international organization is rather bashful: we know little about its internal operations; we learn about its meetings and actions only when it takes a public decision. (Nathan Brown, 2012.)

He comments further that the international MB is sluggish and Egyptian dominated and its leader is always an Egyptian who emerges from a "rubber-stamp election." According to Brown, the various chapters do consult each other, but when they do, they are still free to reject advices. He notes that the "Iraqi Islamic Party", presumably the Iraqi Brotherhood, participated in a political process sponsored by the United States at a time when Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood refused to interact with American officials because of American

occupation of Iraq. According to this academic, all Brotherhood movements agree on the general principle that they will work for peaceful change but they still consider violent resistance to occupation as legitimate. He also avers that old ideological documents of the Muslim Brotherhood suggest what he calls “a distant goal” of global Caliphate but current leaders are focused on their domestic scenes. He explains further that members of local Muslim Brotherhood around the world hardly ever refer to the authority of the international organisation, but they refer to the Brotherhood’s manual (*minhaj*) and to the thoughts of Hassan Al-Banna. According to him, Al-Banna’s thought is a set of organizational techniques, inspirational speeches, and a general approach that places emphasis on speaking softly to non-members social engagements and working for reform on all levels based on Islamic teachings. He further argues that the Al Banna model also inspires MB branches and members to enter politics and run for office, form charitable associations, act as role models in their neighbourhoods, embark on self-improvement, participate in study groups, and support Islamic causes such as building and equipping hospitals, schools, clubs and associations. Brown implies that based on these teachings, some informal organisations spring up from the Muslim Brotherhood and this results into confusion and suspicions around the MB (Brown 2012). He suggests that the group is secretive at local levels by saying that the Brotherhood is no mafia at the international level and it is not rigid and disciplined in the Stalinist-style but it resembles a tame Socialist International movement. Nathan Brown’s view contradicts the image of the Brotherhood as totalitarian movement which is fascinated by fascism advanced by scholars like Bale (2009) and Picket and Gardener (2005).

Indeed totalitarian regimes tend to be atheist it is an interesting suggestion that supposed “Muslim fundamentalists” and “Totalitarian fascists” are in a kind of alliance. As

for the opinion of Islam on totalitarianism, the Qur‘ān in its chapter 88 counsels the Prophet thus:

أَبَاذْغَلْ أَلَلْ أَهْبِ دُعَيْفَ رَفَاكَ وَتَنْ مَالٍ رِطِي صُ مَبْمُ هَيْلَ عَتْسَلْ رُكْ دُمَتْنِ أَمْنِ إِرْكَ ذَفْ
مُهَبَّاسْ حَ أَنْيَلْ عَنَّ إِمُثْ

21. Therefore do thou give admonition, for thou art one to admonish.

22. Thou art not one to manage (men's) affairs.

23. But if any turn away and reject Allah,-

24. Allah will punish Him with a mighty punishment,

25. For to us will be their return;

26. Then it will be for us to call them to account.

In Nir Rosen’s *Islamism and the Syrian uprising*, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood is said to have inspired uprisings in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s against the regime of Hafez al Asad. But in the ongoing uprising against Hafez’s son, Bashar, a group found the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (SMB) too moderate that it split off and became known as the *Fighting Vanguard*. Rather than take up arms, the Syrian Muslim Brothers fled into exile and entered into alliance with the secularist Syrian National Council and became dominant members of this opposition group, in contrast to the earlier generation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria (Rosen 2012)

The Libyan Muslim Brotherhood dates back to 1949. According to Omar Ashour, Colonel Qaddafi’s coup “froze” the group in 1969, repressed it severely and never allowed it to operate openly. According to the academic, the only thing that the State TV did broadcast

about the Muslim Brotherhood under this regime was the bodies of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood leaders hung from street lampposts in the mid-1980s. Muammar Qaddafi's regime labelled the MB as "deviant heretics" and "stray dogs". Consequently, many of the Muslim Brotherhood members fled to the United States. According to Ashour:

Many of the MB figures who were studying in the United States returned to Libya to re-establish the organization in the country but ended up in prison or were executed. The Libyan Muslim Brotherhood made a comeback in 1999, and entered into a novel dialogue with the regime. Its rebirth was bolstered in 2005 and 2006 by Saif al-Islam al-Qaddafi's initiatives, which aimed to co-opt and neutralize opposition groups, particularly Islamist ones. (Ashour, 2012,119-120)

On account of this, detractors are said to have questioned the motivations of the Libyan Muslim Brothers when the group established the Justice and Construction Party after the 2011 upheaval

In the reckoning of the United Kingdom based Cordoba Foundation, the first organised Brotherhood activism in the UK was recorded when a number of Iraqi students established the Muslim Student Society (MSS) in the late 1950s to facilitate their religious, cultural and other common interests. Students from other Arab countries are said to have joined the organisation and they published a monthly magazine for some years. Sometime later, the Shi'i students pulled out of the MSS to establish their own organisation. Some Asian students later came on board and joined the young Muslim Brothers to establish the Federation of Students of Islamic Societies FOSIS in 1963, to cater for Muslim students in higher educational institutions in the UK and Ireland.(MENA 2013) .

The Muslim Brotherhood is also said to attract mainstream conservative Muslims in the UK because it promotes integration without assimilation into the western culture. On account of this principle, the Muslim Brotherhood is said to have a wide reach and appeal.

Like the parent organisation in Arab countries, Muslim Brotherhood members in the United Kingdom organise Muslims into active communities and they promote education and social services through programmes like literacy classes and evening lessons for children with learning difficulties. They also engage the society through activities such as debating on hijab and negotiations and mobilisation of support on issues such as the hijab, halal food products and other ethical affairs and seek recognition of the UK authorities through these activities (Picket and Gardener, 2005).

The writers aver that since the 1960s, the Muslim Brotherhood established a wide and well-organised network of mosques, charities and Islamic organisations with the ultimate goal of ‘extending Islamic law throughout Europe and the United States. They also claim that the Muslim Brotherhood has the same philosophy with far right European fascists and they curry favour with European extremists because they share the same ideas. They accuse the Brotherhood of what they call “theologically based, violent anti-Semitism, homophobia, anti-feminism and communalist polarisation.” (Picket and Gardener 2005,9).

It is difficult, if not impossible to see anti-Semitism as a trend in the Muslim Brotherhood. Suffice is to note that the authors did not provide evidence in their claim. Of particular interest is the accusation of “theologically based anti-Semitism” which does not exist in the primary sources of Islam and which the authors did not back with any reference. The Qur‘ ān certainly warns that Jews and Christians would want Muslims to adopt their world view, (Q2:120) but calls for dialogue with Jews and Christians (Q3: 64). This said, however, Islamic teachings are certainly not in favour of western feminist ideas and homosexuality.

Following the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt, the UK Government decided to "Review" the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in Britain. Observers believe that UK did this because dictatorships like the Saudi Government pressured the UK to do so. In July 2014, global news outlets reported that the UK government found the Muslim Brotherhood innocent of terrorism and wrongdoing in an unpublished report.

1.5 Participation in Professional Organisations

One of the strategies through which the Muslim Brotherhood tried to sell its ideas was through involvement in professional associations. Hasan al Banna began his career as a primary school teacher. He was also a publisher and his organisation had members from all walks of life. Sayyid Qutb was an educationist, a poet and a writer while Muhammad Morsi was an engineer and a University lecturer. Though the organisation had many religious leaders and was always preaching, it also dominated many professional guilds in Egypt. Doctors were the first to witness the ascendancy of the Muslim Brothers in their syndicate. In 1984, the Muslim Brothers won seven out of 25 seats in the Doctors Syndicate's governing Council (Fahmy 1988). Perhaps because of its subsidised hospitals, the MB had many members who were medical doctors and who hold important positions within the doctor's guild where the organisation first broke grounds in the Egyptian professional guilds. Fahmy writes that there were 22 professional syndicates in Egypt with a total of 3.5 million members and the Muslim Brothers controlled the five most politically active syndicates, which were the doctors', engineers', pharmacists', scientists', and lawyers' syndicates. In 1987, the Muslim Brotherhood won 54 out of 61 seats in the engineers syndicates general assembly and all the seats in the syndicates council elections held in 1988.

According to El-Taweel :

The Muslim Brotherhood managed to dominate most professional syndicates and headed most Student unions all over Egyptian universities. “Twenty-one professional syndicates, encompassing about 2.5 million members, fell into their hands.” The signal success was in the Medical Syndicate in 1986, followed by the Engineering, Pharmacist, and other syndicates. But the development that reportedly “stunned Mubarak” was their securing of 75% of the vote at the Lawyers Syndicate during the 1992 elections. The latter was always regarded as a “citadel of secularism”. (El-Taweel 2012,8)

The diversity of occupational specialisation in the Muslim Brotherhood is a natural occurrence which the MB took advantage of . The Qur‘ān in verse four of its chapter ninety-two encourages diversity through its emphasis on this fact saying that:

يَتَشَالُ مُكَيَّعَسْنَ

4. Verily, (the ends) ye strive for are diverse.

.While the Brotherhood is popular among students and professionals, its relationship with the Islamic Scholars of Egypt can certainly be better. Al-Banna was known to criticise the traditional Islamic scholars (*‘ulama*) of Egypt who were mainly graduates of al-Azhar University, for their lack of action in combating secular and Western influences in their society. Decades later, the Azhar Sheikhs were quick to endorse the July 2013 coup in Egypt against the democratically elected MB member and the traditional scholars are known to always be on the side of the government in power in Egypt’s modern history.

Conclusion

The Muslim Brotherhood lay claim to promoting Islamic morality, ethics and teachings generally and its history and evolution over the last 86 years since it was founded has proven to be a sort of microcosm of the history of Islam. While critics of the Muslim Brotherhood accuse the group of terrorism, totalitarianism and division, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood , Hassan Al-Banna did not adopt any of the four Sunni schools of Islamic Law (*Madhahib*) in order to prevent division among his followers. As a teenager, he was influenced by Muslim mystical (Sufi) as well as Literalist (*Salafi*) scholars. This sue for unity is justifiable with Qur‘ān 3:103

The MB developed an instructional booklet (*Mihaj*) with sets of organisational techniques inspirational speeches and a general conduct which places emphasis on social engagement. This guides members to work towards reform on personal, social, political, and religious levels based on Islamic teachings without being an isolated community of saints (Brown 2012).The organisation also approached the public with its published magazines and letters just as it used violence to pursue its aims at a point in its history.

It is apparent that the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood is characterised by paradoxes throughout its history on account of its spread, population of members and

individual human differences which affected the contradictory paths that the brotherhood took at different points of its life.

The paradoxes are evident in the fact that while one of Al-Banna's delegates to Iraq in the days of the first generation of Muslim Brotherhood, Muhammad Abdul-Hamid Ahmad accused the Iraqi people of being more accommodating of communism than Islam (MENA 2013) the Muslim Brotherhood was itself accused of promoting communist ideas (Picket and Gardner 2005). Today, the Muslim Brotherhood is accused of being a non-progressive 7th century caliphate seeking socio-political system, yet, it uses its twitter handle, a 21st century technology, to circumvent the ban imposed on it since 1954, to engage with the world, seek for supporters and votes and air its side of the story. Also some accuse the organisation of being organic part of the Mubarak tyranny yet Mubarak's military proteges overthrew the Muslim Brotherhood.

There is however no denying of the facts that the Muslim Brotherhood supported efforts aimed at resisting the founding the state of Israel among Arabs, which is justifiable in the light of Qur'ān 2:190. There is also no denying of the notion that Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of the Islamic world view is extreme and some have been inspired by the views to become violent, extremist, and even terrorist in their dispositions.

However, the fact that extremist, violent and terrorist minded individuals were compelled to leave the Muslim Brotherhood to found new groups or join groups with people of like mind minds absolves the Muslim Brotherhood of the accusations. I contend that the group is as guilty of extremism and terrorism as a country can be if its citizens peddles cocaine or commits any other crime while in exile. A 2014 British Government inquiry into the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood has said this much by finding the Muslim Brotherhood innocent of terrorist and illegal activities.

Despite the fact that since the beginning of the Muslim Brotherhood, the powers that be in Egypt opposed the Muslim Brotherhood because of fears that the organisation was becoming a state within the Egyptian state, the group has survived persecution to emerge, still very much like a state. This it does in being consistent with its vision but inconsistent in its approach. The evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood over time has witnessed Hassan al Banna, the founder, denouncing party politics, it has seen Sayyid Qutb declaring that Islam and western/eastern socio-political systems have nothing at all in common (Qutb 2006) and it has seen Muhammad Morsi the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood winning the first ever multi party democratic elections in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood has remained faithful to its vision of Islamic acculturation but has adopted different policies under different leaders. It was however always consistent and focussed across times and climes in its quest for the economic, cultural and political emancipation of Muslims, using pragmatic policies. These policies have textual backing in the Qur‘ān and hadith of the Prophet and at this point in its history, the organisation has not misrepresented Islamic principles as it adjusted its policies through the course of time.

Note

¹Translations of Qur‘ān is from software version of Abdullahi Ysusuf Ali’s translation

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