

Allah is our goal, the Prophet is our leader, the Quran is our constitution, Jihad is our way, and death for Allah is our most exalted wish (Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood)

The Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden

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Method

This report is based on international research conducted on the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Egypt and studies conducted on the European branch during recent years (Johnson, 2010; Kandil, 2015; Larise, 2012; Maréchal, 2008; Meijer et al., 2012; Quilliam, 2016; Schuck, 2013). In this research, we have selected those aspects which are particularly relevant for Sweden in terms of organizational and strategic aspects of the movement's activities. The report also draws on an analysis of the traditional Islamic policy that has guided the MB; a policy linked to the policy documents that the European MB has formulated for its work in the new political space where the movement's activists exist in connection with their establishment in Europe (see the statutes of the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE) and the Islamic Association in Sweden (IFiS)).

To this should be added the various forms of empirical and theoretical experience of Islamism that the report's authors have acquired in various contexts. Dr. Magnus Norell has extensive experience from studying Islamism's different modes of expression in the Middle East and Europe. For many years, Professor Aje Carlbom has interviewed Islamists in Malmö who belong or have belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood's ideological orientation. Pierre Durrani is a former member of the Muslim Brotherhood with considerable inside information on the movement's members' organizational and tactical philosophies. On several occasions during the past two years, we have discussed our respective experiences and found that we, independently of each other, have drawn similar conclusions about the movement's European/Swedish activities.

Naturally, the contents of the report are presented in a summarized and generalized form in order to fit the format. The task remains to, both empirically and theoretically, expand the study of various matters concerning the European Brotherhood's ideological network. The contents of the report should be considered a first attempt to formulate a coherent systematic review of the movement's activities in Europe and Sweden.

Introduction

Islamism

*There is no regime in this world which can supply the forthcoming nation with what it requires in the way of institutions, principles, objectives, and judgments to the same extent as Islam can.*¹

Islamism is not a distinct type of Muslim faith. It is a political ideology based on and derived from Islam, from which it acquires its legitimacy. There are many differences between the multitude of Islamist parties and movements that exist, and they should be studied in the context in which they operate.² The common denominator is the emphasis on an ideological-religious base as guidance for how society and its citizens should be governed and where the individual is subordinated to the state; this in contrast to a democratic state where the individual's privacy, protection and rights to free and fair elections (both personal "life choices" and public ones) are indicative and where the state's democratic structure is at the individual's disposal.

These many forms of Islam also share the ability to combine a hostility towards the West with a resistance – if not outright hatred – towards the (in the MB's opinion) discontents of the project of modernity. Islamists may also offer an alternative to these two "threats" by combining a militant political ideology with a social conservatism based on control over their own group.³ With Islamism, these movements and groups have spawned an option where militant politics are combined with a very conservative view of society and hostility towards globalization and modernity. What the Islamist theorists – political and theological thinkers from Ahmed ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328), Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahab (1703–92), Maulana Abul Ala Maududi (1903–79), Hassan al-Banna (1906–49), Sayyid Qutb (1906–66) and Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1926–) – assumed was that there was, in addition to an unspoiled and uncorrupted social structure (the Prophet's own time and place), an ideal human identity and existence that had its finest outlet under the Qur'an's divine guidance.⁴ And in their modern incarnation, these ideas have evolved to assert that Islam is currently under attack from the Western world, which – in conspiratorial agreement with Jews and Zionists (the terms are used to express the same threat) – intends to wipe out Islam. The Islamists thus maintain that by taking up arms against these global threats, they make it possible to both defeat this diabolical conspiracy and recreate the ideal state (both humanly and structurally) that prevailed during the time of the Prophet and the "Golden Age" that followed upon his death.⁵

The militant branch of Islamism (often referred to as Jihadism) also becomes a tool for the Muslim community, the *Ummah* – which is portrayed as being under constant pressure from a hostile world – to engage in this struggle. And in that struggle, all means become permissible because "the enemy" (modernity) is everywhere and – according to the Islamist worldview – uses all means possible to

¹ Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna. Open letter to King Farouk of Egypt, May-June 1947, <http://tinyurl.com/kqx589z>

² Trager, Ullah, Sakhivel, Islamists in Government: Do They Moderate Once in Power?, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, May 1, 2014.

³ For an extraordinary illustration of how this social control and destructive influence of radical and militant Islamism may be expressed (even in Sweden) and how close and frequent the ties are between the militant ideology that underpins Islamism and Jihadism that end in violence, see Hanna Gadban's book *Min Jihad - jakten på liberal islam*. See also Kenan Malik, *Radical Islam, Nihilist Rage*, The New York Times, January 3, 2015. See also Raheel Raza, "Boxed and Packaged Islam" *Trying to Pass Itself Off as Mainstream Islam*, Gatestone Institute, October 17, 2014.

⁴ Paul Berman, *Why Is the Islamist Death Cult So Appealing?*, Tablet Magazine, January 28, 2015.

⁵ Ibid. See also Sayyid Qutb: *Social Justice* (1949), *World Peace and Islam* (1951) and *Milestones* (1964).

fight Islam. The long series of terrorist attacks directed against the West can therefore take many different expressions; from attacks on mass transportation (such as in Madrid and London in 2004 and 2005 or Brussels in February 2016) to the attacks in Paris and Copenhagen in January and February 2015, where they were directed against two of the main targets for Islamist hatred, namely the West's freedom of expression and opinion and Jewish targets, especially since these freedoms can mean criticism, scorn and ridicule directed against one's own religion and not least the Prophet Muhammad himself. In Paris, *Charlie Hebdo* and in Copenhagen, the Swedish artist and art professor Lars Vilks, who had drawn so-called "traffic circle dogs" with a "face of Mohammed," were targeted. Anti-Semitism has a long history in Islam, and there are a number of references to the Qur'an and various Hadiths where Jews are described as enemies of Islam and portrayed in the worst possible way as a people that must be fought and humiliated.

All systems of government based on a particular interpretation of a religious (or political) ideology are incompatible with the liberal democratic structure we have created in the West, where the separation between religion and politics is fundamental. However, this does not only apply to Islam; regardless of dominant religious tradition, a conflict between secular and religious values arises.

It is worth emphasizing that the dividing line runs between those countries which have privatized religion and where individual religious beliefs are not indicative of the architecture of the relevant public structure, and the countries which have not effected such a separation.

The Islamists' choice of political system is based on an interpretation of Islam as a universal system where the individual is not only subordinated to the collective, but also a system where religion and politics are completely interwoven. The idea of an Islamic state is by no means new, and in such countries (like Iran, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan) there are models for how such states are to be governed.⁶ Moreover, the fact that a religious tradition is defined by how the believers choose to interpret the religious texts is of course also of great importance. How faith is practiced determines how it is defined. At the heart of an Islamic state – be it IS, any previous incarnation of IS or the current nations which define themselves as Islamic – lies the connection of religion and politics; an interconnection that is still maintained in most interpretations of Islam.

There are, of course, theological arguments used by Islamists to bolster the idea of creating an Islamic state and that it can be done by force if necessary. Surah 34:28 in the Qur'an, which says: "*We have sent you forth to all mankind*"⁷ is a text often referred to in this context. But it is also emphasized that if non-Muslims refuse to voluntarily convert or submit to Islam, it follows that violence can and should be used to spread it. Peace, in reference to this process, can only be attained when Islam rules the entire world,⁸ and this relies on a variety of both historical and contemporary commentators.⁹ Regarding the ideological and religious roots of Islamism, an extensive collection of sources may be referred to in order to justify both the political and violent methods used to spread its influence.

⁶ See for example Fatah, *Chasing A Mirage: The Tragic Illusion of an Islamic State*, John Wiley & Sons Canada, Ltd. 2008.

⁷ Bassam Tibi, *War and Peace in Islam*, p. 129; in Terry Nardin (ed.), *The Ethics of War and Peace, Religious and Secular Perspectives*, Princeton University Press, 1998.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Tibi and Durie, p. 119.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Durie p. 119.

The Muslim Brotherhood

The ideological foundations of the MB are thus profound and widely shared. And the MB's role as "sponsor" of today's European Islam can hardly be exaggerated. The MB's founder – Hassan al-Banna – claimed that an Islamic state would: "... *implement Islam as an all-embracing concept which regulates every aspect of life.*"¹⁰ It is a totalitarian system that is not especially "moderate" but rather an ideologically constructed movement where members undergo an introduction process for 5–8 years (known as "*tarbiyya*") in order to prepare them for long-term efforts in creating social structures.¹¹ The Muslim Brotherhood's strategic approach to gradually build an Islamic state with emphasis on indoctrination, preaching and *da'wah*¹² separates the organization from e.g. the Islamic State (IS), which with brutal means already has declared such a state. But the Muslim Brotherhood also emphasizes that the individual should be subjected to the state and that the ultimate goal is a state based on *sharia* and where *jihad*, in the sense of holy war, must be applied.¹³ Moreover, since its formation, the Muslim Brotherhood has been clear about distancing itself and sometimes espouse hatred of the West and Western influence on Arab Muslim communities. And here the differences are not so significant compared to other, more explicitly violence-prone Islamist movements, such as the IS. Islam's political roots thus constitute a breeding ground for Islamists of all stripes who still manage to agree on a vision of the role of Islam in the world and the importance of combating the "corrupt" Western influence in the Arab and Muslim Middle East.¹⁴

¹⁰ Eric Trager & Gavi Barnhard, *Brothers In Trouble? Goma Amin And The Future of the Muslim Brotherhood*, Foreign Affairs, September 24, 2014.

¹¹ Ibid. and Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, Columbia University Press, 2010.

¹² "Invitation," similar to proselytizing, but can also refer to social outreach.

¹³ As stated, it is already clear in the motto of the Muslim Brotherhood: "Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. The Qur'an is our law. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope."

¹⁴ Ibid., Trager, Barnhard & Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood*, and Clive S. Kessler, *The Islamic State and 'Religion of Peace'*, Quadrant Online, September 26, 2014.

Ideological Network

Today, rather extensive international research on the Muslim Brotherhood in general and the European branch of the movement exists. In Sweden, research on the heterogeneity of “Islam” has always been conditional.¹⁵ Most Islamic variations have been brought up for discussion, but not Islamism or political Islam, as it is also called.¹⁶ This has been the situation and still is today, even though activists affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood’s network have dominated the representation of Islam in recent decades. The consequence of ignoring Islamism is a low level of knowledge in Sweden about what the European Brotherhood wants, both among politicians and the population at large. The denial of the fact that Islamism has had a prominent position in the country for many years has enabled wide-ranging prejudices and stereotypes about “Muslims” in the collective consciousness.

As for the European branch of the Brotherhood, researchers ask themselves a variety of questions; What is the organization’s political goal in Europe? Is it a movement, an ideological network, or is it made up of scattered activists? There are many uncertainties concerning the organization’s activities. The explanation for this is partly, as stated, that it has been taboo to explore what the activists in the network want. Partly, it is a consequence of the activists themselves being unclear with their political project.¹⁷ The non-Muslim Swedish public is often told that it is prejudiced, have incorrect knowledge of Islam or that it is “Islamophobic.” However, activists who bring forth such accusations are usually unclear with what they mean that “Islam” constitutes exactly and what they want “Islam” to contribute to Swedish society. Such clarity would be necessary in order to allow for a reasonable assessment of whether the activists’ definition of the religion should be seen as an asset to or a burden on society.

Over the years, various criticism has been directed at the European Muslim Brotherhood. Roel Meijer¹⁸ shows that the list of complaints is long. The movement is accused of being a sworn enemy of the Western values of democracy, freedom of expression, pluralism and tolerance; that the movement is homophobic, anti-Semitic, reactionary and sectarian; and that its overall objective is to introduce *sharia* in Europe.¹⁹ A common view is that the movement systematically make use of “doublespeak”; towards Western public officials, they present themselves as proponents of democracy while they show an intolerant side in front of a Muslim audience. They are also accused of lack of transparency, especially when it comes to financial transactions. To this may be added that the movement has been criticized for engaging in “infiltration” of European institutions in order to adapt them to Islam.²⁰

¹⁵ Carlbom, 2012.

¹⁶ Carlbom, 2006.

¹⁷ Meijer, 2012:295-321.

¹⁸ 2012:1-27.

¹⁹ Quilliam, 2016.

²⁰ Meijer, 2012.

Gradual Development of the Movement

The first MB activists arrived in Europe in the decades after World War II. One of the pioneers was Said Ramadan, who started the first mosque and the organization in Munich in 1961.²¹ Initially, most of the activists were students who clung to the political objective of transforming the governments of their home countries. However, gradually, as the number of Muslims greatly increased in Europe, the movement came to realize the importance of directing their efforts toward European Muslims. Activists in the movement feared that Muslims would slip from their Islamic way of life if they were left adrift in a secular Europe. They also considered – a common approach among Islamists – that many Muslims practice Islam in an unsatisfactory manner and thus saw it as MB’s responsibility to educate European Muslims in the “correct” doctrine. In conjunction with European Muslims being named objects for Islamization, work was started to build an organizational structure that could support operations, both financially and ideologically.

The exact moment when the MB was established in Sweden is unclear, but the network has gradually been established as a result of immigration, and the MB has been active in Sweden since the late 1970s. In so-called information publications about Islam from the 1980s, it is possible to detect a clear influence of the MB’s traditional ideological stance. One of the most widespread, *Att förstå islam* (“*To understand Islam*”) looks like a transcript of MB’s general policy for societal change. The leaflet contains all the ideas that the MB has become known for, and it also indicates which methods should be used for the restructuring of society in an Islamic direction. It is stated, *inter alia*, that Muslims should “submit” to the faith, which is perceived to be an all-encompassing system of ideas, ideals and standards for human life. Girls should be tightly controlled, and Muslims should follow different rules than secular citizens. Moreover, Muslim organizations in the country are encouraged to mobilize their forces in a nationwide Islamic information campaign. It is perceived as a religious duty to spread Islam. The leaflet offers good insight into general Islamist thinking, since it in a rather pithy way states how Islam should be perceived and disseminated.²²

The Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden is organized in a council, a *shura*, which has a leader, an *amir*. This council may consist of a dozen people and its leaders are periodically rotated. These members are in turn organized into small units of 5–10 members which form an *usra* (family). The *usra* holds regular weekly meetings where they mainly recite the Qur’an, pray and discuss spiritual matters.

²¹ Johnson, 2010.

²² *Att förstå islam*, information leaflet published by the Swedish Muslim Association and the Islamic Information Association.

Associations

In the mid-1990s, the Islamic Association of Sweden (IFiS) was created as a way to provide a public organizational statute to the MB's various bodies in Sweden. The Islamic Association in Stockholm, which is tied to the Stockholm mosque, is the original body from which the others (including in Gothenburg and Malmö) have been spun off. The Islamic Association in Stockholm (often called *Rabita*, Arabic for association) was for many years housed in a larger basement mosque on Ringvägen in the Stockholm neighborhood of Södermalm, but now runs a mosque that was bought and renovated with money from the UAE. The Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden has also, at least in the past, assumed administrative responsibility for the creation of chapters in Norway and Finland, while Denmark has had its own local branch. The Muslim Brotherhood adapted early to Swedish standards of association by forming various organizations, both faith-based and other types. Through these, the MB could both receive financial aid to build up its network in Sweden as well as learn about and interface with the surrounding Swedish society. It is in MB's tradition to almost never reveal its religious-political orientation and its membership in the MB to outsiders.

To outsiders, the MB operates as a more or less hidden structure; a global network and a spiritual brotherhood more so than an association in the Swedish sense of the word. You can thus be a member of the MB (*Ikhwan*, "brothers" in Arabic, which MB is often called in Arab countries) by having sworn an oath before an *amir*, local or regional leader, by attending an *usra*, studying literature and carrying out the prescribed rites (including daily reading of the collection of texts called *al-Ma'thurât*) without there being a formal membership in the Swedish sense. However, to facilitate the organization of its members, and not least to create a kind of MB-controlled platform, the Islamic Association in Sweden was founded; an organization which denies its affiliation with, but not its inspiration by, the MB.

Over the years, MB has through a plethora of organizations been able to establish a completely dominant position in the state-sponsored so-called Muslim part of civil society. Many millions of Swedish taxpayer money have been funneled into the world's largest Islamic organization's Swedish branch. This entails that the state and its citizens have financially and organizationally aided the establishment of many organizations with direct or indirect ties to the MB. Many of these organizations receive state subsidies via, for example, SST (Commission for Government Support for Faith Communities), MUCF (Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society) and Allmänna Arvsfonden (Public Inheritance Fund). In addition to national government agencies, regional and municipal bodies also provide support and contributions in the form of various project grants.

This phenomenon, that the MB serves as the nexus of Muslim organizations, is to varying degrees also present in other European countries, but it is in Sweden that this development has reached its farthest point. A consequence of this is that many interpretations of Islam other than the so-called moderate Islamist that the MB represents, are not as well-established in Sweden. Although there are a plethora of ethnic and religious associations without links to the MB in Sweden, none has enjoyed a similar organizational impact as the MB-oriented (including Sunni Muslims). So when government agencies, politicians and journalists turn to a Muslim organization, they often – most likely totally unknowingly – end up communicating with the MB. A year or so ago, the radio show *Medierna* which is broadcast on Swedish NPR made an episode about Muslim representativeness which showed that these (MB-related) organizations were overrepresented in the media.²³

²³ <https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2795&artikel=5796656> & <https://sverigesradio.se/sida/avsnitt/334734?programid=2795>

Below are some of the more influential organizations that the MB has started in Sweden:

Islamic Relief

A major recipient of aid funds from SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) which runs aid projects around the world. A central organization to provide the MB credibility. The former imam of Stockholm's mosque, Haytham Rahmeh²⁴ was long active in Islamic Relief, but in recent years he has been involved in supporting militias linked to the MB in the war in Syria through lobbying and weapons purchases.

Studieförbundet Ibn Rushd (The Study Association Ibn Rushd)

Runs many study groups in mosques and premises linked to Muslim organizations around the country. Receives large sums of money from the state which funds study activities, often around the view of Islam and concepts such as "Islamophobia." The management is completely controlled by the MB. Recently purchased the retreat Granhedsgården for tax money, which is jointly owned with the Islamic Association (and its foundation). After Ibn Rushd transferred one half to the IFiS foundation, the other half has been placed in a joint venture with IFiS. Transparency of operations is minimal with the combination of a foundation and limited liability company structure. While operations are being financed by tax revenues intended for public education, they have been allocated to the build-up of capital. The transactions involving Ibn Rushd, IFiS and Granhedsgården provide an interesting (but rare) insight into the operations of MB-related organizations, both when it comes to bolstering their influence in society and to prevent transparency. These maneuvers have been mapped in detail by freelance journalist Johan Westerholm.²⁵

Sveriges Unga Muslimer (SUM; Young Muslims of Sweden)

Originally formed as the Swedish Muslim Youth Association, the later renamed Young Muslims of Sweden is an initiative by the MB for organizing Muslim youth associations. Some are directly or indirectly affected by the MB's ideology while many associations are Salafist in their interpretation of Islam. Fully controlled by the MB, but today also clearly influenced by Salafism and contemporary so-called identity politics. The organization is a good example of how MB organizations on the one hand can receive millions of SEK to counter for example "Islamophobia" to simultaneously run member associations (like SUM) with a Jihadist rhetoric and whose members in many cases have traveled to fight as Jihadists in Syria.

Islamiska Förbundet i Sverige (IFiS; Islamic Association in Sweden) is the MB's organizational front.

The Stockholm mosque at Björns trädgård is today the most well-known MB institution in Sweden. Perhaps it can be considered the movement's headquarters. It houses a variety of organizations linked to the MB. Through the years, the activists in the mosque have managed to create an "official status" where they are consulted on matters related to Islam and Muslims in general. By its location in Stockholm, the mosque has enjoyed geographical proximity to the country's political heart, which has facilitated cooperation and relationship building with politicians and others for a number of

²⁴ <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/12/14/syrian-brotherhood-s-armed-struggle-pub-50380>

<https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2054&artikel=5691854>

http://www.longwarjournal.org/today-in/2013/10/haytham_rahmeh_the_syrian-born.php

²⁵ <http://ledarsidorna.se/2015/07/folkbildning-utan-granser/> & <http://ledarsidorna.se/2015/07/svindlande-affarer/>

years. Photographs from events show that politicians from different parties have been regular visitors to the mosque. The Brothers' location in Stockholm, their skillful work to appear as representatives of a religious minority and their patient efforts to establish social relations with those in power have given them a political advantage in relation to other Muslim activists in the country. Far from all Islamists and Muslims in Sweden sympathize with MB, but all are forced to relate to the movement since it has managed to assume a relatively dominant position. Ideologically, however, the similarities between Islamic groups are greater than the differences; the dividing line is usually drawn between political approach rather than objective.

Borderless Efforts

One should keep in mind that the MB's activists perceive their political-religious activities as "borderless." The movement is organized into 30 or so nationally active national organizations, which all follow a common policy developed under the auspices of the umbrella organization *Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe* (FIOE). In connection with the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and former Ministry for Civil Affairs-sponsored conference Euro-Islam in 1995, a youth division of the above mentioned FIOE was formed. Again, the Swedish taxpayers assisted the MB in organizing their youth association, FEMYSO, in which *Young Muslims of Sweden*, *Young Muslims UK*, *Jeune Musulmans de France* and *Muslimische Jugend Germany* played a central part. MB also has at least three educational institutions in Europe; two in France and one in Wales, and the fatwa council *European Organisation for Fatwa and Research* (ECFR) which is headed by Yusuf al-Qardawi and often convenes at these educational institutions.

The national organizations direct their efforts primarily towards states and their representatives, while the FIOE primarily operates in the European Parliament where the activists "*successfully [have] gotten access into the EU parliament where they hold meetings and conferences with MEP*".²⁶ The whole of EU is thus perceived as a playing field for the MB's Islamization project. This is illustrated by the jointly developed policy "Muslims of Europe Charter" that the FIOE published in 2006 but started already in 2000. According to the FIOE, the document was drafted by the organization's 28 member organizations and the intent is to unite Europe's Muslims under one ideological umbrella. The underlying idea of the policy is that the FIOE wants all Muslims in Europe to be recognized as a "European Muslim community" (p. 1).

But the project is also borderless in relation to locations outside the EU. It is common for activists to attend Islamic conferences organized by the MB in for example the Middle East, that they travel on study trips to the *Hamas-controlled*²⁷ Gaza Strip or that they participate in transnational personal networks. It is likely that the MB's activists identify more with the global Muslim "*Ummah*" than with different national groups. Given that they perceive Islam as a universal doctrine, this is not particularly remarkable.

²⁶ Agbor (2009:42).

²⁷ Hamas is the MB's Palestinian branch. They took control of the Gaza Strip in a brief but bloody war against the Palestinian Authority in 2007.

European Ideological Network

The fact that activists in the European MB rarely appear under the name “Muslim Brotherhood” means that it has created uncertainty about whether the movement exists at all on the continent. In Europe, the activists appear, as we have seen earlier, as representatives of European organizations with all sorts of letter combinations that often contribute to the confusion for those trying to gain understanding of the issues. A fairly common approach in Sweden is to say that there are elements who are “inspired” by the Muslim Brotherhood’s ideology.

However, among researchers studying the European Muslim Brotherhood, there is no doubt that the movement *de facto* exists on the continent. The difficulties for the researchers lie in that it is a secretive organization that is systematically unclear about who the members are and the organization’s political goals in Europe.²⁸ A reasonable assumption is that there are several activists in Europe who are members of the Muslim Brotherhood. At the same time, it is reasonable to assume that many are active without actually being members. The important thing is not that someone is a member but that someone sympathizes with the organization’s ideological tenets. The FIOE’s former president, Ahmed al-Rawi, describes the movement as an ideological network that spans several countries.

We are part of nobody outside of Europe, but we have good relations with the Brotherhood. We have our own ideas and missions and they know it. We are interlinked with them with a common point of view. We have a good, close relationship (Johnson 2011:200).

The same type of description is given by Brigitte Maréchal (2012), who claims that the Muslim Brotherhood primarily offers an *ethos*: A basic view of life or morality. The descriptions can be transferred to other movements. Many people are members of various organizations and work with their core political issues, but it is not necessary to be a member in order to be able to sympathize with a message. Today, many sympathize with feminist or green messages without being members of such associations, organizations or parties. At the same time they promote the movement’s message in various everyday contexts, such as in the workplace or among friends. The same applies to members/sympathizers of the Muslim Brotherhood’s values.

Some twenty years ago, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of the most influential ideologues in the MB’s network, published a policy document for the MB and the Islamic movement in general where he presented a basic strategy for how activists should operate. In “Priorities for the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase,” he argued that the common starting point for all Islamists is:

*the unrest which a Muslim feels when the Awakening visits him and he feels a turmoil deep inside him, as a result of the contradiction between his faith on the one hand and the actual state of affairs of his nation on the other.*²⁹

The reaction to this “gap” between the “map” and the “territory” makes the Muslim feel compelled to take action to, among many other things, reintroduce the *caliphate* as is stipulated by *sharia* and to spread Islam throughout the world. Qaradawi urges his fellow believers in the Islamic movement to mainly rely on “the word” instead of “the sword” in the coming Islamization process.³⁰

²⁸ Meijer et al., 2012.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

Thus, there are some common ideological positions within the European MB. Dunja Larise argues that the lowest common ideological denominator of the activists is that they must embrace four basic principles.³¹ They must understand that Islam is “a total way of life,” that social change is to happen gradually as it was formulated by Hassan al-Banna (see the 7-point program, pages 26–27); that they are included in the “middle way” of Islamic orientation which embraces all of Sunni Islam and a consistently pro-Palestinian position. However, these general principles do not clarify that much of the MB’s European policy. But it is clear that they can be difficult to manage for a secular Europe if they are somewhat more concretized.

The notion that Islam is a comprehensive system of ideas, norms and values entail, for example, the attitude that Muslims should live in accordance with *sharia*; to adhere to their own legislation, especially in personal and family matters.³² For example, IFiS in the Stockholm mosque considers *sharia* an “eternal” system of laws that God commanded humanity to follow regardless of time and place. In the educational text *Vad du inte vet om islam* (“What you don’t know about Islam”) it is stated that “Islamic principles are a collection of immutable constants, based on *sharia*, which govern society.³³ They do not change with time and space.” Given that the Brothers believe that Islam must encompass everything in society and that it is governed by *sharia* and that this is a law that does not change with time and space, how should this be combined with Western democracy? How can it be possible to be both an advocate for democracy based on man-made laws, while being a follower of a permanent *sharia* that “governs society”? Representatives of the MB have never given a clear answer to these questions.

³¹ Larise (2012:262).

³² A typical position held by Islamists (Reading et al., 2016).

³³ Malaekah, 2016.

The MB's Political Approach

The MB's approach in Europe exhibit both similarities and differences with the movement's classic political approach formulated by its founder, Hassan al-Banna, in the early 1900s. The European branch basically rests on the same original methodological foundation, as will be shown below. The difference is that the Islamization efforts in Europe mainly are focused on Muslims, not on mainstream society as is the case in the activists' countries of origin.

Since the activists in Europe are located in secular environments where the populations have a weak understanding of the importance of following a manifested religion, the European Brothers have toned down their Islamist ideology. The movement's activists rarely take to the streets under the classic slogan "Islam is the solution" and have instead chosen to avoid engaging in discussion and debate concerning their Islamist ideology. When it comes to political-religious matters, they keep a low profile towards secular mainstream society, knowing that their ideas about women's position in Islam or the importance of following *sharia* would evoke strong objections from the majority of Swedish citizens. This "low profile" should not be interpreted as the activists in Europe have given up the dream of the *caliphate*; instead, the profile fits within the framework of the MB's general policy for its various branches. It is well-known (especially among researchers) that the MB's activists enjoy significant freedom in developing strategies that are locally viable.

For the last couple of years, researchers have debated whether the MB has changed in Europe and in such case, what these changes consist of. One example that is often given is that the European branch has altered the classical worldview of dividing the world into *dar al Islam* (the realm of peace) and *dar al Harb* (the realm of war). One of the most prominent ideologues of the MB network, Tariq Ramadan, is an example of how the MB wrestles with the question of its locus and what it means that Muslims are in the minority.³⁴ Ramadan's conclusion is that Muslims should view Europe in terms of *dar al Shahada* (the realm of testimony), which entails that Europe can also be seen as *dar al Dawa* (the realm of mission).³⁵ He believes that Muslims have a duty to "testify" about Islam in Europe, while trying to spread the religious ideas in different ways. This is the case, he argues, because Islam claims to govern all of humanity. But, he emphasizes, it is not about converting Europe to Islam. It is rather, he says, about trying to integrate Islam's universalism with a pluralist reality.³⁶

Only time will tell whether this is a permanent ideological shift or a temporary solution designed due to the fact that Muslims find themselves at a disadvantage on the European continent. Some researchers argue that the MB has adapted its policies to Europe by turning it into a multiculturalist movement instead of a classic Islamist one. The coming years will also show if this is a tactical maneuver designed in Europe to create an opportunity to render the Islamist tenets invisible. A great deal of the movement's activities in Europe are based on how activists relate to the ideological content formulated by Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb in the early 1900s. As far as it is possible to assess, there are no indications from the leadership of the European MB that there has been a reassessment of the revolutionary message of these authors. On the contrary, it seems that Hassan al-Banna's message is still "unchallenged" among the European activists.³⁷

³⁴ Ramadan (2004:72–77).

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Maréchal (2008:89–94).

The Role of “Gatekeeper”

An important strategic aspect of the MB’s European operations is to assume the role of leader of all European Muslims. They have, in other words, taken on a self-proclaimed representative role as “gatekeepers” between, as they perceive the situation, “Muslim civil society” and the European political elite. Lorenzo Vidino introduces some reasons as to why the activists believe it important to be recognized as Islam’s leading force.³⁸ Part of the calculation is that if the MB is recognized as the main representative, opportunities to access financial resources arise, which in turn enables them to increase their ideological influence among Muslims.³⁹ The MB’s activists are in ideological-religious conflict with other Islamist groups to win the “hearts and minds” of Muslims and have thus realized the significance of financial resources to be able to monopolize the interpretation of Islam. When IFiS publishes photographs on their website showing representatives of the Stockholm mosque in dialogue with Swedish politicians on the national level, this is a signal to their surroundings that MB is a politically important group that has the attention of policymakers.

The recognition as representative of Islam thus entails increased chances of being invited to “dialogue” and “cooperation” with politicians, officials and other operators in the surrounding society. This means that the MB is given the opportunity to define what Islam is and what problems “Muslims” face in Sweden and other European countries. In these dialogues, the movement is also given the opportunity, based on their approach, to help solve various social problems facing Sweden and other European countries. The European Brothers see themselves as a positive force in Europe where their religious ideology around family, child-rearing and biologically-based approaches to gender issues as a universal focus area can facilitate the creation of social order.⁴⁰ Another important item on the MB’s agenda in Europe is to, through dialogue and cooperation, influence European foreign policy considerations that somehow touches on Islam.⁴¹

A controversial issue is whether the MB’s strategy includes “infiltration” of political parties or other influential groups to bolster their political influence.⁴² This is sometimes called “entryism”; to strategically invest in placing operators in different positions to ensure their core issues are being heard. Considering the MB’s strategy in Egypt, one can conclude that the Brothers there managed to enter the trade unions, which contributed to the consolidation of their ideological influence on society. An indication that entryism serves as an important strategic aspect for the European MB is that one of the FIOE’s goals is to promote the appointment of Muslims to influential positions in Europe. As stated in the organization’s policy: “*working towards achieving representation of Muslims within European institutions and authorities.*”⁴³

What this means in practice is unclear. The problem here is that they use the word “Muslims” instead of the word “activists” or “Islamists.” A “Muslim” can be anyone who self-identifies with the concept; for example, a pious person not necessarily engaged in promoting political Islam, or a secular Muslim who is uninterested in religion. However, Mahmoud Khalfi, imam of the MB’s main Swedish mosque, saw it as a success for MB’s Islamism when Mehmet Kaplan was appointed

³⁸ Vidino (2012:66).

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ When it comes to the status of women within the network, there is a text that often has been quoted on the subject: Mostafa Malaekah’s Swedish translation of Jamal A Badawi’s *The Status of Women in Islam* (1980). The Swedish translation has long been available at the Young Muslims of Sweden’s website. However, at the time of writing (February 2017) it is not possible to access it, since the website has been shut down.

⁴¹ Vidino (2012:37).

⁴² Meijer, 2012.

⁴³ See the FIOE’s objectives.

minister in the Social Democrat–Green Party government led by Stefan Löfven.⁴⁴ In Arab media, he said among other things that “*by Mehmet Kaplan’s political career, there was a breakthrough for the Islamists in Sweden.*” Khalfi also complimented Swedish politicians for “*having normalized relations with the Islamic Association known for its affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood.*”⁴⁵

However, this process was initiated several years ago in Sweden. And the agreement that the then-named Social Democratic Brotherhood movement (now called Faith and Solidarity) entered into with the Muslim Council of Sweden (SMR) in 1999 serves as a good starting point. In the agreement, it is clearly indicated that SMR wants a parallel society.⁴⁶

The basic idea of “Muslims” constituting a collective with *a certain* definition is, as has been stated, a fundamental tenet of the MB (and other Islamists). As former Moderate Party MP Abdirizak Waberi, Omar Mustafa’s predecessor as chairman of IFiS, has said: Islam only has one definition. Both Waberi and Mustafa are good examples of how MB activists have operated inside Swedish party politics.

The role of “gatekeeper” is often made clear when Islamist terror attacks occur in Europe. After these militant Islamist attacks, politicians’ interest in dialogue with representatives of Islam is usually intensified. The pattern that has emerged is that politicians turn to associations/groups/organizations included in the MB’s European network. This probably happens because of a belief that these organizations are legitimate representatives of Islam in Sweden. The consequence of this behavioral pattern is that the Islamist movement as a whole is granted the opportunity to further strengthen its political-religious influence. That is, the European MB believes that violence and terror are the wrong methods to use in Europe (however, elsewhere it is completely legitimate to use violence). They are, however, part of a larger ideological movement that greatly shares ideological views on several issues, but differs in terms of which political method is most appropriate to use on the European continent. At the one end of this continuum, we find the MB, and on the other end militant *Salafists*. The militant Salafists’ terror is abhorred and rejected by many while contributing to a political logic where Islamists in the MB win advantages in their role as “gatekeepers.”

⁴⁴ Carlbom (2016).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ <http://tinyurl.com/j5xc5qw>

“Islamophobia” and Ideological Alliances

Another aspect of the role of “gatekeeper” is that the MB’s activists are given the opportunity to 1) control how Islam is represented and 2) construct the problem facing Swedish “Muslims.” As for 1), it is important for activists to create as “positive” of a view of Islam as possible in relation to secular mainstream society. Given that mainstream interpretations of Islam contain a wealth of ideas that are in conflict with Western norms and ideals, it follows that the activists must tone down those elements of their religious ideology that may be perceived as controversial. The German political scientist Christoph Schuck points out that this is typical of Islamists who find themselves in the MB’s position, where both secular policymakers and Muslims/Islamists make up the target for political efforts.⁴⁷ In general, Muslim leaders seem to invest a lot of effort into various attempts to “normalize” and construct a positive “image” around Islam.⁴⁸ The role of “gatekeeper” is thus important as part of the general defense of Islam that the European MB has assumed responsibility for.

Regarding the possibility to 2) construct difficulties that (all) “Muslims” are faced with, the MB’s activists have developed a strategy where the problem *par excellence* lies in mainstream society’s attitude to the religion and its followers. The pattern of action developed in recent years is that the movement’s activists reject all types of criticism of Islam or the activists’ efforts with the term “Islamophobia.” The term originated fairly recently from the British think tank *The Runnymede Trust* and is used by Islam’s “defense attorneys” to undermine people’s morals instead of discussing factual issues. Precisely because of this, it is also effective for MB’s activists who use it in efforts to defend their pro-Islamist project. By using the term, they can disseminate the false perception that they are ordinary Muslims exposed to “Islamophobia” rather than being part of a socially transformative ideology.⁴⁹ Young Muslims of Sweden has also in recent years increasingly started to use the polemical rhetoric commonly practiced by supporters of Leftist identity politics, with its focus on “whiteness,” “structural racism,” and “alienation.”

By creating suspicion of the opponent’s psychological and moral intentions, it is possible to avoid taking responsibility for own shortcomings or ethically questionable views. An example of how the term is used was when Omar Mustafa, former chairman of the MB’s national organization IFiS, launched a full-frontal assault on Swedish daily DN’s journalist Lasse Granstrand, who published completely reasonable evidence that Mustafa’s organization had invited the well-known anti-Semite Salah Sultan to speak at a conference.⁵⁰ The alternative UN report authored by activists in the MB’s network in 2013 is also a clear example of how the activists have chosen to assume and maintain the role of victim of a so-called “Islamophobic” world.⁵¹ Politically, it is obviously more productive for the MB to be seen as a victim rather than a player; built into victimhood is the idea that someone should be “pitied” rather than “feared.”

For Islamists in a secular political context, this is an important strategic opportunity. The role means that one can always claim to be misunderstood or exposed to a mainstream society that despises or hates Islam. The term “Islamophobia” is effective because it seeps into many Westerner’s guilty

⁴⁷ Schuck, 2013.

⁴⁸ See Sohrabi & Farquharson, 2015.

⁴⁹ Readings et al., 2016.

⁵⁰ In response to Lasse Granstrand's article, then-chairman of IFiS, Omar Mustafa, penned the article “Negativa generaliseringar en del av islamofobisk idétradition” (“Negative Generalizations Part of Islamophobic Thought”) at the debate website Newsmill. In the article, Mustafa avoids discussing the facts of the matter by dismissing all criticism as an expression of Islamophobia.

⁵¹ Swedish Muslims in Cooperation Network Alternative Report (2013).

conscience towards people from the Third World.⁵² The MB's activists are aware that it is very difficult to defend oneself against accusations of being an "Islamophobe" and it is therefore very likely that they will continue to use it as a rhetorical weapon. The term is also effective in the Islamists' political game, since it places "blame" for Muslims' problems entirely with secular mainstream society. This type of "self-victimization" seems dominant throughout the Islamic movement, which means that they view themselves as permanent victims who refuse to accept any responsibility for their situation.⁵³

A "gatekeeper" of the MB type can also broaden sympathies for their political project by maintaining the notion that "Islamophobia" is the central problem for all Muslims. That is, people who hardly would agree with the MB's basic tenet that Islam is "a total way of life" may start believing that "Muslims" are being exposed to abject discrimination in society. Over a number of years, many different types of individuals and groups in Sweden have felt that the most important measure to solve integration problems is to get rid of discriminatory ideas among the population at large.⁵⁴ In other words, there exists an ideological opportunity for the MB to enter into alliances with other groups by sticking to the unilateral declaration that Muslims are subject to "Islamophobia". In this respect, it is no coincidence that the "multiculturalist" wing of the Leftist movement and the Swedish Green Party for many years have operated as secular support for the Islamists in the MB's network. By uncritically touting "Islamophobia" as the most crucial problem for Muslims – while simultaneously denying the existence of Islamism – many are lending their support to the MB's totalitarian philosophy.

⁵² Hasan (2010).

⁵³ Kuntzel (2007:131).

⁵⁴ Carlbom (2003).

Communitarian Multiculturalism

Philosophers and social scientists have for many years pursued a critical discussion about multiculturalism, in which different theoretical problems have been identified.⁵⁵ In Sweden, there has never been any real critical debate on this policy, which was introduced in the country in the 1970s in order to address immigration of that time. In Sweden, it has usually been about joining one of the two political “camps”: those who are “for” or “against” a multicultural society. During recent years, multiculturalism has more or less been replaced by the word “diversity” in Sweden, probably because the former was so strongly associated with immigration.

The term diversity is more aligned with postmodernism, as it allows the inclusion of more “identities” in the description of the cultural and religious pluralism that characterizes the inhabitants of Sweden today. The “imagined community” of contemporary Sweden does not only include immigrants of different ethnic and religious origins, but also “function-variated” (a postmodern term for disability) people and people with a different sexual orientation have their place in a “pluralistic society.” But regardless of what term one chooses to use, there is an established structure of values among the country’s political elite, which stipulates how citizens should relate to “minorities.” Important values that are raised by many is to show “acceptance” and “tolerance” for those citizens who in some sense differ from the mainstream; that society should offer minorities cultural and religious “rights” in order to be able to “preserve” or perhaps even “develop” their specific lifestyles is also a value that many sympathize with. But even if you fundamentally believe that there are problems with these values, it is for political reasons extraordinarily difficult to critique them in public.

For the MB in Europe, these values form an ideological “opportunity structure” to link their political project to.⁵⁶ That is, all political movements operate in contexts that offer both obstacles and opportunities for activists to succeed with their project. Activists in the MB are aware of the difficulties to be recognized as the representative of Islam if they were to promote Islamist ideas to politicians and others. Such a strategy is and has been possible in Muslim countries where the majority of residents appreciate Islam and believe that they should follow God’s commands. In a country like Sweden, according to *World Values Survey*⁵⁷ the world’s most secular nation, it would border on political suicide to be upfront with the fact that one is working for *sharia* to govern society or that men and women by birth are biologically predisposed to different tasks. In Sweden and other Western countries, the MB is instead offered to insert its Islamic project within the ideological framework of multiculturalism. For years, ever since Mahmoud Aldebe’s tenure as one of the leaders of the MB’s network, the MB’s activists have argued that Muslims should be recognized as a religious “minority” because they have a special way of life that must be preserved. Aldebe claimed in a letter to former MP and Social Democratic Party chair Mona Sahlin that “special legislation” (read: *sharia*) was an essential part of Muslim lifestyle. The MB’s representatives are now more cautious in their statements in order to avoid the breakdown of “dialogue” with secular parties.

The Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE), the MB’s European umbrella organization, is clear about having “embedded” their religious project within a multicultural discourse. In their policy, it is stipulated that “*the Muslim presence in Europe requires a framework of citizenship based on justice, equality of rights, with respect for difference, and the recognition of Muslims as a European religious community.*” Originally, the movement’s aim was to take control

⁵⁵ Carlbom (2003); Hasan (2010); Malik (2008).

⁵⁶ Wiktorowicz (2014:1-37).

⁵⁷ <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp>

of the state, but in Europe, the MB has appointed themselves defense attorneys for Islam and Muslims.

One of the main objectives of the FIOE is thus to preserve/protect Muslims from cultural assimilation. Given what we know from previous research on the MB, it seems to flow from the organization's fears that Muslims would distance themselves from Islamic ideals, laws, norms and values and be swallowed up by the liberal Western tradition of ideas. This fear is not unique to the Islamists in the MB; it characterizes several religious movements that value what they perceive as divinely revealed dogmas and duties.

The European MB represents something that is sometimes referred to as a "strong" multiculturalism. In contrast to many activists, researchers, journalists and politicians, the MB believes that there exists a "homogeneous" group of Muslims in Europe with "common interests," as expressed in the IFiS's bylaws. This group, or "minority" as it is sometimes called, is seen by Islamists as a "monolithic" entity that must be governed by the MB in order to function in society. The European MB thus embraces communitarian thinking in their view of how Muslims should be incorporated into Swedish society. Here, it is not about individual integration/assimilation, but that Muslims should be incorporated into society as a collective entity where everyone submits to Islam in the MB's version of what the religion requires, and that this group demands collective rights. The notion of a homogeneous group of "Muslims" living in a "Muslim civil society" is today embraced by a large group of activists/Islamists in Sweden. This is clarified in the *Swedish Muslims in Cooperation Network* and the alternative UN report, which was written in 2013 and in which Sweden is portrayed as an almost uninhabitable country if you are a Muslim.⁵⁸ No fewer than 17 Islamic/Muslim organizations have signed the report and joined in the assertion that "Muslim civil society" is placed in a "hostile societal context" and that "Swedish Muslims should be seen as a minority."⁵⁹ Swedish Muslims should thus not be seen as several "minorities," but as ONE single minority. Why ONE single minority needs to be represented by 17 organizations is not clear from the report.

This type of multicultural thinking has been criticized in different ways. For example, Amartya Sen points out that the approach is based on monocultural thinking.⁶⁰ "Internally," towards Muslims, the MB's activists see a monolithic entity of believers, all portrayed as clones of one another. "Externally," towards secular society, it is presented as sympathies for a society characterized by "diversity." There are several problems with this "integration model." As Susan Moller Okin has pointed out, it supports patriarchal and misogynistic interpretations of the group's "culture," which the MB in Europe is a clear example of if we look at the Islamic documents disseminated via websites.⁶¹ In addition, it is democratically destructive in that it virtually renders normative critique impossible across "group" boundaries. When there is a "right" for a "group" to practice a certain set of norms – for example *sharia* law – any critique of those norms is translated into a matter of the "group" being "violated" (or exposed to "Islamophobia"). In other words, the European MB advocates an "integration model" based on splitting society "into little islands that are not within intellectual reach of each other."⁶²

This integration model seems to be widely disseminated in the MB's ideological network. *The Muslim Association of Sweden* (Sveriges Muslimska Förbund, SMF) believes for example that "the ideal society is a system of cultural pluralism, where each minority group is on the same level as the

⁵⁸ <http://www.islamiskaforbundet.se/sv/doc/Report.pdf>.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 10.

⁶⁰ Sen (2006).

⁶¹ Moller Okin (2002).

⁶² Sen (2006:34).

*majority group. It is possible to develop a pluralistic system instead of forcing your own values on each other.*⁶³ The quote is interesting because it illustrates how society should be organized as “little islands without contact with each other.” Hence, the ideal is that Sweden should be organized into different “groups,” where each group should have the right to practice their particular values, without any of the other groups having the ability to opine on these. The Swedish population should, even though they are in the majority, be a group among other groups: all groups should have the same status.

⁶³ <http://www.smf-islam.se/vision/>

Grassroots Islamization

On the surface, this looks like an apparent minority-political claim for a group's religious rights, but if we compare the MB's traditional political approach with multiculturalism, it is possible to discern similarities in policy. The approach offered by multiculturalism is not essentially different from the ideological thinking that have been influential in the MB's Islamist outlook. In a sense, the MB, since Hassan al-Banna founded the movement, has maintained identity politics as an important policy consideration. A central aspect of the movement's emergence in Egypt was to re-Islamize the country after the British, as perceived by the MB, demoralization of the Egyptian people. Re-Islamization demanded that the Egyptians "awoke" to their identification as Muslims and started practicing an Islamic-rooted lifestyle with all that implies of norms and ethical positions. To succeed in re-Islamization, it was therefore important for the MB to "retrain" or indoctrinate the Egyptians in the doctrine espoused by the movement. The basic tenet of al-Banna's schematic 7-point program for re-Islamization was hence to attach great importance to influencing individual Muslims' religious identity and beliefs.

*To the extent that the Brotherhood has a plan, it is the seven-step design set out in Banna's 'Ela al-Shabab' (To the youth): creating the Muslim individual, whose thinking, emotions, and values exemplify Islam; then the Muslim family that lives according to Islam; then the Muslim society, composed of numerous Muslim families; then the Muslim government that reflects the perfect Muslim society and revives Islamic glory; then uniting all Muslim governments in one organization (a modern caliphate); then reconquering the lost lands of Islam (Andalusia, the Balkans, Southern Italy, and the Mediterranean isles); and finally assuming 'tutorship of the world.'*⁶⁴

As we see in the quote, al-Banna's politics of change were based on creating believers and practicing Muslims who, in a kind of domino effect, are expected to contribute to the creation of more practicing Muslims, who in turn build families, villages, cities, countries, and so on, where all follow the MB's Islamist ideology. In other words, Muslims' Islamic "identity" has always been a focal point in the MB's political program for societal change. The expansion of Islam is expected to take place at the grassroots level, in the homes and neighborhoods of individual Muslims.

Tariq Ramadan, Hassan al-Banna's grandson, is a prominent example of the fact that al-Banna's 7-point plan is used by the MB in Europe. He bases his lectures in front of Muslims on this model when he highlights the "method" Muslims should use in Europe.⁶⁵ Ramadan views (all) Muslims' "identity" as a multi-layered "onion." The "core" of their identity should be belief, practice and spirituality. After that comes the understanding of texts and their contents (the Qur'an and the Hadiths); education and dissemination of religious ideas; and finally, activities and participation.⁶⁶ Ramadan normally expresses himself in a way that makes it difficult to interpret what he really means. But like the MB at large, he wants Muslim identity to be strong and rooted in Islamic discourse (rather than Western) with all that implies of practicing the religious obligation to follow *sharia* and to practice *dawa* (proselytizing). The model thus forms part of the MB's policy of Islamization at the grassroots level and is as such unlikely to enable the integration of Muslims into mainstream society.

When the MB contends that one of its main tasks is to "preserve" the religious identity of Muslims in the name of multiculturalism, this is no real adjustment to European conditions. It is about

⁶⁴ Kandil (2015:110).

⁶⁵ Fourest (2008).

⁶⁶ Ramadan (2004:83).

describing an ideohistorically accepted policy in other words than those used by Hassan al-Banna in the early 1900s. Multiculturalism offers the European MB a rhetoric with which they can explain their activities to secular politicians and officials in a way that makes them comprehensible, but above all politically harmless. Very few people with political influence would object to a movement with roots in the South that claims to be able to “preserve” or “develop” its religious identity.

The similarities between the MB’s classic strategy and the identity politics of the European MB are also striking if one looks at how the European MB imagines that “Muslims” should be able to preserve their religious lifestyle (read: avoid cultural assimilation). In the Swedish debate, it has become increasingly common to encounter the concept “Muslim civil society.” It is derived from the *Islamic Association in Sweden’s* (IFiS) policy on the organization’s views on the integration of Swedish Muslims. The political objective of the MB in Europe is to build a parallel Islamic public sector where Muslims attend their own schools and have access to social services operated in accordance with Islamic standards. The strategy is almost a clone of how the MB in Egypt has operated during recent decades. As several researchers have pointed out, the MB has created a parallel Islamic sector in the country in which citizens are offered to enjoy welfare services that the Egyptian state has failed to deliver. The strategy to separate Muslims from non-Muslims is also highlighted by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a popular ideologue in MB circles.

*I used to tell our brothers in foreign countries, “Try to have your small society within the larger society, otherwise you will melt in it like salt in water. What has preserved the Jewish character over the past centuries was their small community that was unique in its ideas and rituals and was known as “the Jewish ghetto.” Try to have your own “Muslim ghetto” then.*⁶⁷

The fact that the MB wants to create a parallel Islamic sector in Sweden is within the framework of the protective political role they self-identify with. Naturally, it is difficult to maintain such a strict Islamic lifestyle that the MB advocates if a Muslim lives entirely within the framework of secular institutions. The cultural “risk of infection” increases for Muslims who, through everyday life, are regularly exposed to Western norms and values. It is easier to maintain social control in environments where Muslims can keep an eye on each other. The MB’s activists can also control the ideological content if institutions are administered and operated by the movement.

Given that the MB’s activists engage in what is usually called “doublespeak”⁶⁸ in Europe – to keep a low ideological profile in relation to secular mainstream society and be more outspoken about their ideological persuasions in relation to Muslims – it is possible to express certain doubt about the movement’s obvious “right” to establish its own school system and other welfare institutions. There is a high probability that Muslims who are drawn into this “Muslim civil society” are socialized in a spirit significantly contrarian to the values of mainstream society. The school is one of the most important institutions in the European MB’s plan to build a religious enclave. It is of course a logical consequence of the FIOE’s goal to preserve/protect Muslims from cultural assimilation; young people are the most formative and it is easier to establish a basic *habitus* that may be difficult to change in adulthood.

It is therefore no coincidence that the MB has created the independent school corporation *Framstegsskolan*, which is currently run by the former chairman of the FIOE, Chakib Benmakhlof.⁶⁹ By building its own school system, the MB’s activists expect to gain control over Muslim children’s and adolescents’ feelings and ideas about the Islamic faith in general, rights and

⁶⁷ Priorities for the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase.

⁶⁸ Fourest (2008).

⁶⁹ Eriksson, 2015.

obligations under *sharia* law, and the different roles of men and women. In other words, the risk is thus great for a school system of this type to produce citizens who have significantly anomalous values when it comes to gender equality compared to the rest of society. To this can be added the risk that these school environments disseminate anti-Semitic ideas; strong anti-Semitic ideas have been present in MB circles since the days of Hassan al-Banna.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Kuntzel (2007).

Summary

In summary, one can say that the European MB's political-religious work has been built into an "integration model" that is difficult for politicians and others to resist, because it can easily be interpreted in terms of standard integration efforts. It is also difficult to oppose something that on the surface appears as religious rights (of a vulnerable minority). If one, in various ways, opposes the MB's communitarian approach, one also runs the risk of being branded a "racist" or an "Islamophobe," and given the current state of affairs in Swedish society, such classifications may jeopardize people's careers. At the same time, if one allows the MB's model free reign, there is an imminent risk that the movement may strengthen their positions during coming years. Basically, Islamists are building a parallel societal structure that competes with the rest of society over Swedish citizens' value systems. In this way, the MB's activists constitute a long-term challenge in terms of the country's social cohesion.

The formation of enclaves of the type advocated by the MB will probably also create problems for Swedish society's ability to conduct an effective integration policy. Migration from Africa and the Middle East is likely to continue in the coming years, both in terms of family-based immigration and asylum seekers. In this perspective, the MB's parallel Islamic sector may function as a competing societal structure in relation to established secular society. Given that the MB's goal is to increase the number of practicing Muslims in Sweden and Europe, it is highly likely that there will be a "tug of war" between mainstream society and Islamic society under the auspices of the MB concerning what basic norms should apply to Swedish citizens. The MB's Islamization efforts are likely to cause major political and social tensions in the Swedish nation state.

Future Research Suggestions on the EMB/MB

- An in-depth survey of which organizations in Sweden form part of the European Muslim Brotherhood's (EMB) ideological network. The objective of such an effort is to provide a more comprehensive picture of how operations are organized. What associations, organizations, mosques are included in the Swedish network, and what status do they have in relation to secular policymakers in the locations where they operate?
- An in-depth study of public funding (national, regional and municipal) provided for MB-related organizations. On what grounds has funding been granted, and what are the consequences?
- Interviews with defectors from the ideological network. The objective of these would be to increase knowledge "from the inside" of the network about how the activists think strategically in relation to secular and Muslim target groups. What messages are activists focused on promoting in different contexts? What does the relationship between Brothers in Europe and in other parts of the world look like?
- A thorough review of the EMB's operational efforts towards political parties, volunteer organizations, academic institutions and other civil society organizations.
- An in-depth study of how the EMB and the FIOE work with lobbying in the EU, since such efforts may affect Swedish society through various directives from the European Parliament or by individual politicians in the EU. The Brothers want to be involved in several contexts in which they are given the opportunity to influence. How is the EMB's work organized at the EU level? Which groups do they cooperate with? What objectives do they have with these operations? Hypothetically, one can imagine that the questions concerning Turkey's possible accession to the EU, freedom of expression and religion are important themes for the EMB.
- A study of how the European Brothers relate to the revolutionary and totalitarian ideology formulated by Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb. In what way do the messages of these ideologues live on with activists in the ideological network? The Brothers in Europe seem to refrain from violence, but is this rooted in a permanent rejection of violence, or is it a rejection based on pragmatic considerations? Are the Brothers of the opinion that democracy is an end in itself, or that it is a system that will be used as a means to reach the caliphate? Similarly, the Brothers' anti-Semitism and opposition to Western democracy in general should be investigated.

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